

**GROWTH OF COMMUNALISM IN BENGAL (1905-1947): ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN
BANGLADESH**

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled GROWTH OF COMMUNALISM IN BENGAL (1905-1947): ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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CONTENT

TITLE	PAGES
Acknowledgements	i-ii
Contents	iii-viii
List of Abbreviations	ix-xi
Preface	xii-xiii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1-36
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Theoretical Framework	2-11
1.3 Communalism in Pre-Independence India	11-13
1.4 Jinnah, Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha	13-14
1.5 Communalism in Bengal	15-23
2 Review of literature	23-31
2.1 Growth of Islamic Consciousness in Bengal	
2.2 British Colonial Policies	
2.3 Role of Socio-Religious Reform Movements and Political Organisations	

2.4 Implications of the Communalism for the Political Development in Bangladesh

3. Definition, Rationale and the Scope of the Study 31-33

4. Research Questions 33

5. Hypotheses 33-34

6. Research Methodology 31-32

7. Chapters 33-36

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Growth of Islamic consciousness in Bengal and the British Colonial Policies

7.3 Ethno-Linguistic Factors: 1947-75

7.3 Role of Religion in the Political Development in Bangladesh during Military Regime:

7.4 Role of Religion in the Political Development in Bangladesh during Democratic Era:

7.6. Role of External Factors in the Growth of Communal Politics in Bangladesh

7.7. Conclusion:

Chapter 2. Growth of Islamic Consciousness in Bengal and the British Colonial Policy 37-82

1. Introduction 37-45

2. British colonial period	46-66
2.1 New Land Revenue Systems	
2.2 Role of Western Education	
2.3 The partition of Bengal and aftermath	
2.4. Discriminatory Policy in appointments	
3. Role of Socio-Religious Reform Movements And Political Organization	66-82
3.1 Introduction	
3.2 The Hindu Mahasabha	
3.3 The Muslim League	
Chapter 3: Ethno-Linguistic Nationalism: 1947-75	83-120
1. Introduction	83
2. The United Pakistan Period, 1947 to 1970	84-93
3. 1970 Elections	93-97
4. Liberation War	97-99
5. The Formation of Linguistic Identity	100-111
6. The Mujib Era: 1971 to 1975	111-119
7. Conclusion	119-120
Chapter 4: Role of Religion in the Political Developments In Bangladesh during the Military Regime	121-151

1. Introduction	121-124
2. Historical Background	124-129
2.1 Rise of the Military	
3. The Zia Era	129-139
3.1 Islamisation under Zia	
3.2 Bangladesh Nationalist Party	
3.3 End of the Zia Era	
4. The Ershad Era	139- 148
4.1 Islamisation under Ershad	
4.2 Mosque Centred Society	
4.3 Islam as the State Religion	
4.4 Jatiya Party	
4.5 Ershad’s Legacy	
4.6 End of the Ershad’s Regime	
5. Conclusion	148-151

Chapter 5: Role of Religion in the Political Developments in Bangladesh during Democratic Era **152-184**

1. Introduction	152-153
2. Evolution of Party Politics in Bangladesh	153
3. The First Phase: Domination of the Awami League (1972-1975)	153-156
4. The Second Phase: Military Sponsored Political Parties during Military Rule (1975-1990)	157-152
4.1 Zia’s Bangladesh Nationalist Party	
4.2 Ershad’s Jatiya Party	

5. The Third Phase: Awami League and BNP Rivalry	161-169
(1991 to Present)	
5.1 BNP's First Government (1991 to 1996)	
5.2 Awami League's First Government (1996 to 2001)	
5.3 BNP's Second Government (2001 to 2006)	
5.4 Military Rule (2007 to 2008)	
5.5 Awami League's Second Government (2009 to Present)	
6. Role of Religion in the Democratic Era	169- 176
(1991 to Present): An Appraisal	
7. Religion and Ideologies of Major Political Parties	176-182
Of Bangladesh	
7.1 The Awami League	
7.2 Bangladesh Nationalist Party	
7.3 Jatiya Party	
7.4 Jamaat	
8. Conclusion	182-184
Chapter 6: Role of External Factors in the Growth of Communal Politics in	
Bangladesh	185-222
1. Introduction	185
2. Bangladesh's Relationship with the Muslim World	185-194
2.1 The First Phase	
2.2 The Second Phase	
3. Identity Formation and States	194-196

4. Transnational Identities	196-203
4.1 Deterritorialization	
4.2 Collective Identity Formation	
4.3 Logic of Similarity	
4.4 Logic of Difference	
5. Hindu India as the ‘other’ for Bangladesh	204-206
6. Re-emergence of Political Islam across the World	206-220
In the last few Decades	
6.1 Islamic Revival of 1970s	
6.2 Islamic Revolution in Iran	
6.3 Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan	
6.4 First Gulf War	
6.5 End of Cold War	
6.6 War on Terror	
7. Concurrent Rise of Political Islam	220-222
And Terrorism in Bangladesh	
7. Conclusion	223-237
8. Bibliography	238-277

ABBREVIATIONS

AL	Awami League
BADC	Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation
BAIRA	Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agents.
BARI	Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute.
BAU	Bangabandhu Agriculture University.
BATEXPO	Bangladesh Textile Exposition.
BAAS	Bangladesh Association of Advancement of Science.
BAF	Bangladesh Air Force.
BARD	Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development.
BAEC	Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission.
BAFA	Bulbul Academy for Fine Arts.
BAARI	Bangladesh Atom Agriculture Research Institute.
BARC	Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council.
BASC	Bangladesh Administrative Staff College.
BASIC	Beginners All-purpose Symbolic Instruction.
BATEXPO	Bangladesh Textile Exposition.
BAUCSU	Bangladesh Agricultural University Central Students Union.

BCL	Bangladesh Chhatra League
BEC	Election Commission
BHBCOP	Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist Christian Unity Council
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
CTG	Caretaker Government
EPO	Emergency Powers Ordinance
EPR	Emergency Powers Rules
EWG	Election Working Group HC High Court
JMB	Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh
JP	Jaitya Party (Ershad)
LTO	Long-term observer
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NDI	National Democratic Institute
RAB	Rapid Action Battalion
RPO	Representation of the People's Order

STO Short-term observer

UNO Upazila Executive Officer

USAID United States Agency for International Development

PREFACE

The term communalism became more relevant after the advent of the British rule in South Asia, which used it to characterise the unique social realities in colonies like India, where several distinct religious minorities coexisted with a dominant religious majority. Existing religious differences were portrayed by the British as a cause as well as a *fait accompli* of divisiveness and parochialism, which in turn was used as a just cause for the ‘emancipatory’ civilizing mission colonialism was portrayed as. These justifications also lay at the foundations of widely-circulated mission of ‘white man’s burden’. At the same time, communalism was also utilised by the colonial rulers both as a template to understand the social structures and history of South Asia and as a tool to further their political interests in the sub-continent. However, it did have inherent foundations in the local customs and, therefore, did not decline after the end of the colonial rule. Thus, a deeper understanding of the causes and consequences of communalism requires an analysis of its historical evolution. The following paragraphs attempt such a historical analysis for South Asia, especially in Bengal.

Communalism is basically an ideology; rioting and other forms of violence are its contingent or conjuncture forms. The study of the rise and growth of communalism in Bengal is undertaken to understand the roots of communalism in South Asia in general and Bangladesh in particular. Due to the British colonial policy of ‘divide and rule,’ socio-religious reform movements and economic backwardness among Muslims, a wave of communalism spread in the Bengal delta. Different political organizations were also responsible for the growth of communalism in Bengal and it impacted the religious politics of Bangladesh.

The British authorities, in the name of administrative convenience, divided the united Bengal into two parts; East Bengal and West Bengal. The former constituted a Muslim majority whereas the latter had a dominance of Hindus. Although many Bengalis opposed this step, and started the *Swadeshi* movement, ultimately these factors increased the wave of communalism, as Hindu mythology and symbolism, like Kali Puja, was mixed with nationalism, antagonising the Muslims. This was not a co-incidence that the Muslim League was founded in Dhaka in the very next year. Due to the economic and educational policy of the British, Muslims lagged behind the Hindus. They became marginalised, especially in the

sphere of employment, while they had fresh historical memories of being powerful, both politically and economically. Muslims opted English education very late and ‘Macaulization’ of education pushed them back.

Socio-religious reform movements, such as *Faraizi* and *Wahhabi* movements, also paved the way for the spread of communalism in Bengal. Similarly, the Arya Samaj movement emphasized on re-establishment of the Vedic era elements. Both types of religious reform and revivalist movements hardly emphasized on secular and integrative approach. Accordingly, they compartmentalized the two societies into two entirely different segments. For example, *Tablighi* and *Tanzeem* movements of Muslims and *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* movements of Hindus were completely endeavoured to regain and re-establish their value systems over each-other. These factors consolidated the religious gap between

Hindus and Muslims and resulted in the partition of 1947. Since 1947 to 1971, linguistic nationalism emerged in East Pakistan and Bangladesh was formed on the basis of linguistic nationalism and secular ideologies. But the scenario changed in the post 1975 Bangladesh and it went back to the path of religious politics which has since been getting retrospectives from the communal politics of Bengal during 1905 to 1947. The rationale of the study lies behind the explanation and the analytical reasoning of these factors.

The present study, therefore, helps to explore communal violence from the context of historical background as provided by the study. People become aware of communalism only when violence breaks out. It is very important to bring out the different elements that constitute communal ideology and to explain its socio-economic and political roots. Once communalism is seen as an ideology, it becomes clear that it cannot be suppressed by force, for no ideology can be suppressed by force or through administrative proscribing. Ideology has to be overcome at the level of ideas. This study attempts to understand the roots of communalism in Bengal so that the basic factors behind its rise and the growth can be traced. In doing so, it will help understand the current scenario of communal politics in Bangladesh. There is a need to study the root causes of communalism in Bengal because it impacts the present and future socio-religious scenario in the whole region. The scope of the study lies in providing a detailed explanation such contexts and in understanding the present communal based issues in Bangladesh.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Communalism refers to use of religious tools for political gains. It is the transformation of a religious community into an exclusivist political and electoral constituency and, as a form of politics, is opposed to the process of secular nation-building. At the core part of communal question, there lays a trust and belief of ethno-religious community based primordality, which in practice exploits both religion and politics. In the South Asian context, communalism has emerged and entrenched itself as a specific political ideology of using and exploiting both the religious identity of the people and secular democratic opportunities of the citizens in order to capture political power.

In South Asia, the term communalism became more relevant after the advent of the British rule, which used it to characterise the unique social realities in colonies like India, where several distinct religious minorities coexisted with a dominant religious majority. Existing religious differences were portrayed by the British as a cause as well as a *fait accompli* of divisiveness and parochialism, which in turn was used as a just cause for the ‘emancipatory’ civilizing mission colonialism was portrayed as. These justifications also lay at the foundations of widely-circulated mission of ‘white man’s burden’. At the same time, communalism was also utilised by the colonial rulers both as a template to understand the social structures and history of South Asia and as a tool to further their political interests in the sub-continent. However, did have inherent foundations in the local customs and, therefore, did not decline after the end of the colonial rule. Thus, a deeper understanding of the causes and consequences of communalism requires an analysis of its historical evolution. The following paragraphs attempt such a historical analysis for South Asia, especially in Bengal.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Theoretically there are many models of communalism and partition. When homogeneous population demands for creation of a homeland as a solution to complex contradictions between various subjectivities, it also generates schizophrenic agents who claim to be real embodying elements of the proposed nation, this is known as national partition. When demographic patterns comprise heterogeneous entities on the basis of religion, ethnicity, or any other categories, demand for partition is termed as multi-national partition. When particular group or groups within the territorial and sovereign limits demand for autonomy, leads to internal partition as it does not change the status quo of existing external boundary. Anxieties of ethno-national groups make external partition indispensable, as like the case of India where modifications of sovereign borders and jurisdiction were concluded in 1947. As discussed, partition occurs due to various rational motives as prescribed by the agents. What make real influence are the internal and external agents, where they either intervene forcefully or in non-conflictual manner.

Sophisticated dividing lines of models of partition displayed the recurring demands felt by communities or groups, where vivisection of territories become the last resort to avoid further contradictions and related violence. Radcliffe Line signified the partition and creation international boundary first between India and Pakistan (Western and Eastern Wing), after liberation war of 1971 and creation of Bangladesh added one more party to the existing international boundary and Pakistan in this scenario lost its Eastern Wing. The genesis of the history of partition is difficult to fit in any specific context, space, and time, because the partition of Bengal under Lord Curzon could be a possible precursor, followed by provisions for separate electorate, and finally Britain's acts in the early part of the year 1947 shows its swiftness to end its administration and transfer the power to warring Congress and Muslim League. Sir Cyril Radcliffe, who was designated with the project to partition British India and demarcate the boundaries for the newly independent states of India and Pakistan. Although Radcliffe line was destined to draw the margins for both states, in reality it flared up the communal divide among the people as it aggravated the suspicion and confusion on the direction to which they were forced to move. The Boundary Commission constituted by the then Viceroy in 1947 was the result of the

failure of political elites in the undivided British India, as they could not compromise over the construction of an inclusive notion of the nation, this made the commission project to vivisection of Bengal into Muslim and Non-Muslim political units. Moreover Cyril Radcliffe was under profound pressures from various political outfits and lobbyists in terms of influencing colonial government's procedures of boundary demarcation.

As per the instruction, the commission was influenced under politics of border-making to delineate margins of nation-states on the basis of Muslim and non-Muslim. Willem van Schendel in his book makes a critical analysis of the Hindu-Muslim divide as the major narrative downplayed in the partition literatures produced by three countries. This is because, when it comes to Bengal Borderlands, near to 4000kms were drawn; three-fifth of the borders did not show any Hindu-Muslim divide along the borders. In his study, on the Pakistan side of the boundary comprised two-fifth of non-Muslim population, on the other hand India's part possessed one -fifth of Muslim majority areas. The partition entailed not just demarcation of Hindu-Muslim majority areas but also Bengali, Non - Bengali in which certain communities did not fit in the Hindu-Muslim dichotomy. As the boundary demarcation went through Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Burma (became an independent nation-state).

The author questions the narrative popular in the literature on Hindu-Muslim and Bengali divide, in actual along the lines demarcated in Garo hills of Meghalaya were Christians, similarly in Tripura where some stretches dividing lines had majority Buddhists. Author contends that the popular Hindu-Muslim antagonism prevailed over the historiography of border-making, little or no space was left for the other communities and their contribution and reactions during the turbulent period. From the perspectives of the population, their opinions were not granted prominence or remained obscured, and tensions were the concept of notional borders, derived from the idea of probable areas to be marked to be borders. This somehow enhanced the dilemma among the people, who on divided fault lines were to make choices of territory (Schendel 2009).

The communal fault lines produced volatile outcomes in a catastrophic than the Direct Action Plan day riots and killings. With the passage of time, the Radcliffe line became

the new margins of the Hindu-Muslim enmity. Chaotic population movement was met with communal rioters, remained far from colonial administration's control.

As a politics based on political beliefs, communalism identifies the socio-economic and political interests of an individual or a group on the basis of its association with a particular community. These interests are defined by and constructed around a particular religion, and the fulfilment of those interests is the objective of a politics based on this community identity. There have been numerous attempts to understand and theorise this communal politics. There are three major schools regarding the theorizing of communalism in South Asian subcontinent (Batabyal 2005). Based on the keen observations and analysis of history, Batabyal divides the whole theorisation on communal politics in Bengal into three major schools, as given and stated below. The first school is represented by the historians like Anil Seal, Christopher Bayly, etc. Communalism is interpreted by this school as a normal, and not uncommon, strife between religious groups, which exists, and has existed, independent of the ruling powers. This interpretation helps these historians overcome the problem of the presence of the colonial context, and the historical experience of a substantial section of humanity as colonial subjects.

Much before Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations hit the global equations of harmony and discord based on cultural and civilizational differences, the colonial India was divided in 1947. If partition was a great human tragedy from the perspective of human security, the retrospective research on the event produce various narratives. The relentless quest is to underline the factors and determinants which drove then political elites for a consensus for partition. When the Indian subcontinent was cherishing the independence from shackles of colonial rule, the trauma of partition was felt in the borderlands from where the limitations of two newly independent nation-states were drawn.

What has remained the least researched theme in the partition history is the dearth of documentation capturing the degree of violence forced on the refugees, which reflects till date. Partition as imagined by colonial administrators and then nationalist leaders as a

solution to the contending communal fault lines, could only ignite the overarching communal divide to majoritarian domination over minorities in varying intensities, as even after partition population movement was evident to avoid religious persecution.

The colonial context, under which millions existed, included the control of the administrative and other state apparatuses, the politics of negotiating between the communities to safeguard its own interests, and the larger interests of the British colonial empire (Batabyal 2005). However, the writings of this variant find in communalism a convenient instrument to erase the crucial impact of the colonial intervention. In a renewed effort at excavation, Bayly came out with new findings, suggesting that many conflicts in the period 1700-1850 bear close resemblance to the communal riots that took place during the late 19th and 20th centuries. Taking examples from the land wars and acts of the indigenous states, i.e., the Sikh and Marathas, he challenged some of the assumptions held by a large number of Indian historians. Bayly questioned the strongly-held notion among Indian writers that communal conflict was not a direct outcome of religious revitalisation, and argued that the possibility of communal disturbances cannot be excluded solely on the basis of widespread pre- and early colonial Hindu-Muslim symbiosis (Bayly, 1975 :177-203).

Bidyut Chakrabarty argues that communalism existed in the pre-British period and none of the rulers of that period made serious attempts to evolve a secular state. Royal/official religion tried to gain maximum benefits at the cost of every other minority group. In the British period, with the rise of the Muslim League as representative of Indian Muslims, the political division between Hindus and Muslims became strong. Chakrabarty blamed the Indian National Congress for abortive attempts to develop a strong nationalist movement, as it agreed to several concessional pacts and agreements with the League and other groups (Chakrabarty 1990).

Accepting the League's claim of being the sole representative of Indian Muslims, the Congress lost the trust of the latter and the pacts with Muslim elites were viewed as the Congress ignoring the Muslim masses. While such pacts may have legitimized Congress politics, these negotiations with communalist forces had a severe impact on nationalist leaders like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Asaf Ali.

Although Mahatma Gandhi's decision of launching the Non-Cooperation Movement was the last true instance of a combined Hindu-Muslim challenge to the British rule, it had a negative impact on communal harmony in the succeeding decades. Congress leaders consistently tried to resolve Hindu-Muslim tensions at the highest level, through talk with communal leaders. In the case of Bengal, C.R. Das, following the Congress ideal, concluded the Bengal Pact in 1924 with a view to securing the support of the educated Muslims. The argument behind the pact was that the failure to accommodate the educated Muslims in the mainstream would create dissatisfaction among the masses leading to further fissures in the Muslim society. His apprehensions became quite evident with the two events that followed. First, fearful of the possible assertions of influential Muslims in case they entered the political system, the Act was 'abrogated'. Secondly, the apprehension of C.R. Das were apparently similar to the reasons asserted by the Muslims in their demands for separate electorates after 1919. While Subhas Chandra Bose appreciated negotiations as a means to settle Hindu-Muslim tensions, C.R. Das felt the importance of widening the social base of Indian National Congress by incorporating individuals, irrespective of religion, from the localities. The possibility of fighting Hindu-Muslim tensions collapsed after the death of Das. Elite-level agreements aggravated the notion of communalism (Chakraborty 1990).

On the other hand scholars like Bipan Chandra in his book *Communalism in Modern India* opined that communalism found its tentacles in the Indian subcontinent due to colonialism, and what added to the existing cleavages were the economic stagnation, and such tattered economy gave rise to new social classes who were termed as responsible for the intensification of communal tensions. Among the new social classes, the colonial administration provided prominence to Hindus in the upward social and economic mobility, thus this was sharp retreat from the Muslim domination in the medieval period. Thus the social divisions of the society were transformed as communal divide leading to bloodshed. The same scholar, in another article *Communalism and the State: Some Issues in India* traced the process of communal ideology's journey to communal violence, according to which the growth of one phase to another requires a time gap to develop. Which points clearly that colonial administration promoted communal ideology and achieved disastrous culmination in form of communal strife which took heavy death toll

(Chandra 1984). Visva Mohana Pandeya's book titled *Historiography of India's Partition: An Analysis of Imperialist writings*, according to him the colonial regime were quick enough to interpret the nature of Indian nationalist methods inclined to secular principles, as a reactionary colonial administration profoundly promoted forces of communalism (Pandeya 1990). Gyanendra Pandey's formulation on the debate between colonialists and nationalists is best summarised as the former's view translates communalism in the Indian society as of 'given' nature or as essentialist, and the latter's interpretation suggests as a phenomenon of constructed origin (Pandey 1990).

The second group of historians regard communalism as a modern phenomenon, a repercussion of the origin of the recent and modern politics and identity which, according to Bipan Chandra- one of the chief representatives of this school, marked a sudden and severe divergence from the traditional and old politics of the pre modern Indian kingdoms or even the period prior to 1857. While attempting to situate communalism within the overarching colonial context, this school of thought refutes the notion that it was the result of India's bitter history and past, existing for centuries. Instead, its emergence is located in the context of the impact of the colonial rule, and the response of different Indian social classes, strata and groups to this rule. Communalism, according to Chandra, developed as a political and economic tactics of the reactionary social and political forces. Such forces and social classes were represented by and allied to the communal leaders and parties (Chandra 1993). Communalism was deliberately encouraged by this nexus, due to its capability of distorting and diverting popular struggle, and of diverting attention from the real, more exigent issues.

As per the words of Bipan Chandra, Communalism and its core elements consists of mainly three phases as given below:

- 1) Uniqueness in economic, political, social and cultural priorities and interests are common in religious believes of people whole follow the same religion.
- 2) There are some peculiar dissimilarity even in the belief, tradition and custom of people belongs to the different and divergent religions and this could be cited as the second step and reason for the origin of communalism.

- 3) The interests and aspirations of the supporters of various religions or groups are found to be reciprocally not adjusting, contradictory and antagonistic (Chandra 1993).

Political practices rooted on the already stated communally driven ideologies always lead to skirmishes, scuffle and violence. Chandra further makes a distinction between two distinct types of communalism- liberal and extreme, and identifies 1937 as the watershed in the course of the Indian independence movement which marked the end of an era of liberal communalism and the beginning of extreme communalism.

A.R. Desai, belonging to the same school of thought, defined communalism as “only the disguised expression of the struggle between the vested interests belonging to different faiths who gave a communal form to that struggle. It also was the form within which the struggle of the professional classes of different communities over posts and Seats carried on” (Desai 2005). Therefore, communal strife was viewed by scholars of this ilk as a middle-class inspired struggle. A similar view has been expressed by Asghar Ali Engineer and Moin Shakir. They see communalism as a product of the weaknesses and imbalances in the economy created by the capitalist system. The unequal economic forces, unleashed by the colonial rule, led the Muslim middle-class to lag behind their Hindu counterpart. They began to feel uncomfortable given the entire capitalist scenario and, hence, gradually shifted towards those parties that were demanding a separate homeland for Muslims (Engineer 1989). Prabha Dixit, too, finds communalism a modern phenomenon, that makes use of religious-cultural differences and awareness these into a political doctrine. According to Dixit, “communalism is a consciously conceived political doctrine of one section of traditional elites” (Dixit 1974: 3).

Locating herself in the tradition-modernity model, she opines that the Muslim elite, who were lagging behind in the race for modernisation, took to religious conservatism and communal identity to safeguard their interests. Even when some modernisation occurred, as in the form of Syed Ahmad’s efforts, these were superficial. According to her the modernisation of the Muslim community as heralded by Sir Syed Ahmad was not the modernisation of the whole community, but the superficial modernisation of the upper class Muslims. The modernization introduced in this manner was not aimed at creating an

intellectual or social revolution. Its sole aim was preservation of the old order (Dixit 1974). According to her, communalism firstly originated among the Muslim elite. And hence, they were the 'original sinners'. Dixit, thus, explains the emergence of Hindu communalism as a reaction to Muslim communalism (Dixit 1974: 9).

Asghar Ali Engineer, emphasising on another dimension of communalism, identifies capitalist mode of development, with its imbalanced growth, as the major cause of communal problems. According to Engineer, the macro-level cause of the communal problem in the economic arena is that "Muslims are left out in the process of economic development and the Hindus mainly benefit from it" (Engineer 1996).

Tracing the growth of communalism in India, Vanaik sees Indian Renaissance as the chief culprit as it was embedded with strong Hindu symbolism. He calls Indian nationalism Hindu nationalism. Counterpoising this Hindu nationalism and post-independence India with the European nation-states, Vanaik draws the conclusion that while European nation-states, prior to their emergence, went through a process of secularisation, the Indian state came into being with an inheritance of predominance of religion which had also marked the national movement. The Indian civil society, contrary to the European case, never went through the process of secularisation. In this context, he defines communalism as a process involving competitive desecularisation in a religiously plural society. Through such characterisation, Vanaik highlights the fact that communities use ideology and institutional control to extend the reach of their religion which, along with other non-religious factors, hardens the divide between such communities and increases friction (Vanaik 1990).

The third school is represented by scholars such as Gyanendra Pandey, Partha Chatterjee, etc. Communalism, in their conceptualisation, is, among other things, primarily a construction in/of knowledge founded on the Enlightenment-induced paradigms of knowledge. Communalism, according to them was "a construction" of the Enlightenment knowledge brought to India by colonial rule (Chatterjee 1984; Pandey 1990). Chatterjee deconstructs communalism into several constituent events, and locates each of them in a different analytical plane. This is because, for him, the task is to break up and supersede the liberal problematic of 'communalism'/ 'secularism'. He does not regard "it as a

problem and secularism as the answer” (Chatterjee 1984: 9-38). Instead, he locates communalism in the structures of power relations where, for instance in Bengal, communalism becomes synonymous with the actions of the peasant community.

While Chatterjee wants to understand communalism by breaking its monolithic construction into different analytical planes, Gyanendra Pandey does it by trying to give meaning to the ‘community text’ and demonstrating the colonial construction of communalism. He found that while categorising communalism by stereotyping this distinct, considerable political trend as conceptual ‘other’ of nationalism, the secularist and nationalist forces were at leading position. Furthermore, Pandey established that the meaning of communalism in the form of colonial mode of knowledge was only a byproduct of interpreting history in particular manner through which the persistent religious differences were continually re-endorsed between already communities of Hindus and Muslims. To put in simple words the communalism need to be comprehended with the different political trends of the colonial and postcolonial period. He examined “the meanings that different participants in the sectarian politics of the period- local Hindus and Muslims, nationalist spokesmen, colonial officials- attached to these politics.” Pandey does not overemphasise on socio-economic and political facts, rather exhorts scholars to understand how these ‘facts’ are presented as history by historians, administrators and politicians. The discourse of communalism, the concept, and the vocabulary itself is as much a part of its politics as any notion of real, lived experience of a particular interpretation of history (Pandey 1990).

1.3 Communalism in Pre-Independence India

During the 1857 revolt, also known as the ‘first war for independence’, the British were identified as the common enemy by the Hindus and Muslims, allowing them to present a unified opposition to the colonial oppressor. Once the revolt was thwarted, this communal unity against its rule was targeted by the British through the, now famous, ‘Divide and Rule’ policy. Religious identity became the primary marker for this ‘division’, used as a highly effective and influential mechanism to provide economic, political and other social benefits under the colonial administration.

The British attitude towards the Muslim community was at best of apathy and, at worst, one of outright hostility till 1870, since the community was perceived to be responsible for the revolt. With the crystallization of the 'divide and rule' policy, the colonial attitude towards the Muslims also changed. Several factors brought about this shift, a significant one being the rise of a distinct Indian nationalism that had the portents to threaten the colonial supremacy in India. The British efforts to suppress the emergent nationalist tendencies led to the cleaving the minority community from a potential unified nationalist rhetoric.. As a result, the early phase of nationalism was represented mainly by Hindus, Parsis and Christians. While British policies were not the sole reason for the lukewarm participation of Muslims, they surely ensured that the community remained antithetical. Towards this end, the British implemented policies promoting communal forces and, thus, dividing the national struggle (Chandra 1993).

At the time, British colonial administration was opened up for the 'natives, most of the positions went to the Hindus owing to better educational levels, that is, better 'Western' education. Being left of the economic, as consequently socio-political, benefits of this colonial association, the Muslims started demanding more inclusion in the government machinery, preferably through special reservation. Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan, an early nationalist was one of the strongest proponents of such Muslim demands and encouraged the spread of both Western education as well as affinity with the colonial rulers among Muslims; and in doing so drifted towards Communalism. Communal tendencies were also fostered through the skewed and narrow rewriting of Indian history, by various socio-religious reform organisations and movements, such as the Arya Samaj, Sanatan Dharam movement, Aligarh movement, Wahhabi movement and some other fringe groups. The Khilafat movement (1919-1924) was one mainstream, significant Islamic movement in India that contributed to the establishment of a distinct idea of 'separate Muslim interests'. The Sultan of Turkey, called the Ottoman Empire, was also the Caliph i.e. Khalifa, an Islamic politico-religious office created to lead the worldwide Muslim community, the *Ummah*, thus claiming allegiance of Muslims all over the world. With the defeat of Turkey in World War I, the victorious British and French divided the Ottoman territories and abolished the Monarchy in favour of a republic in Turkey. The Khilafat Movement was started to protect the status of the Caliphate as well as Turkish

territories, by pressuring the British with the threat of revolt of Muslims throughout its colonies. While the initial appeal of the movement in India was limited to the elites, it soon became the first religious political movement to involve common Muslims. The movement received the support of Congress leaders such as Nehru and Gandhi, who aligned the Non-Cooperation Movement with it. Along with major Congress leaders, several other political parties also extended support to this issue close to the Muslim masses the important steps taken by the movement are given below:

- a) No involvement in the Victory celebrations
- b) Boycotting of British commodities
- c) Non-cooperation Movement with the Government

Maulana Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali were the main Khilafat leaders, popularly known as the Ali brothers. They were even delivered strong protest from prisons and their speeches were circulated through different newspapers across the country, which actually had awakened Muslim community. The main epicentre of this movement was Mumbai where they used to organise conferences and gatherings to make their demands more heard (Sarkar 1991).

1.4 Jinnah, Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha

But at the same time, the Indian National Congress was enjoying a mass popularity due to its mass influencing speeches and secular outlooks. This had also sidelined Muslim League. As a result, when election happened, they won only 109 out of 492 reserved Muslim seats and only 4.8 percent of the overall Muslim votes. It demonstrates the clear rejection of communal politics by the Muslim League and its leaders. But in the year 1937, Muslim had a better electoral performance but the Hindu Mahasabha encountered some sort of fall in vote share. For instance, Hindu Mahasabha, in the election, had gained only 12 seats from 175 in Punjab. This forced the Hindu outfits to get re united under one umbrella and fight firmly for the next elections. But again the response of Congress party towards all communal outfits put them again in danger and it in return gave Congress a secular face among the Indian mass. Still, Congress was criticised for its

Hindu inclined policies and thus led to the Hindu ardent version and introduction of ‘two nation theory’.

The communal agenda was given a theoretical and ideological underpinning by the now infamous ‘two-nation theory,’ which suited the political machinations of not just the Muslim League, and its leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah, but also the Hindu Mahasabha. The theory, in the understanding of the Mahasabha, postulated that India, by virtue of being Hindu-majority, belongs to only Hindus and that the minorities, namely Muslims, had two choices- either to accept a subservient status to the majority community or find a new home. The Muslim League also promoted this theory to emphasise the implausibility of the two communities living under a single political rule, stating that a state of Pakistan was the only alternative to ensure the protection of the interest of Muslims (Sarkar 1991).

After the outbreak of World War II, the Muslim League was constantly promoted by the Colonial administration, first under Viceroy Linlithgow and then Wavell, to challenge the Congress claim of representing all Indians and its demand of handing over the reins of power to a government controlled by Indians. The Congress-League divide ensured that the League could hold a ‘veto’ over any concession the British could grant the Congress, alternately causing the British to withhold any commitment until the two parties resolved their differences.

The Hindu Mahasabha, just like the Muslim League, was not an organisation with unquestioned mass appeal. Since 1870, elite Hindus like zamindars, money lenders and other leaders had started an organization to provoke anti-Muslim opinions and simultaneously oppose the Congress. The sole purpose was to deny any place, social, religious or political, to Muslims in the country. The underlying thought that Hindus were first Hindus and then Indians was at the foundation of the organization later known as the Hindu Mahasabha and, later still, as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) (Sarkar 1989). The Hindu Mahasabha created a false impression of patriotism, using slogans invoking the ‘Bharat Mata’ i.e. Mother India and so on, which also gave the idea that they wanted a country without Muslims.

The communalism adopted/followed/ espoused by communal Muslims and Hindus, in other words Muslim communalism and Hindu communalism, had certain common

features. The two communalisms supported ideas and notions that were targeted at and supported by the elites of the two communities. Both communalisms were supported by the British, as both favoured the continuation of British rule. Both wanted a separate nation and, as a whole, strongly opposed the Indian National Congress. The two communalisms also shared a staunch hatred for each other. The political organisations that espoused these two forms of communalism followed a hierarchical system, and were strongly against democratic ethics.

Communalism was used by individuals and organisations of almost every religion to exacerbate and exploit religious as well as social, economic and political fault-lines. At the same time the communal movements themselves were affected by these fault-lines, especially the divisions and differences between the upper and lower classes and castes. The Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha deliberately did not allow the lower castes to participate in the communal programmes and policies.

1.5 Communalism in Bengal

The 19th century witnessed the rise and growth of communal tensions in Bengal. The inevitability of Muslim separatism shows that the socio-economic and politically advantageous position of the Hindus necessarily meant that the only recourse for Muslims was to articulate their political aspirations in the form of communalism and separatism. (Batbyal 2005). Here, the Partitions of 1905 and 1947 acted as significant postmarks, it had a big impact on the studies with the assertion that the Muslim society had been preparing itself and its politics for the Partition. Sufia Ahmad accepts that the idea of separatism was a deliberate choice of the Muslim community due to their consciousness of “their inferiority in education and economic strength.” According to her,

“The Muslims of Bengal long pursued the policy of loyalty to the British power ...Younger members of this community became dissatisfied with so passive and unfruitful a role. So rumours of impending political change spread in Morley and Minto's day, the Muslims of Bengal joined their forces with the Muslims of North India in approaching the Viceroy” (Ahmed 1974: 373).

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the Muslim community became very conscious of the disparity and the lag. This was reflected in popular literature which, devoid of western sources of inspiration, gradually developed a reactive mind against the new subjects and modes that Bengali Hindus produced.

The economic backwardness of Muslims compelled them to participate in communal riots. This argument was supported by Jayanti Mitra and Joya Chatterjee. Similarly, Rajat Roy argues,

“The economic backwardness of the generality of the Bengali Muslims and their subordination to the rich and influential Urdu speaking elite also hindered the possibility of any co-operation between the former and the Bengali Hindus..... The most eminent Hindu political leaders on their part, failed to understand the real feelings and grievances of the Muslim community and to appreciate the motives which guided their policy” (Ray 1979: 85, 165).

Sugata Bose has separated Bengal into three distinct areas according to the typology of their distinctive agrarian and social structures, and the characteristics of politics in these areas. He argues that “enmeshing of agrarian Bengal with the world market gradually led to the unmaking of that society; integration with the world market in its period of crisis also adversely affected the rural society and its economy. It had the effect of sapping the symbiosis that existed in rural society” (Bose 1986). This was particularly so in the 1930s and 1940s, when the slump in the world market also resulted in a credit squeeze in the rural economy and tended to break the symbiotic relations between the creditor and peasants. Bose locates the origin of the Kishorganj riot and, to an extent, the Noakhali-Tippera riot, in this break-up of the symbiosis. Some historians, like Bose, see communalism through the prism of communal riots. According to them, communal riots shape a community’s perception of boundaries given to it by symbols.

Joya Chatterjee has rightly pointed out that the Hindu *Bhadralok* class of Bengal dominated the nationalist politics in the province of east Bengal. According to Chatterjee, these politics that always had a narrow social base in Bengal and support from the masses, even in the heyday of Gandhi’s influence, was limited and sporadic. Except for a brief interlude during the Khilafat agitation, the Muslims of Bengal, who were more than half the population of the province, kept away from the movements led by *Bhadralok*.

However, despite being overwhelmingly *Bhadralok* in character, the Bengal Congress remained a political force to be reckoned with and during the 1920s and 1930s it exerted a powerful influence over the mainstream of Indian nationalism (Bandyopadhyay 2004).

In the twentieth century, the *Bhadralok* identity increasingly came to rest upon a perception of a cultured and enlightened class, heir to the hallowed traditions of the Bengal renaissance, and representatives of progress and modernity. The self-image informed *Bhadralok* politics justified the claim for representations by early Bengal nationalists. In later years, it also served the demand that Hindus should continue to dominate Bengal, and ultimately that Bengal be partitioned. The timidity that characterized nationalist mobilization in rural Bengal was an expression of the same predicament between nationalist and Hindu exclusivist tendencies. Notwithstanding the fact that it was led by the modern progressive and anglicised *Bhadralok*, nationalism drew inspiration, to quite a remarkable extent, from Hindu revivalist ideologies, emphasizing religious precepts (Chatterjee 1994).

Thus, Aurobindo Ghosh, educated in London and Cambridge, developed the philosophy of 'Political Vedanta' which preached the identification of the nation with the mother goddess Kali, while Bipin Chandra Pal and Sarala Debi, both from old Brahmo families, introduced Kali Puja and Shivaji festivals onto the nationalist agenda. *Bhadralok* leaders saw themselves as the standard-bearers of Hindu Bengal's destiny. Many of the idioms of Hindu communal discourse were thus recognized in nationalist discourses, as well as in the thought of the Bengal renaissance, and had been common currency since the beginning of the twentieth century. However, these idioms and symbolisms were subtly reworked in the following decades, their emphasis shifting from anti British to anti-Muslim themes.

Many political organization had been established by Hindus like the Bengal Land Holders Association (1837), the British Indian Association (1851), the *Jatiya Gaurab Sampadani Sabha* (1866), the *Hindu Mela* (1867), *Jatiya Sabha* or the National Society (1870), etc by 1885. While go begin with, the Muslims had little to do with those organizations, Hindu leaders of these organisations also failed to make any serious attempts to draw the support or win the sympathy of the Muslims. Bipin Chandra Pal

noted that in those days the Hindus regarded Muslims and Christians “as foreigners”. Similar attitudes were common amongst the Muslims towards the Hindus. The Indian National Congress had always had some Muslims participation and it stood for secular nationalism and demanded the introduction of democratic institutions. But the bulk of the Muslim community kept away from it, both elites and the masses, for example, Nawab Abdul Latif kept away from the Congress because he did not believe that the time was “opportune for forcing the hand of the Government” (Seal 1968).

The Hindu- Muslim differences served the British imperial interests. In 1905, Bengal was partitioned by Lord Curzon and many Bengalis, particularly Hindus, felt that it was a move to split the politically articulate Bengali speaking people. The partition greatly intensified nationalist feelings in Bengal and gave rise to the *Swadeshi* movement. Very few Muslims were involved in these movements and this failure of the Muslims to support the anti-partition movement seemed to antagonise the Hindus, sharpening the communal differences.

The annulment of partition (1911) gave a rude shock to Muslims in Bengal, which was followed by the Lucknow Pact (1916), denounced by a large section of Muslims in Bengal. They felt that the interests of Bengali Muslims had been sacrificed to reach a compromise with Hindus at a national level. The sudden end of the Non-Cooperation Movement, in February 1922, brought to an end the one major movement with cross-community participation, leading to a change in the political atmosphere of Bengal as in that of the rest of the country. Muslim society had been highly excited over the Khilafat issue and the failure of the movement created great resentment among Muslims. The centuries-old religious tolerance was forgotten and questions like ‘music before mosque’ and cow-killing came to influence the community’s relations with Hindus.

The Hindus in northern India started the *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* movements and the Muslims started the *Tabligh* and *Tanzeem* movements, leading to a further deterioration in inter-community relations in Bengal (Bhardwaj 2010). On 17 August 1936 Jinnah addressed a meeting of the Bengali Muslims leaders in the Kolkata Town hall. In the course of his negotiations with the Bengali Muslim leaders, Jinnah asked them to join and strengthen the Muslim League as the national organization for the Muslims of India.

However, he failed to persuade Fazlul Huq to merge his Krishak Praja Party with the Muslim League, as he was not willing to compromise on the most vital interest of Bengali Muslims- the abolition of Zamindari system without any compensation. Such a radical programme was not acceptable to Jinnah as he was not willing to alienate the support of the United Muslims Party, composed primarily of Zamindars and led by Nazim-ud-Din and Suhrawardy, which decided to join the League.

The acute tensions between the two communities manifested itself in a series of riots. Political polarizations, in terms of complete division between Hindus and Muslims were quite apparent by 1937. In the 1937 elections, Fazlul Huq formed a coalition government which later fell as the Muslim league withdrew its support. The Muslim League started attracting more supporters as the wave of communalism became stronger. In 1940, at its Lahore annual session, the Muslim League raised the demand for the partition of India and the creation of a state comprising Muslim-majority areas of India (Bandyopadhyay 2004).

In 1946, Jinnah started mobilizing the Muslims of Bengal on the name of religion and community and later on 16 August 1946 Jinnah announced "Direct Action Day," which led to one of the worst outbreaks of communalism in India. After the 3 June 1947 announcement of Lord Mountbatten to transfer power to two independent states, the Bengal legislative assembly met, on 20 June, in two sections, representing the Muslim majority and Hindu areas of province, to decide on the partition of Bengal. The Muslim majority section decided against partition by 106 votes to 35, the Hindu majority section voted in favour by 58 to 21 votes, thus ensuring the partition of Bengal (Chakrabarti 1990).

Thus, the colonial 'divide and rule' policy and the policies of the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, and the failure of other political parties to combat communal forces were the [political factors responsible for the growth of communalism in Bengal in the period between 1905 and 1947 (Bose 1998).

An analysis of East Pakistan, between 1947 and 1971, reveals, firstly, severe economic and political discrimination against East Pakistanis, and secondly, the snapping of communal bond of Islam that had been the basis for the creation of the two parts of

Pakistan. The emergence of linguistic nationalism was the prima facie factor behind the birth of Bangladesh. Islamisation of East Pakistan, and Arabicisation of the Bengali language and literature, ignited the linguistic nationalism. The history of united Pakistan from 1947 to 1971 is one of the constant conflicts between Pakistani nationalism and the emerging Bengali regionalism or sub-nationalism (Muhith 1978).

Due to the suppressive policy of united Pakistan government, the Bangladeshi movement emerged and strengthened, on the basis of four pillars of Mujibism- Bengali nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism. Although independent Bangladesh focused on the secularism aspect to begin with, but the 1975 assassination of Mujibur Rahman, led to the replacement of pre-liberation 'Bengali' nationalism by a 'Bangladeshi; nationalism- which replaced the secular principles of the 1972 Constitution in favour of religious orientations. After the death of Mujib, the political-military ruling elite started using Islam in a bid to legitimize their leadership.

Mujib had on many occasions emphasised that the brand of secularism being promoted in Bangladesh could not be equated with atheism and, to prove the compatibility of public secularism with personal piety, he even began to use Islamic symbolism and quotations in his public conduct and speeches. He declared his pride at being a Muslim and that Bangladesh was the second largest Muslim state in the world. As if to send a strong message regarding his adherence to Islam, Mujib was seen leading a Munajaat (prayer) in November 1972. Mujib also used Quranic verses and Islamic terms of greetings more regularly, viz. Insha Allah (Only if Allah wishes) and Bismillah (in the name of Allah), as compared to his earlier rhetoric of secular nationalistic greetings such as Joy Bangla (Victory to Bengal) (Chakrabarti 1995).

After banning the Islamic Academy in 1972, Mujib revived it soon afterwards and upgraded it to a foundation to propagate Islamic ideals. To meet the growing Islamic aspirations of the people, Mujib also increased the annual budgetary allocation for Madrassas; from 2.5 million Taka in 1971 to 7.2 million Taka in 1973. However, the changes in the State's approach to religion were perceived to be too little and belated, and

Mujib was accused of plotting to rob the sense of identity of the Bengali Muslims which kept them united (Rahman 1979).

Among the other pro-right gestures which established the self-contradiction of the Awami League was Mujib's visit to Lahore to be a part of the Islamic Summit in 1974 and his role at the Islamic Foreign Ministers' conference held in Jeddah to initiate the process of setting up an Islamic Development Bank.

Bangladesh emphasised its Islamic heritage to maintain a special link with countries of the Islamic world. However, concomitant to such efforts, Bangladesh also started witnessing the resurgence of reactionary organisations and Islamic fundamentalism, as *Jamaat-e-Islami*, *Islamic Chatro Shibir* and *Islamic Okiyo Jote* strengthened their position and prestige in the political sphere. *Jamaat-e-Islami* focused on four-point programme inspired by the *Tabligh* and *Tanzeem* movements- *Tabligh and Dawah*, *Tanzeem and Tarbiah*, *Islah al-Ijtimayee* and *Islah al Hukumah*. There was a clear impact of communal politics of early twentieth century in the politics of newly-independent Bangladesh.

Soon after Mujib's death there was a perceptible shift in the emphasis from syncretistic, linguistic nationalism and secular ideology to the search for a new identity shaped by distinctions such as "us" vs. "them". Reflective of this trend, ancient texts were researched by historians to highlight the differences between the Indian part of Bengal and the contemporary Bangladesh notwithstanding the fact that both of them belonged to the same geographic area, shared the same written and spoken language, had the same dietary habits and living conditions. Curiously, few scholars even came up with the theory that there were two Bengals, and Bengal in historical and cultural terms is not monolithic.

In 1977, under Ziaur Rehman's military dictatorship Article 8(1) of the Constitution, which proclaimed secularism as the fundamental principle of state policy was replaced by a proclamation asserting "absolute trust and faith in Almighty Allah" (Hashmi 1994). The exodus of Hindus in 1947 was repeated once again after the 1971 political fiasco. General H. M. Ershad, the leader of the Military administration, also imposed conservative Islamic ideas. The eighth amendment of the constitution was the most

harmful step taken by him, which declared Islam as the official state religion. This declaration, and the ongoing process of Islamisation, brought immense pressure on the religious minorities in Bangladesh, resulting in an exodus of minority across the border into India (Jalal 1995).

The idea of secularism in South Asia is distinct from the Western conception of secularism or the French principle of *laicete*. In the subcontinent, secularism primarily ensures the freedom of an individual to practice her/his faith without the state's interference or discrimination. This interpretation of secularism was only officially respected by the government in Bangladesh, while in reality religious discrimination became rampant after the death of Mujib. The target of discrimination was religious and ethnic minorities, which as it is lack the social and political capital to protect their interests. These included the Ahmadis and other Shias, Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists (Chatterjee 1982).

The democratic era began in Bangladesh in earnest from the 1990s, but the trend of religious extremist politics did not change. Although both the major parties, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Awami League, have played the religious card, but compared to the BNP, the Awami League still tried to uphold the four pillars of Mujibism. BNP's latest tenure in power, from 2001 to 2006, witnessed the spread of religious politics and the growth of terrorism, to the extent that Bangladesh came to be associated with such terms as the 'cocoon of terror' and 'the next Afghanistan' (Karlekar 2005).

Minorities in Bangladesh have consistently faced mistreatment and discrimination at the hands of the Islamic extremists as well as the government, especially the BNP governments. Discriminations towards the Hindus, specifically, intensified immediately after the 2001 electoral victory of the BNP, and the establishment of the BNP-led four-party coalition government, which had a major participation of two Islamic parties (Linter 2002). Discriminations and violent attacks continued through till 2006.

The electoral victory of Awami League in 1996 and 2009 showed that the 1971 elements are still alive in Bangladesh. The 2014 elections have been in controversy as BNP did not participate in the electoral process, leading to the return of Awami league to power.

Despite the BNP and its Islamist coalition partners being away for power for more than a decade, religious fundamentalist forces remain active in Bangladeshi society and politics. Consequently, attacks against the minorities have continued, although the intensity and extent has reduced since the early years of the twenty first century. Nonetheless, minorities and their religious places, especially Hindu places of worship, have increasingly come under attack. According to the Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Unity Council (BHBCOP), in just the one-year period of March 2009-May 2010, at least 150 acts of repression were perpetrated against the minority communities, including land seizures, arson, rape, and killings. Such incidents have been reported from numerous districts such as Chittagong, Bariasl, Tangail, Pabna, Munshiganj, etc. In recent years, secular bloggers have also become the targets of religious extremists. For instance, the US-based secular blogger Avijit Roy was murdered in 2014 while on a visit to Bangladesh.

In February 2013, the historically infamous Noakhali religious riots of 1946, were repeated, marking a landmark in the communal politics in Bangladesh. It is not a coincidence that after 60 years, riots again took place in the same area. While the state of democratic values and institutions is still very fragile in Bangladesh, the politics of religious fundamentalism has continued grow legitimising religious forces and fringe elements which trace their history back to the communal period of 1905 to 1947. Hence, the forces unleashed by the colonial 'divide and rule' policy and the narrow exclusivist policies of the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha have continued to impact political development of Bangladesh since 1971. Fundamentalist forces still draw inspiration from that period and Bangladesh has, consequently, continued to face communal violence.

2 Review of literature

The review of literature is divided into four themes: first, the rise and growth of Islamic consciousness in the Bengal delta, second, the impact of British colonialism, third, the role of socio-religious reforms movements and political organizations and, fourth, the

implications of communalism for the political development in Bangladesh. **2.1 Growth of Islamic Consciousness in Bengal**

On the growth of Islamic consciousness in the Bengal delta, Eaton (1993) has given a detailed account. He attempts to compile the events and causes that led to the rise and growth of Islamic consciousness in Bengal. Eaton has addressed complex issues such as the presence in Bengal of the world's second largest ethnic Muslim population after the Arabs, that too specifically in the eastern part of Bengal. He also focussed on the role of conversion and immigration in this process, and the Social attitude towards conversion among the Bengalis.. In the author's view, Islam was successful in Bengal because it was flexible and able to transform the environment in a creative way continuously reinterpreting and readapting to the particular structural environments.

Bangladeshi scholars have also worked on the growth of Islamic consciousness in Bengal. Farooq (1990) discusses the cultural and historical growth Islam in the Indian subcontinent. He draws a historical background of Bengal delta and gives a detailed account of the Islamic identity in formation in Bengal, from the Sultanate period till the modern times.

The rise of Islamic consciousness in Bengal has a long history. Bhardwaj (2010) focuses on the idea of Bangladesh, based on socio-cultural, linguistic and religious identities that have been distinctively shaped by the history of the Bengal delta. This work examines the evolution of syncretic culture in Bengal delta, and analyses the growth of Islamic consciousness. According to him, Bengal has been the representative of syncretic culture. The evolution and expansion of Islam in Bengal was because of Muslim's new farming technology and egalitarian view of society.

Chaudhary (1977) analyses numerous theories regarding the rise and growth of Islamic consciousness in Bengal and emphasized that since conversion is an action of the mind more than anything else, the background for such mass conversion in Bengal were based on the psychological aspects of the society. He further argues that such a background was produced by the socio-religious factors prevailing in the society. Many converts were gained by the Sufis through their sympathy and readiness to serve the downtrodden population.

2.2 British Colonial Policies

Chandra (1989) sees communalism as a modern phenomenon. For him, it was a middle-class, petty bourgeoisie phenomenon, a product of the unique socio-economic and political situation of colonial India. He argues that communalism instils a belief among its practitioners that owing to a shared common religion, its followers also share common socio-political and economic interests. He finds that the emergence of communalism is located in the context of the impact of British colonial policies, and the response it evinced from different Indian social groups, strata and classes.

Economic disparity was also a significant contributor to discontent among the Muslims of East Bengal. As Chatterjee (1982) argues, in Dhaka division and East Bengal proper, there existed a rich Hindu landlord community belonging to a higher social category than the poor Muslim peasantry, the *paschima*, i.e., Marwari moneylenders, who were active in jute-growing districts of Bengal. Cumulatively, there existed a scenario of political confrontation developed between the urban Hindu landlords, traders and professionals, and the rural Muslim peasantry. This sometimes created a situation of communal riots, as in Pabna in 1926. In the 1930s, growing communalism ensured that Muslim masses in Bengal decisively moved away from the Congress and the communal problem became severe.

Muslims lagged behind the Hindus because of socio-economic and political policies of the British. Hasan (1980) argues that relative communal harmony, as witnessed during the Khilafat and the Non-Cooperation Movements, started disappearing from the mid-1920s, and was replaced by communal antagonisms, frequently leading to riots and pogroms.

From the empirical evidence it is well-founded that deprivation and deliberate underdevelopment has fuelled the factions that exist in the society. Engineer (1996) argues that capitalist development with its imbalanced growth was the major cause of communal problems. Dutta (1949) epitomizes the whole idea when he asserts that “behind the communal antagonism lies the social and economic questions.” Authors like Morris de Morris (1968) argued that deindustrialization, lack of competitiveness and

other economic hurdles faced by the Indians because of the British-imposed economic system led to underdevelopment.

Some Bangladeshi social scientist also focused on the impact of British colonial policy on East Bengali society. Farooq (1990) mentioned that not all the Muslims liked the idea of partition in 1947 on religious grounds and many were torn between the two forces of religious fanaticism and Indian nationalism, leading to the fact that about one third of undivided India's Muslim population stayed back in India creating a situation. This situation also created social problems and communal riots.

Another well-known Bangladeshi academician Muhith (1978) describes the role of policies of colonial forces, first British and then Pakistani, behind the emergence of Bangladesh as a separate nation. He asserts that the basic reason for the partition of India was the misunderstanding, verging on hostility, between the two major religious communities of India, Hindus and Muslims which was created by the British colonial policies.

2.3 Role of Socio-Religious Reform Movements and Political Organisations

Both Hindu and Islamic socio-religious reformist movements led to the consolidation of distinct religious and cultural identities among the two communities and later formed the tendency of communalism in Bengal.

Chatterji (1994) focuses on the Hindu *Bhadralok* class, who dominated nationalist politics in the province of east Bengal. She writes that these politics had narrow social base in Bengal, and little support from the masses. The Muslims of Bengal, who were more than half the population of the province, kept away from the movement led by the *Bhadralok*. The book has viewed the background to the partition of Bengal in a rather unique way, and has put forward the thesis that the Hindu *Bhadralok* class was no less responsible for the partition, than the Muslims of Bengal.

Tracing the growth of communalism in India, Vanaik (1990) observes that the Indian Renaissance was the chief culprit as it was embedded with strong Hindu symbols. He

calls Indian nationalism Hindu nationalism. Counterpoising this Hindu nationalism and the post-independence Indian state to the European nation states, Vanaik draws the conclusion that while European nation-states, prior to their emergence, went through a process of secularization, the Indian state, which came into being with the culmination of the national movement, inherited the predominance of religion which had marked the national movement.

Bangladeshi historians lament that no serious efforts were taken by the prominent Hindu leaders regarding opposing communal forces. Ahmed (1974) argues that the Muslims of Bengal retained their indigenous cultural background which tied them closely to the non-Muslim populations. In fact, the characteristic feature of the Bengali Muslims has been their isolation, but towards the end of the nineteenth century, the tendency of a separate identity was developed in Bengal. Later nineteenth century renaissance Hinduism and renaissance Islam suffered from inner contradictions. The Hindu leaders did not make any serious attempt to draw the support or win the sympathy of the Muslims, while the newly emerging Muslim middle class of Bengal was not willing to collaborate with the Hindus in any political venture, neither the Indian Association nor the Congress. Socio-economic backwardness in the Muslim society of Bengal and their subjugation played an immense role in the rise and growth of communalism in Bengal between 1905- 1947.

Ahmed (1974) discusses the socio-political conditions of Islam in the Bengal delta. She focuses on factors such as educational and economic standards, social and political activities, the 1905 Bengal partition and the evolution of syncretic culture in the Bengal delta. The author asserts that while the Muslims of Bengal felt distinct from the Hindus, they also felt distinct from Muslims of the rest of India. Ahmad accepts the idea of separatism as a deliberate choice of the Muslim community, due to the consciousness of their inferiority in education and economic strength.

A wide range of available literature on communalism explicitly focuses on the polarization factor in fuelling communal tensions. Sarkar (1991) makes a clear distinction between the Bengali Muslims and Muslims in Bengal. Whereas the Muslims in Bengal necessarily included a sizeable number of Urdu speaking non- Bengali Muslims, residing mainly in metropolitan, industrial and urban areas, the Bengali Muslims, besides being

the overwhelmingly majority of their community and permanent residents of the province, spoke Bengali as their mother-tongue. This distinction has an important bearing on the study of the Bengali Muslims. The study identifies the emergence, by the 1920s, of common, secular and somewhat class oriented platform of Bengal tenants, *Nikhil Banga Praza Samiti*, as a rival to the Zamindar-oriented Bengal congress. The name was consciously Bengali and avoided any Urdu words. This arguably fortifies the assumption that the new organization was an intended vehicle of the Bengali Muslims to assert their dual identity as Muslims and as Bengalis so that they could thwart the threat of both Hindu and Non-Bengali Muslim dominations. The author gives a detail account of the politicization of Bengali Muslims between years the 1912-1929.

The role of political organisations was not less important in the growth of communalism in Bengal. Rajat ray (1984) argues that communalism was also shared by the prominent leaders of the Hindu community, because even “the most eminent Hindu political leaders on their part, failed to understand the real feelings and grievances of the Muslim community and to appreciate the motives which guided their policy” (Ray 1979: 85). Here, the zeal of the Hindus “for democracy and nationalism”, comes in for criticism because, as Maitra argues (along with R. C. Mazumdar), this zeal also made them forget the large section of people who refused to “accept these ideals” for “very good reasons”. In addition, the favouring of the Muslim community by the British also became a factor in the resistance by the Hindus.

Communalism and communal politics have been conversely projected as a struggle for power, so as to impose one set of ideas and culture over others. Dixit (1974) finds communalism a modern phenomenon, a political doctrine that utilises religious-cultural differences and awareness, and turns these into communalism. This deliberate choice, however, is not made by the community, but by the elite of that community. Thus, “communalism is a consciously conceived political doctrine of one section of traditional elites.” (Dixit 1974: 3)

A major post-partition work on the topic is that of Desai (2005) who defined communalism as the disguised expression of contestations between the vested interests of different faiths. It also was the form within which the struggle of the professional classes

of different communities over administrative benefits was carried on. Therefore, in the final analysis, communal strife was a middle-class inspired professional struggle.

The parties like the Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha were enormously responsible for the rise and growth of communalism. Ahmed (2004) asserts that the Muslim League came to represent the interests of Zamindars and English-educated Muslim middle class. Sen (2008) argues that the League was the important medium through which the ideology of communalism penetrated down within the society of Bengal. In fact, the League was the main culprit behind the Calcutta and Noakhali riots. Bipan Chandra, in *India's Struggle for Independence* argues that the Mahasabha was actually in the phase of liberal communalism till 1947. Liberal communal groups and leaders focussed on separate communal rights, safeguards, reservations, etc., rather than a separate homeland. They accepted a single nation, under a unified political rule, as the ultimate goal as also the concept of the ultimate common interests of all communities. This form of Liberal communalism also had a narrow social base, comprising only of the upper and middle class. The Hindu Mahasabha did not have any radical aggressive front as Muslim League, which had the Muslim National Guard. However, despite being a part of liberal communalist tradition, Hindu Mahasabha also contributed to the spread of communalism in Bengal.

Political leaders of Indian National Congress did a lot regarding maintaining religious harmony between Hindus and Muslims but they did not necessarily target the socio-economic base of communalism. Chakrabarty (2004) discusses the role of Bengal provincial Congress and points out that factionalism was the main characteristic of BPCC. He indicates some shortcomings of BPCC like its tilt towards the upper castes, stress on urban politics and failure to get support in East Bengal. Chakrabarty argues that the Bengali middle class failed to form a provincial alliance against imperialistic forces.

By acceptance of League as the representative of Indian Muslims, the Congress had lost its trust-worthiness among them and the Pacts with Muslim elites reflected the side-lining of the Muslim masses. Agreements with the communal leaders had negative impact on the legitimacy of nationalist leaders like Maulana Azad and Asaf Ali. The period immediately succeeding the Bengal famine of 1943 witnessed the entrenchment of

communal politics, culminating in the 1946 riots of Calcutta and the violence of Noakhali. Batbyal (2005) discussed the clashes between nationalism and communalism in 1930s and 1940s.

2.4 Implications of the Communalism for the Political Development in Bangladesh

The period from 1947 to 1971 was one of development of linguistic nationalism countering the communal politics. However, during the reign of the military regime, Islamist politics started spreading again. In the democratic era, the BNP strongly supports religious politics, continuing to believe in the communal ethos of 1947.

The tenures of Begum Khaleda Zia have been known for the role played by religious extremism in politics. Linter (2002) focused on Bangladeshi politics turning on the path of religious extremism in this period and described the developments during the military rules. Karlekar (2006) examines how the Islamists forces were systematically infiltrating in key political and administrative positions within the government and an Islamist quasi-state was established within the ‘official’ state. This presented a very real and imminent threat of Bangladesh emerging as an operational base for Islamists, including Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, in the region.

This spread of an extremist influence of religion in politics was furthered by a confusion of identity as Bangladesh squandered its secular beginnings to turn towards religious fundamentalism. Millam (2009) tackles this crisis of national identity, and says that Bangladesh could not succeed in carving out an unambiguous because of its inability to reconcile the contesting “visions of secular and Islamic identities”. However, he also asserts that, Bangladeshi society is not nearly as Islamised as Pakistan.

Riyaz (2003) explains that the rise of Islam as a political ideology and Islamists as prominent actors have its roots in the legitimacy crisis of military rulers of the country, but the acquiescence of the secular parties has allowed this process to continue during and after the military rule.

Ghosh (2005) argues that Bangladesh's fundamentalist organisations aim to destroy the secular parliamentary democratic traditions of the country and establish a state based on *sharia*. Mohsin (1984) also focuses on the religious politics in Bangladesh; asserting that the state has failed to protect its minorities as the political elite whips up religious fanaticism for its own vested interests.

Similar arguments are given by Banu (1992), who states that the political role of Islam in each period was largely determined by its historical and socio-economic settings and perceptions of various Muslim groups, and that the political elites have always used Islam as a tool to fulfil their interest. Like the power elites of Pakistan, military rulers of Bangladesh used Islam to gain popularity and legitimacy.

Hence, post-1971, Bangladesh has witnessed the use of religion for political gains, in both the military dictatorial and the democratic era. Exclusionary and reactionary interpretations of religion have been used as political tools. The current communal politics of Bangladesh is still retrospectively trying to legitimise itself on the basis of the political arguments drawn from the period 1905 to 1947.

3. Definition, Rationale and the Scope of the Study

Communalism is basically an ideology; rioting and other forms of violence are its contingent or conjuncture forms. The study of the rise and growth of communalism in Bengal is undertaken to understand the roots of communalism in South Asia in general and Bangladesh in particular. Due to the British colonial policy of 'divide and rule,' socio-religious reform movements and economic backwardness among Muslims, a wave of communalism spread in the Bengal delta. Different political organizations were also responsible for the growth of communalism in Bengal and it impacted the religious politics of Bangladesh.

The British authorities, in the name of administrative convenience, divided the united Bengal into two parts; East Bengal and West Bengal. The former constituted a Muslim majority whereas the latter had a dominance of Hindus. Although many Bengalis opposed this step, and started the *Swadeshi* movement, ultimately these factors increased the wave of communalism, as Hindu mythology and symbolism, like Kali Puja, was mixed with nationalism, antagonising the Muslims. This was not a co-incidence that the

Muslim League was founded in Dhaka in the very next year. Due to the economic and educational policy of the British, Muslims lagged behind the Hindus. They became marginalised, especially in the sphere of employment, while they had fresh historical memories of being powerful, both politically and economically. Muslims opted English education very late and ‘Macaulization’ of education pushed them back.

Socio-religious reform movements, such as *Faraizi* and *Wahhabi* movements, also paved the way for the spread of communalism in Bengal. Similarly, the Arya Samaj movement emphasized on re-establishment of the Vedic era elements. Both types of religious reform and revivalist movements hardly emphasized on secular and integrative approach. Accordingly, they compartmentalized the two societies into two entirely different segments. For example, *Tablighi* and *Tanzeem* movements of Muslims and *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* movements of Hindus were completely endeavoured to regain and re-establish their value systems over each-other. These factors consolidated the religious gap between Hindus and Muslims and resulted in the partition of 1947. Since 1947 to 1971, linguistic nationalism emerged in East Pakistan and Bangladesh was formed on the basis of linguistic nationalism and secular ideologies. But the scenario changed in the post 1975 Bangladesh and it went back to the path of religious politics which has since been getting retrospectives from the communal politics of Bengal during 1905 to 1947. The rationale of the study lies behind the explanation and the analytical reasoning of these factors.

The present study, therefore, helps to explore communal violence from the context of historical background as provided by the study. People become aware of communalism only when violence breaks out. It is very important to bring out the different elements that constitute communal ideology and to explain its socio-economic and political roots. Once communalism is seen as an ideology, it becomes clear that it cannot be suppressed by force, for no ideology can be suppressed by force or through administrative proscribing. Ideology has to be overcome at the level of ideas. This study attempts to understand the roots of communalism in Bengal so that the basic factors behind its rise and the growth can be traced. In doing so, it will help understand the current scenario of communal politics in Bangladesh.

There is a need to study the root causes of communalism in Bengal because it impacts the present and future socio-religious scenario in the whole region. The scope of the study lies in providing a detailed explanation such contexts and in understanding the present communal based issues in Bangladesh.

4. Research Questions

1. What were the causes and processes of the growth of Islamic consciousness in Bengal?
2. How did the British colonial policies pave the way to create gap between the Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal?
3. What was the role of political organisations in propagating communalism in Bengal?
4. How far the socio-religious reform movements were responsible behind the rise and the growth of communalism in Bengal?
5. How did the religious elements play an immense role in the politics of Bangladesh during military regime?
6. How far has religion played a crucial role in the politics of Bangladesh during democratic era?
7. How do external dynamics impact the communal politics of Bangladesh?

5. Hypotheses

1. British colonial policies had communalised the Bengali society and polarized it on socio-religious and economic lines.
2. Socio-religious reform movements among Hindus and Muslims aggravated the communal politics in Bengal.
3. Political parties have used ethno-religious elements as a tool to meet the political ends in Bangladesh.

6. Research Methodology

Since the study is primarily on the historical aspects of the growth of communalism in Bengal, the important method would be historical. As the growth of communalism in Bengal was the result of the culmination of long historical process, this method helps to find out the roots which played an immense role. For a better understanding and explanation of facts, analytical method is also used. These methods are useful to enrich the present understanding on this study. The study carries out a deductive approach. This research is analytical and descriptive, based on both primary and secondary source available on the subject. Primary sources will include various official dialogues, reports, diplomatic briefings, and discussion about the growth of communalism in Bengal during 1905 to 1947 and its impact on the politics of Bangladesh. Secondary sources will include books, articles, journals, newspaper, and magazine. Internet sources will also be used to enrich the study.

A substantial part of the present study makes use of the archival sources based at National Archives of India and the Nehru Memorial Library in India and state archives based in Bangladesh. The quality of the present research is largely dependent on the faithful and proper use of Bengali language sources, which required language proficiency. Hence, the researcher made use of language related assistance and tools for the same. The study being a historical one also required reference to innumerable South Asian archives both online and offline set up by several universities in India and abroad. Added to it several newspaper archives both online and in print came in handy.

7. Chapters

7.1 Introduction: This chapter will give a theoretical background and historical overview regarding the rise and growth of communalism in Bengal. The chapter will discuss the theoretical part of the politics of communalism.

7.2 Growth of Islamic consciousness in Bengal and the British Colonial Policies:

This chapter analyses the rise and growth of Islamic consciousness in Bengal. The chapter deals with the roots of political consciousness in Muslims of Bengal and the factors behind their separate consolidation.

This chapter also discusses the British colonial policies which were responsible behind the break between Hindus and Muslims. British administrative, economic and educational policies played an enormous role in the rise and growth of discontent in both the sections and the wave of communalism extended massively in Bengal. Curzon's Partition of Bengal (1905) was the landmark in terms of the rise and growth of communalism in Bengal and later resulted in the Calcutta and Noakhali riots.

Furthermore the chapter also analyses the impact of socio-religious reform movements on the growth of communalism in Bengal.

The study of communalism in Bengal would have remained incomplete without a discussion on the role of political organisations and the elites in the growth of communalism. The chapter, hence, also examines the role of Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha and Indian National Congress and other political organisations in the growth of communalism in Bengal.

7.4 Ethno-Linguistic Nationalism: 1947-1975

This chapter discusses the ethno-linguistic factors which were created Bengali nationalist notions in East Pakistan. The economic-political-cultural and military subjugation of the East Pakistan by the West Pakistan started after 1947, imposing of Urdu, denial of Bengali script and language forced East Pakistan to revolt and later on the revolt changed into the Liberation war. The chapter deals with the era of the secular and syncretic Bengali culture and pride since 1947 to 1975.

7.6. Role of Religion in the Political Development in Bangladesh during Military Regime:

The chapter deals with the impacts of communalism in post-independence political discourse. It deals with the relevance and legacy of communalism as Bangladesh has been engaged in the debate pertaining to communalism vs. secularism in the socio-political spheres. During 1975 to 1990, Bangladesh faced an extremist religious political agenda. General Ziaur Rehman and General H. M. Ershad used religion as a political tool and threatened the Bengali harmonious and secular culture.

7.7. Role of Religion in the Political Development in Bangladesh during Democratic Era:

The democratic era has witnessed the role of religion in the political development in Bangladesh. The BNP won the first two election on the basis of religious politics. The Awami League, supports the 1971 movement elements based on the secular Bengali culture. The ideological differences between both the parties has contributed to the secularism debate. The chapter deals with the religious politics during democratic era.

7.8. Role of External Factors in the Growth of Communal Politics in Bangladesh:

This chapter deals with the external factors, like the role of Islamic countries, in formulating domestic and external policies of Bangladesh, as well as the role of Bangladesh in Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), international funding to terrorist organizations and religious institutions, and Bangladesh's response towards world politics and vice-versa.

7.9. Conclusion:

This chapter will summarise the findings regarding the growth of communalism in Bengal during 1905 to 1947 and its implications for the political development in Bangladesh.

Chapter 2

Growth of Islamic Consciousness in Bengal and the British Colonial Policy

1. Introduction

This chapter analyses the rise and growth of Islamic consciousness in Bengal and examines the roots of political consciousness among the Muslims of Bengal and the factors behind their separate consolidation. This chapter also discusses the British colonial policies which were responsible for the differences between the Hindus and Muslims. British administrative, economic and educational policies played an enormous role in the rise and growth of discontent in both communities and the extension and spread of communalism to Bengal. Curzon's Partition of Bengal (1905) was the watershed event which created the political scenario for the emergence and spread of communalism in Bengal.

In the pre-modern era, Bengal, like other areas within the Ganges basin, was inhabited by indigenous, most likely animist, people who worshiped their own deities. These people depended on shifting cultivation system for their subsistence (Bhardwaj 2010). The major ethnic group comprised of Chakma, Marmas, Tipperas, Mros, etc., later collectively known as the non-Bengalis.

In the early Vedic period, Aryans came from north-western part of the Indian subcontinent, which influenced indigenous people by introducing Brahminical socio-cultural beliefs. According to anthropologists and archaeologists, the earlier inhabitants of Bengal were composed of diverse racial elements, such as, Aryan, Alpine, Dravido-Munda and Mongolians. In Vedic period, Aryans penetrated in this area and the Aryan civilization and territory advanced rapidly. They introduced new and innovative agricultural technology and influenced indigenous people. Later, the Mauryan Empire expanded its influence into eastern Bengal. A Mauryan inscription has been found at Pundra in Bogra district. The western part of Bengal, the current Indian state of West Bengal, achieved some importance during the Maurya period because of the Tamralipti port. Mauryans also introduced Buddhist elements in Bengal. After the decline of Bengal, Pundra remained an important Buddhist site. The delta area was organized in the Kingdom of Samtata, with its headquarter in the Commila district. Samtata later came under the Gupta Empire's influence, but not direct rule. This kingdom finds mention in an inscription of Samudragupta. In the later Gupta period, the Palas are best known for their strong support to Buddhism, and opposition to the Brahminical caste system. By the middle of twelfth century, however, the Palas had lost control to the Senas (Majumdar 2003).

The Sena rulers, like Laxman Sena expanded their influence to a vast area. The Senas were strong supporters of the Brahminical system. After the attack of Bakhtiyar Khilji, the remaining vestiges of Pala and Sena influence soon disappeared. However, the most important legacy left by these rules was a syncretic culture based on the precepts of Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism and later Islam.

The strong Brahminical and Buddhist cultural influences on Bengal remained till the 1204 AD conquest of Bakhtiyar Khilji. The initial phase of Islamic consciousness in Indian subcontinent began in 712 AD with the conquest of Sindh and Multan by Muhammad bin Qasim al-Thaqafi. The north-western part of the subcontinent became the first region to come under the Islamic sphere of influence, as well as bearing the brunt of conquests. The seventeen military expeditions carried out by Mahmud of Ghazni during 1000-1030 AD is a case of point. At the same time, these expeditions can be considered as the second phase of Islamic engagement with India. The influence of these expeditions extended all the way till Gujarat in the south and Kannauj in the east, thus bringing these regions in contact with the ideals and principles of Islam. The third phase started in 1192 AD with the second Battle of Tarain when Muhammad Ghuri defeated the Prithviraj Chauhan led forces and established the first permanent Muslim rule in India with Delhi as his capital. In this phase, eastern Indian came in contact with Islam when Bakhtiyar Khilji invaded the Lakhnawati Kingdom and defeated the Sena King Lakshmana Sena. Formal Muslim rule in Eastern India was established in 1204 AD and henceforth, these regions started interacting with Islamic practices and cultural features (Majumdar 2003).

Initial English authors opinions about forceful Islamisation of Bengal were challenged by the view that Islam brought by the Muslim merchants of Arab and Persia. There was another argument that followers of Buddhism of the region converted at mass level into Islam because of the alleged suppression of Sena dynasty. Some scholars also argued that the Sufis, who were known for their simple lifestyle and some miraculous activities, played very crucial role in the mass conversion of local rural people. According to Richard M. Eaton, because of the lands reclamation at the sideways of Sundarbans areas and

swamplands at the coasts of the Bay of Bengal, the farmers ‘of the region got involved in economic affairs around the Muslim spiritual leaders. This phenomenon actually led to the concentrating Muslims in majority number in this eastern region of South Asia’ (Eaton 1996).

Thus, it has been argued that the Khilji conquest was not the first contact this region had with Islam and that traders, merchants, Sufis and sailors had already ensured an initial, though limited, interaction with the tenets of Islam. Thus it is argued that “when Muhammad Bakhtiyar appeared before the gates of Nawdia, the capital of the Sena dynasty of Bengal, with only eighteen horsemen, the people guarding the gates of the city mistook them for a party of Muslim horse traders and opened the gates. This certainly suggests that Muslim horse traders were a familiar sight in Bengal before the conquest” (Eaton 1996). If not the first contact with Islam, Bakhtiyar Khilji can still be credited with inaugurating Muslim rule in Bengal, although large scale conversions still took centuries to occur.

There is a contentious debate on the emergence of an Islamic consciousness in Bengal. Eaton argues that the existing theories explaining the emergence of Islam in Bengal can be summarised into four basic arguments:

1. Immigration Theory, which asserts that the Muslims of Bengal were the descendants of Muslims who migrated to this region from the traditional Islamic areas of the time, such as Iran, either overland or across the seas;
2. ‘Religion of the Sword’, which states that Hindus were forcefully converted to Islam by Muslim rulers;
3. ‘Religion of Patronage’, asserting that conversion to Islam was accepted by the native population to receive secular favours, such as tax-relief, official patronage, etc. from the ruling class; and,
4. ‘Religion of Social Liberation’, which claims that the lower castes embraced Islam to escape the discriminations inherent in the rigid Hindu caste system (Eaton 1996).

All these arguments have been deemed inadequate by Eaton as they fail to fully explain all the historic and social aspects of Islam's spread to Bengal. For instance, the critical role played by the *pirs* (Sufi saints) in the spread of Islam in Bengal has not been adequately addressed by the above-mentioned theoretical arguments. Joya Chatterji addressed this issue when she asserts that although Islam emerged in Bengal in the 12th century, it could expand to the masses only in the 17th and 18th century with the arrival of the saints during the Mughal period (Chatterjee 1994). These saints were pioneers, who cleared up the marshy forest lands of the delta and started rice cultivation. The Sufis had Mughal state patronage in these land reclamation efforts, which gave them the legal ownership of lands. These saints became known for their Islamic teachings as well as their "power over nature" inspiring the local populations to build shrines in their memory, along the mosques the Sufis had built in these reclaimed lands. Over time, these shrines and mosques emerged as the hub of local social and cultural interactions as well as the nuclei of new communities that emerged in the reclaimed lands, in some cases emerging as strong cults centred on the legend of powerful Sufi saints. Such Pir cults, essentially mystical, ritualistic and non-political, played an influential role in the emergence and spread of popular Islam in Bengal. The popular religion emerging from such Sufi influence retained the core tenets of Islam (the five pillars of Islam) while incorporating local cultural traits, thus making the new religion more easily accessible to the local population. Sufis prepared a soft background for the expansion of Islam and the Islamic identity in the Bengal delta. The egalitarian nature of Islam and its liberalizing influence on an inequitable social system, coupled with the aura of association with the ruling class, secured large number of converts from all strata of Bengali society. The Sufis not only preached Islam but also influenced local religious beliefs and contributed to the spread of knowledge. There were historical reasons for the emergence of separate cultural and linguistic consciousness among the Bengali Muslims which differentiated them from the Muslims of central and north-western India. The thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries epitomized the peak of Islamic conversion in Bengal. Both the Sufis and the Muslim conquerors converged on the area, but geographical distance from their home-lands compelled them to seek maximum de facto independence from any central authority. Distance also deprived both missionaries and conquerors of the opportunity to tap the

political and scriptural resources of the Middle East to the extent possible for their counterparts in north-western India (Sarkar 1991).

The Muslim missionaries and leaders had to compete against the strong Hindu revivalist forces and movements like Vaishnavism. An adaptation to, and adoption of, local customs and practices, in other words the Bengalisation of Islam, was the only way to overcome the problem. Hence, Muslim preachers and missionaries started emphasizing on a new form of Islam, with the Bengali language and culture at its core. This linguistic emphasis and consciousness remained among Muslims of Bengal and a distinct Bengali Islamic nationalism was emphasized by them. Jadunath Sarkar writes that the Muslim masses, knowing only Bengali, heard the poems and stories in Bengali, witnessed performances based on these at Hindu festivals, patronized by Hindu Zamindars. Thus, the mental background of the Bengali Muslim was more Hindu than Muslim (Sarkar 1991).

The Bengali Muslim rulers and leaders started enriching and enhancing Bengali language since sixteenth century, one of the initial pioneers being Sayed Sultan. He emphasized Bengali language and literature and some sections of Muslims supported him because they had a fear psychosis as Hindu rulers started protecting Sanskrit language and literature. During the rule of Mughals the hold of such Bengali Muslim elites on Muslim masses weakened as Mughals were supporters of a more Arabised form of Islam. This led to the emergence of a class within the elites of Bengal who were strong supporters of Urdu and Persian rather than Bengali and they started viewing Bengali as the language of the Hindu Bengali elites, and this section later supported Urdu as the national language of the state during the united Pakistan period.

Islam was one of the basic elements in the process of formation of identity in Bengal, as discussed in the context of the role played by Sufism and Islam (Eaton 1993). However, the 'divide and rule' policy of the British and the traditional socio-cultural composition of the Bengali society created differences among the Hindus and Muslims of the delta. Thus, many Muslim Bengali elites started emphasizing on Islamic identities. The ideology of Islam went through a renaissance in Asia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Movements by the Wahhabi in Saudi Arabia, the constitutionalists in Iran, the Muhamadiyahs in Indonesia, the Waliullahis in north central India, the Sayid Ahmadias in northwest India, the Faraizis in northeast India, etc., underscored the worldwide resurgence of Islam during the last two centuries. Although differing in detail, all Asian Muslim revivalists have shared a belief that the process of decay of Islamic societies could be reversed by a two-pronged ideological-nationalist thrust against internal corruption and against external exploitation (Khan 1985).

Taking a deeper look at the Bengali Muslim community of the nineteenth century, it has to be emphasised that Muslims of the delta were not homogeneous in terms of culture, economics, linguistic, etc. In rural Bengal, Muslims were mostly Sunnis, though sizable numbers of Shias also existed, especially among the landlord classes. While the Sunnis accepted the Ottoman Sultan or the ruler of the Hejaz as the supreme sovereign of the Islamic world, the Shias considered the descendant of Ali as their supreme head. Sunnis were also divided in many sects like Hanafi, Shaifi, Maliki and Hanbali. Apart from these two major sects, there were the Muhammadias or the followers of the Muhammad, the prophet, mainly in the north Bengal, with their own mosques at Lalbag and Phulerahat. The existence of such diverse sects within the syncretic and inclusive Islamic community gave the Bengali Muslims a sense of solidarity with their neighbouring communities (Khan 1985).

After Bakhtiyar Khilji's invasion, the Islamic culture became popular in this area with the new agricultural technologies. Sufism also played a vital role regarding its expansion. The Islamic political expansion to Bengal created another classification within the Muslims- Atrafs and Asrafs. The Asrafs were more closely associated with the elitist Persio- Arabic cultural values, while the Atrafs were considered to be lower in terms of social status, having originated from indigenous people (Lepidus 1997). However, the Ashrafs contested this view. The Ashrafs were non-cultivators, leading to disdain from the rural masses which took pride in agriculture and considered themselves good Muslims precisely because they tilled the soil. Ashrafs viewed themselves as the descendants of aristocratic families who had migrated to India to help administer the newly-established Muslim empires. This social cleavage between cultivators and non-cultivators later widened into political and religious fault-lines (Eaton 1996).

Islam succeeded in consolidating itself in the region due to its flexibility and ability to convey its message in popular idioms, using the local language and often utilising imageries which were familiar to the local population. This meant that, even in the initial phases, Islam was not viewed as a foreign imposition, nor did the new religion actually impose itself on the Bengali society. Resembling the much earlier diffusion of Buddhism in the region, Islam succeeded in penetrating the Bengali psyche and society in a transformational way without creating much upheaval or uprooting existing norms. Its tenets and approach to the natural environment appealed to the indigenous people whose traditional lifestyle suited the principles of the new religion. Thus, the spread of Islam in Bengal was evolutionary, rather than revolutionary or reactionary, and gradually became assimilated with the rural agrarian way of life (Majumdar 2003).

The establishment of the Hussain Shahi dynasty had paved a new way for the development of secular cultural development; with the Hindus getting a strong hold on various important posts and departments. Alauddin Hussain Shah, the founder of dynasty was a patron of Bengali language and literature, which was later, carried forward (Ahmed 2004). This dynasty became Bengali kings in a true sense. The role of the Hussain Shahi dynasty was, thus, very important regarding the development of syncretic culture in Bengal.

The early sixteenth century was witness to so many changes in the political scenario of the Bengal delta. Babar's defeat of the Lodi dynasty in 1526 heralded an era of political changes. The second Mughal emperor, Humayun defeated Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah of the Hussain Shahi dynasty in Bengal and ended the independence of Bengal in 1538. After the war of Chausaan in 1539, Humayun was exiled and Sher Shah came to power, in turn being overthrown by the Karrani dynasty (Chandra 2007).

This dynasty was in power in Bengal until the 1574, when the Mughal's direct interference in Bengal started. Akbar appointed Munim Khan and Todarmal as commanders of the Bengal Campaign, with Todarmal defeating Daud's troops at the Battle of Rajmahal in 1576 and bringing Bengal under Mughal suzerainty. However, local issues remained, such as the struggle for political control with erstwhile Delhi Sultanate governors like Bara Bhuiyan and Isha Khan. It is not surprising that these local rulers, especially Isa Khan, were among the Bengali heroes of the past whose exploits were recalled in 1971 (Baxter 1997).

In 1594, Akbar sent Raja Man Singh as the governor of Bengal to defeat Bara Bhuiyan. During Raja Man Singh's administration, Dhaka became an important city. He defeated Isha Khan's son and some other local chieftains. Later, Dhaka was renamed Jahangirnagar after the Emperor Jahangir. The Mughals enhanced the culturally diverse character of the region, ensuring that the Islamic additions supplemented rather than supplanted the existing Hindu and Buddhist cultural traits (Majumdar 2003).

Bengal prospered under the reign of the independent Muslim rulers as well as the suzerainty of the Mughals. These rulers introduced welfare works, such as the *siqaya* (water tanks, wells) systems, which indirectly helped the spread of Islam as well. Institutions such as *waqf* (religious endowment which maintains publicly-held properties and services) and *madad-i-maash* (rent free land grants to men of piety and learning to support mosques and madrasas) also benefited the masses, irrespective of their religion. Islam thus appeared in Bengal as the religion as well as the primary culture of the common masses. Islam's positive correlation with the common concerns of the Bengali community and its positive impact on the ecology continued during the Mughal period too (Ahmed 2004).

Merchants and traders also paved a way for the growth of Islamic expansion and consciousness in Bengal, by disseminating various aspects of the Islamic religion and culture. In the absence of any organized institution of professional missionaries, unlike the other main proselytising religion- Christianity, trade and commerce played a key role in gaining converts to Islam.

Thus, the main phase of Islam's spread in Bengal started with the foundation of Muslim rule in Bengal at beginning of the 13th century AD. Through the historical chronicles and epigraphs of the Bengal Sultans since the conquest of 1204 to the Mughal annexation in 1757, several mentions have been found of mosques established to impart religious education, besides providing accommodation for *salat* or daily congregational and weekly prayers. These mosques acted as communal spaces and played a crucial role in the expansion of Islam in rural Bengal. The Imams, their sermons and the religious gatherings of the faithful, at least once a week for Friday prayers, helped spread the teachings of Islam to the multitudes of people in the whole region. A similar role was played by the madrasas or theological seminaries, being the site of rendezvous for learners, acquire training and

knowledge. Contemporary epigraphical sources count numerous such madrasas providing both primary as well as advanced knowledge of Islam (Sengupta 2001).

In the later stage of Islam's expansion in Bengal, the role of individuals, such as the preachers who founded famous seminaries or gave religious sermons persuading people to enter the fold of Islam, assumes more significance. For instance, Taqi al Din al-Arabi and Abu Tammam became renowned as founders of religious seminaries in Mahisantosh and Sonargaon, and Qadi Rukn al-Din Samarqandi and Imamzada Jalal al-Din became widely known as Islamic scholars and debaters, thus helping in the dissemination of Islamic teachings (Badaruddin 2006).

Thus, Islamic consciousness in Bengal spread owing to various factors- traders, Sufis, new agriculture techniques, the oppressive Hindu Caste system, Muslim rulers, etc. By the time the British established their colonial authority over Bengal, Islam had become an integral part of the society and could claim a majority status in the eastern parts of the region. It was the British pursuance of the policies aimed at dividing the communities along religious grounds that turned Islamic consciousness to Islamic separatism in Bengal.

2. British colonial period

From the beginning of the 18th century, the power of Muslim rulers, as well as the importance of the primary seat of power-the city of Dhaka, started diminishing. In 1702 Murshid Kuli Khan transferred the revenue administration of Bengal from Dhaka to Murshidabad. However, in the pre-Plassey period, Muslim rule was still dominant enough to control the army and the administration of the country. As *amils* and *fauzdars*, they were in fact the most powerful factors in the administrative system. The criminal administration was almost completely under the supervision of Muslims. On the other hand, in the land revenue system as well as in trade and commerce the Hindus were much more influential. Nine-tenths of all zamindars were Hindus, as were almost all the employees of the *Qanungo* department. All the big merchants, money lenders and bankers of the time were also Hindus. The two communities balanced each other in social, economic and political life of Bengal in the days before 1757. As the Muslims enjoyed enough facilities in the sphere of politics or administration, the dominant position of the Hindus in economic sector did not disturb

communal peace as such in 18th century Bengal (Bandyopadhyaya 2004). On the whole, communalism had no occasion to develop in Bengal.

In the Battle of Plassey (1757), Siraj-ud-Daula was defeated by the English General Robert Clive, with the help of a conspiratorial alliance with a group of merchant bankers, headed by Jagat Seth. The bankers wanted freedom from financial exactions imposed by the Nawab and helped turn the disaffected general Mir Jafar in favour of the British (Metcalf and Metcalf 2001). Mir Jafar became the de facto ruler while the real power was now in the British hands, who forced the new ruler to pay almost 28 million rupees (equal to 3 million pounds), nearly half of which went to individuals, including Clive. The East India Company got the exclusive rights to collect revenues in several districts, and also got exclusive trading rights (Metcalf and Metcalf 2001). With its first hold over power in Bengal established, the post-Plassey period experienced rapid expansion and consolidation of British power in the region.

The expansion of British power fundamentally altered the social scenario leading to a rapid economic impoverishment of the Muslims. The entire administrative system was overhauled by the British, including the loss of administrative pre-eminence of the Muslims *amils* and *fauzdars*. At least initially, the dominance of Muslim soldiery was also suppressed. Similarly, the Muslims lost their judicial powers, and the number of Muslim lawyers gradually declined, reduced to just one-fourth of all referees and arbitrators appointed under the Cornwallis system. Thus, within a short span of time, the position of the Muslims rapidly deteriorated, and their distress became much more acute than that of Hindus (De 1974).

While the Muslim Sultans and Nawabs ensured that enough Hindus were represented in their administration and Hindus, in general, had a privileged position compared with the Bengali Muslims, the same cannot be said about the Muslim masses living under British rule. While the Muslim rulers gave Hindus ample opportunities in employment and high position in administration reflecting the secular political culture of Bengal, this nonetheless laid the foundation of anti-Hindu sentiments, especially among the Bengali Muslims whose socio-economic conditions were worse off. These sentiments were exploited by the British colonial policy (Manirzumman 1988).

2.1 New Land Revenue Systems

During the colonial period, ethnic and cultural divisions within the Bengali society increased. The British rule came with new idea; new institutions and new changes at wider level. The British wanted to exploit more and more resources of Bengal. Towards this end, the Permanent settlement was introduced by Lord Cornwallis in 1793, which allowed the entrenchment of agents in the revenue collection mechanism. In the quest to 'modernise' the revenue collection system in India, the Governor-General was helped by an able administrator of that time, John Shore, who justified the necessity of a permanent class of landlords as in the interest of the "security of government with respect to its revenues and the security and protection of its subjects" (Shukla 1997). Before the British conquest, there existed a class of old zamindar families who enjoyed hereditary rights over the land. The British divested these families of their rights, took over their lands and started collecting revenue through various methods. Cornwallis and Shore wanted to revive this class of zamindars and reinstate their responsibility of revenue collection (Guha 1982).

Thus, Cornwallis issued a proclamation in 1793, introducing the Permanent Settlement. It widened the gulf among various sections of the Bengali society. In Mughal times, owing to several factors, most of the zamindars eventually came to be Hindu. First, the law of inheritance among the Muslims prescribed minute subdivision among heirs. Second, the operation resulted in the dispossession of the Muslims zamindars and very few Muslim landlords survived. As a result of the transfer of lands the most predominant among the zamindars of Bengal were Hindus. Third, the improvement of the positions of the zamindars as a result of the Permanent Settlement did not proportionately improve the positions of the Muslims (De 1974). The newly emerged zamindar class was mostly Hindus, even in eastern Bengal, while the majority of the population was Muslim, thus fuelling communal division of Bengali society (Guha 1982).

In a bid to improve the system, Warren Hastings established a Board of Revenue appointed European District Collectors to oversee revenue collection. Unable to resolve the difficulties as well as making sure that his Collectors directly reached the villages, Hastings introduced a system of auction. A person who promised to collect the largest amount of revenue from an area, was given the lease to that land for 5 years. This led to unprecedented oppression of

cultivators causing mass-level sufferings. Hastings also experimented with annual settlement of lands, but, that too, failed (Bandopadhyay 2007).

Some of the land revenue administration changes brought about by the British were opposed by the socio-religious movements as well. In the beginning of the 19th century, vast areas of east Bengal were affected by the faraizi and wahhabi movements, which spread a kind of Islamic consolidation in Bengal. Shariatullah, Haji (1781-1840) was an eminent Islamic reformer who had migrated to Mecca in 1799. After his return in 1818, he started an Islamic revivalist movement, inspired by the contemporary Wahhabism, which came to be popularly known as the faraizi movement- a Bengali version of the Arabian Peninsula's Wahhabi movement (Khan 1985).

Though essentially religious, the faraizi movement also touched upon various secular aspects of the society, because of which Haji is characterised not just as an Islamic revivalist, but also a social reformer and a populist peasant leader. While the faraizi movement sought to revive the pristine glories of Islam, eventually it also started taking up the cause of dispossessed and exploited farmers. It was based on two-pronged strategy i.e. protection of majoritarian Muslim farmers from the Hindu landlords and ensuring social justice for the large population of the Muslims'. The Indigo farmers were compelled for producing indigo at loss, which later led to the 'Indigo' riots. The eastern region Bengal witnessed the 'Pabna Rent Revolt' against absentee landlordism by the peasants mostly belonging to Muslim community. In the year of 1890, Bengal saw another riots known as 'the Calcutta Riots' which was actually the by-product of rising community consciousness' among jute labourers of Calcutta city, particularly after the substantial inflow of north Indian Urdu-speaking migrants labours to Bengal. In some of revolts which were clearly against the British rule, the Hindu community also contributed, but quite logically, in those movements where the Muslim interests were largely highlighted, they chose to be remaining detached.

2.2 Role of Western Education

English education began to spread in Bengali Hindu society with the start of Christian missionary activities from Serapore. The missionaries knew that, unlike the Muslims who were less prone to conversion, the Hindu society yielded converts to other religions. It, therefore, presented the most likely ground for conversion to Christianity. Muslims had too little commercial ability to turn to the missionaries to learn English, and before the introduction of English as an official language, they did not have to learn it even for government jobs. Thus, almost the sole beneficiaries of missionary education in Bangla or English, were the Hindus (Dasgupta 1971).

Among the Muslims, the group which was expected to send its children to English schools was the Ashraf. This class held high positions under the pre-British rulers and had received lands as *madad-i-mash* (rent free) grants, monopolised the courts and several branches of executive service. They held positions of *Munshis* or *Maulvis*, and earned a dignified livelihood by teaching, or by extensive copying of manuscripts (Chand 1954). But as the impact of the Permanent Settlement and other new, government policies, started taking effect, this class was reduced to extreme poverty, thus preventing many of them from sending their children to English schools even if they wanted to. Abolition of Persian as the language of judicial and revenue proceedings in 1837 threw out of employment a considerable body of Muslim subordinate officers, particularly the *Qazis*, who depended on government pay for their livelihood (Chand 1954).

Whatever the cause, the fact is undisputed that while Hindus made rapid progress in English education, Muslims in Bengal maintained their isolation so far as English education was concerned even after the introduction of English classes in Calcutta Madrassa in 1829. Tol and Chatuspatty, Maktab and Madrassa were the traditional modes of learning of Hindus and Muslims but with the spread of English education Hindus flocked round Pathsalas which were general schools for primary education in vernacular and thereafter for English middle schools. Muslims not only continued to cling to Maktabs and Madrassas but their leaders tried to fit this system in with the Government's policy of educational grants-in-aid. Colonial Educational policy created a gulf between Hindus and Muslims. Due to late entry in English education most of the government jobs and opportunities went in the hand of the Hindus.

Muslims discontent continued and later after 1857 revolution, due to the divide and rule policy of British, religious gulf was being widened.

Their sources of income had also quite suddenly dried up with the falling into disuse of a few trades in which they excelled. In Muslims, first, the Muslim boys entered school later than the Hindu as they had to learn religious lessons before learning the secular lessons of the formal school system, secondly, they often left the school at an earlier age. The Muslim parents from Ashraf class were usually poorer than their Hindu counterparts in corresponding social position, thus making it harder to provide a full education to their children. Thirdly, irrespective of their worldly means, Muslim parents often choose religious education in Madrsas which would secure an honoured place among the learned of their own community, rather than a secular education which could command success in a modern profession.

The establishment of the Calcutta Madrassa (1781) by Warren Hastings, three other madrassas at Rajshahi, Dacca and Chittagong by the patronage of Lord Mayo to serve as denominational schools or colleges in which Muslim teachers would teach Arabic and Persian literature, and Muslim law according to their system of instruction; and government, appointment of two Muslim Assistant Inspectors to supervise Muslim education had a great effect in shaping Muslim ideas and expectations (Mukherjee 1972).

The new educational system was designed to produce an 'educated' local class which could help the colonial administrators in governing. Towards this end, the British also replaced the existing Urdu and Persian codicils and laws in favour of English customs and laws. The Muslims could not easily accept Western education for fear of losing contact with their religion. At the same time they also suffered from the loss of opportunities when the Persian language and administrative practices were replaced by English. On the other hand, the Hindus quickly adjusted themselves to the changing situation, they, of course, had shown considerable mobility even before the British rule. So, the Hindus could easily take up English in place of Persian and participated in trade, industry, banking along with their British principals. As they became conversant with English they were easily employed in mercantile houses as well as in administrative services as discussed above (Sarkar 1991).

In addition to the systemic changes, long-suppressed communal discontents also surfaced. When one of the first institutions for the promotion of modern Western education among the locals was established, in the form of the Hindu College in 1817, its General Committee comprising 20 Indians, did not include any Muslims, nor did the Committee support Muslim boys for education in the College. As the doors of the Hindu College were closed to the Muslim students, the Calcutta Madrasa became the main channel through which the exuberant Muslim sentiment expressed itself in manifold ways. This institution focused on Arabic and Persian education. The madrasa education did not realise the importance of English, nor did they attach any importance to learn vernacular education. On the other hand, the students of the Hindu college began to acquire Western knowledge and science through the English medium and at the same time learnt Bengali language. An addition of an English department to the Calcutta Madrasa in 1829 did not improve the situation very much. The attention of the Muslim leaders still remained around madrasa education. (De 1974).

On lines similar to the Calcutta Madrasa another madrasa was founded at Hughly in 1836 with the donation of Haji Muhammad Mohsin. With the decision of the government in 1837 to conduct its business in English or in local or vernacular, the English-educated persons got better facilities in government services. The system of examination for official employment was introduced in 1844. The post of deputy magistrate and deputy collector was reserved for the English knowing candidates from 1859.

It was decided in 1863 that half the posts as *munsifs*, *darogas* and pleaders would be reserved for those who had passed the university entrance or higher examinations. All law examinations were held in English from 1864 and only the bachelors of law were deemed eligible to become *munsifs* according to a rule laid down 1867 (Seal 1968). It was decided in 1864 that English alone should be the language of examinations for the more coveted appointments in the subordinate civil service. By that time Persian had been dislodged from its former official position. Between 1828 and 1846, the government ceased the earlier practice of granting revenue-free land to learned men for charitable and pious purposes. Naturally the Muslim religious study centres and the Arabic-Persian knowing Muslims were put to great inconvenience. As a result of financial difficulties the Muslim students could not

support themselves in pursuing their studies, and consequently the Hindu students became dominant in the educational institutions (Majumdar 2003).

The Revolt of 1857 marked a turning point in many ways, causing the British to devise and implement a policy to promote internal divisions within the Bengali community. The Land Law of 1859 was one such policy, enacted to ensure land ownership for cultivators who had held the land of twelve consecutive years, which further fuelled mounting social unrest in Bengal. This law pitted the hitherto marginalised *Jotedars* against the dominant Zamindar class (Ghosh 1994).

Giving a detailed account of the Wahhabi movement, in his work *Indian Musalmans* (1871), W.W. Hunter tried categorising Muslims into Wahhabis and non-wahhabis. Hunter argued that while initially the Muslims were satisfied with the British rule, they started feeling the brunt of being excluded from important government posts. Hunter pointed out that before the British rule all important posts were held by the Muslims, but now various facilities were enjoyed by the Hindus, whereas the difficulties of the Muslims had multiplied. Hunter is also known for the Hunter Commission report which concluded that the British administrative policies had all but eliminated the official patronage as well as source of Muslim wealth. He especially mentioned the Permanent Settlement as one of the responsible factors for significant reduction in Muslim incomes from land. At the same time, working in the British Army was considered a taboo by the Muslims, and various government services had now become a monopoly of the English-educated Hindu. Hunter, in the colonial messianic spirit of the times, identified the British system of public institutions for the awakening of the Hindu community and instilling it with the nascent ideas of nationalism, which nonetheless turned them against the Muslims. On the other hand, Muslims also preferred Urdu/Persian education rather than Bengali and also resented being taught by Hindus. Hunter's theory of lack of English education as the reason for Muslim backwardness found general acceptance among Muslim leaders, and continued to influence Muslim thought, politics and action through the decades till partition in 1947 (De 1974).

Generally, the tendency was for an accommodation with modern education. The college classes of the Calcutta Madrassa had been abolished for the sake of economy and Muslim boys were compelled to approach Presidency College as this was the only college in Calcutta

where Arabic and Persian were taught. The result was that those students who had Arabic or Persian for their second language in the Matriculation could secure admission in the College. Muslim students almost always took up these subjects. Again, it was only in this college that they could expect to study on a reduced fee of Rs. 2 per month. On 14 November 1924, the government issued a similar circular sanctioning the reservation of 20 percent of seats for Muslim candidates seeking admission to the Bengal Engineering College and in the Ahsanullah School of Engineering (Dhaka) under conditions comparable to those for the Training Colleges, and particularly that the standards of the institutions would not be maintained.

2.3 The Partition of Bengal and Outcome

The starting of 20th century witnessed the enlargement and entrenchment of the Hindu-Muslim religious gap. The British had started the policy of divide and rule and the partition of Bengal was a landmark in its implementation. Lord Curzon believed that the territory contained in the presidency of Bengal was too large to be administered as a unit by a lieutenant governor based in Calcutta and subordinate to the governor-general. As British territory expanded to the northeast and the northwest, the new areas were added to the province of Bengal. As British territory expanded to the northeast and northwest province (later the United Province) in 1836, the inclusion of Arakan in Burma in 1862, and the establishment of the chief commissionership of Assam in 1874, the province of Bengal in 1905 still included Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. According to the 1901 census, this province contained about 80 million people. Curzon observed as well that the state of development in eastern Bengal and in Assam was far below that of other portions of the province.

The lieutenant governor, Andrew Fraser, noted that eastern Bengal was not just the centre of the Bengali linguistic nationalism it dominated the Bengali administrative positions as well. Such factors influenced Curzon into deciding on the partition Bengal by merging the eastern districts with the chief commissionership of Assam into a new Province of eastern Bengal and Assam, placing it under a lieutenant governor of Dhaka. The new province had a Muslim majority of about three to two. This along with comments such as those of Fraser, have led to another explanation for Curzon's actions: divide and rule. As the British looked upon those

Muslims who were politically active as loyalist in the sense expressed by Syed Ahmed Khan, the partition of Bengal would be dominated by Muslims (Baxtar 2004).

Curzon partitioned Bengal on 16 October 1905, proclaiming that it would be very important for administrative purposes as undivided Bengal was too unwieldy to manage. He divided Bengal in two provinces: a Muslim majority province and a Hindu majority West Bengal, that included Bihar and Orissa as well. Curzon was undoubtedly very much guided by his motto to diminish the growing effect of Bengali Bhadrak. As H. H. Risley, a senior most English official pointed out that, United Bengal refers to power and to make difference it is urgent to divide it. According to him Congress party knew this and that is why leaders of the party were apprehensive towards the Bengal divide. So to restrict the one of the strong opponent of British rule Risley felt that dividing Bengal should be main objective of the government. In addition to Bengal divide, encouraging Muslim through assigning them those provinces where they were numerically dominant, was another distinct tactic to diminishing the influence of Bengali Bhadrak. It is a matter of fact that it was Curzon who approached a Muslim leader Nawab Salimullah of Dacca. He stated that, "By means of their numerical strength and superior culture, the Musalmans would have the preponderant voice in the Province that would be created and that would invest the Mussalmans of East Bengal with a unity they had not enjoyed since the days of the old Mussalman Kings" (Hasan 1993).

The Bengal divide culminated into a sudden outbursts and violent movement from Bengali Bhadrak. This incident sketched an adversarial response among the Bengali Muslim (Chatterjee 1994). It resulted into the Muslim polarisation which had the sharp influence on politicising and stimulating Muslim opinion. The magazines like *Lal Ishtihar*, Red Pamphlet and *Krishak Bandhu*, had also further stimulated the communal sentiments among the Muslim community. For traditional and feudal Muslim leadership, this situation was proven very much suitable. The Muslim leaders under Nawab Salimullah found a definite gain in supporting government side. The plan was to attain maximum benefits from the whole situation while depicting Bengali Muslim as main disadvantaged side without resorting to any lawlessness. In return the British government had awarded Muslims to establish a university in Dacca in the form of assurance.

Curzon had clearly said that the united Bengal was hindrance to British imperialism. The real purpose of the British government in dividing Bengal becomes clear from the correspondence of the officiating Chief Secretary to the government of Bengal with the Home Secretary, Government of India. In one of the letters, it was stated that the divided Bengal would pull in different directions and thus the objective would prove fruitful by splitting up and thus weakening the Indian National Congress which was, according to the British officials opposed to the British rule (Chatterjee 2007).

This objective was actually sought to be achieved by setting one community against another, as was made clear by Curzon himself while touring East Bengal in 1904. He repeatedly said that the British government had taken the decision to divide Bengal to protect the Muslim culture. Some sections of Bengali Muslims clearly saw through the imperial ploy and expressed solidarity with Hindus in the Swadeshi movement, which was the initiation of a pan-India movement against British imperialism. But the majority of Bengali Muslims viewed partition as beneficial to their own interest and opposed the anti-partition movement, although their opposition never became very strong. Muslim leaders like Shamsul Hoda, although at first opposed to the idea, ended up openly supporting partition. Among Hindu leaders who protested non-violently were Rabindranath Tagore and Surendra Nath Banerjee. Thus, the partition was widely condemned by large section of Hindus, while only a small section of Muslims opposed it. Many saw the Bengal partition as a calculated move to fragment and weaken the anti-colonial movement, which was particularly strong in Bengal, and to 'divide and rule' the Bengali speaking population (Murshid 1996).

On 1 October 1906, a deputation of 35 leading Muslim personalities comprising nobles, ministers of states, landlords, lawyers and merchants led by Aga Khan, met Viceroy Minto at Shimla, demanding Muslim representation in elective bodies through separate electorates, weightage in Muslim representation so that they were not swept away by Hindu majority and greater share for the Muslims in civil services. The strong anti-partition movement and indifference of the non-Bengali Muslims to the cause of the Bengali Muslims convinced the Muslims of Bengal of the need for a political organisation. The British government also preferred a Muslim political organisation as a counter-weight to the growing strength of the Indian National Congress.

In December 1906, under the initiative of Nawab Vaqar-ul-mulk and Nawab Salimullah, the Muslim League was founded in Dacca. The foundation of the League was a result of the growth of Islamic consciousness in Bengal delta. The Muslim community needed an organisation to voice their grievances and raise the issue of their relative and growing marginalisation. The Muslims of Bengal were also provoked by the British that the national political scenario was such that the interests of the Eastern Bengal Muslims were almost always ignored. Thus, the Bengali Muslims realised the need of an institution that could pursue their interests directly with the government. The leader to emerge from this Muslim search for a political voice was Salimullah, the Nawab of Dhaka, whose loyalty to the British could be gauged from the fact that the Nawab was indebted to the British for saving him from bankruptcy (Sarkar 2003). The Shimla Deputation had stressed on the importance of safeguarding the Muslim interests as separate from those of other Indians. The deputation had three grounds for such a special consideration. Firstly, in Bengal, Muslims were a majority. Secondly, it stated that besides their numerical strength, the political importance of Muslims also deserved special treatment, as one of every three men in India's armed forces was a Muslim. Thirdly, Muslim representatives in the legislative bodies should be chosen only by Muslims, not by the majority Hindus and the number of legislatures should be adequate enough to make them as an effective lobby rather than 'ineffective minority', so that they cannot be overlooked (Sengupta 2001). Lord Minto's empathy and support towards the delegation backed the Muslims to be aspired to initiate an all India Muslim party. In 1906 the Muslim League was formed with having following main goals:

- For inculcating a feeling of allegiance for the British rule among the Muslims community.
- For safeguarding and advancing the rights and interests Indian Muslims and time to time representing their wishes and aspirations in government.
- For preventing the development of hostile motivation between Muslims and other communities without prejudice to its own purposes.

The emergence of all India Muslim League party led to the substantial effects in the Indian political arena. Previously, the common Muslims used to either look towards Congress Party

or relied on their own for protecting their interest as the British rulers were not trustworthy for them. But the formation of Muslim League given them a solid alternative of Congress Party. Just few months after the formation of Muslim League party, the early months of 1907, had observed so many riots between Hindu and Muslims which continued for the whole year. These riots were an obvious outcome of the emergence of League in Indian political scenario. The riots spread to several districts in a short span of time, with the partial treatment of government officials, acting as a further catalyst for increasing communal divide (Sengupta 2001).

The British administration's partial approach towards the Muslim rioters gave a fillip to reciprocal attacks as well as the general feeling of animosity between the two communities. Many Hindus viewed the government's clearly biased approach as a punishment for their community's anti partition stand. The partition had prevented the migration of common Muslims into the sphere of influence of the Indian National Congress, and these riots ensured the communal division also kept the Muslims staunchly away from the Congress, which was perceived and portrayed as Hindu-dominated. There is, thus, a direct causality between the partition and the ensuing communal tensions and violence- a successful fruition and culmination of active British policy. In order to establish its gains more permanently, in the aftermath of the riots, the British promised Muslims greater power and larger role in the administration as well. Special efforts were made to provide Bengali Muslims with extensive educational opportunities and to give them more opportunities in government services. This openly communal and discriminatory treatment made it very clear that the Muslims were being rewarded for their support to the partition and at the same time Hindus were being punished for their opposition of the same (Mukherjee 1972).

The Government of India Act, 1909, created separate electorates for Muslims and gave them a certain number of extra seats in Hindu majority province, conceding the same to Hindus in Muslim majority province. The 1909 Morley-Minto Reforms, brought about to curb the rising nationalistic fervour, especially militant nationalism in Bengal, further deepened the communal divide. While claiming to give a greater role to Indians in their own governance, these reforms kept the provision of separate electorates for Muslims, which meant that

candidates could appeal to the narrow communal interests of their own community and not bother about serving all members of their constituencies (Hasan 1980).

In 1911, the partition of Bengal was annulled, a step considered by many Bengali Muslim to be the return of domination of Bengali Hindu nationalism. It was also viewed as a snub to the traditional loyalist elements and led to replacement of the older leadership by younger nationalist professionals in 1912-13 (Jalal 1985). In 1916, the Muslim League and the Congress agreed on the idea of separate electorates for Muslims and non-Muslims. The Government of India Act, 1919 also known as the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 was primarily focused on slowly promoting the establishment of the autonomous institutions of self-governance in India. This act had introduced diarchy to the Indian political system. The act provided provision of double governments system in which the law and order related issues as well as those subjects which are crucial for keeping the control of Central government such as railways, were assigned to bureaucracy appointed by British government under the provincial governors. Other matters such as health, education and agriculture were given to the provincial governments ruled by Indian.

The prevailing Central and provincial legislative assemblies, which were eight in numbers, were expanded and franchise was also widened for new social groups of Indian citizens. But, despite these few apparent liberal reforms, the act had introduced the separate electorates coupled with the provisions of Muslim over-representation which talked about giving representation more than the share of Muslim numbers in total population. Furthermore, the 1919 act had empowered the Muslim legislatures, who were newly appointed, and encouraged them for patronising the cause of their own community at the cost of Hindus. So the government of India Act, 1919, rather than ushering the unity between the two communities, it widened the gap between the Hindus and Muslims .(Hasan 1980).

In 1920, the Congress adopted Gandhi's proposal of non-cooperation policy and the merger of the Khilafat issue with the non-cooperation movement. Jinnah resigned from the Congress in response, as he did not want to conflate secular politics with communal causes. When the 1928 Nehru report opposed the proposal of separate electorates, Jinnah demanded that one third of the seats in the future central legislature should be reserved for the Muslims, but it was rejected by Congress. In December 1928 the All Parties' Conference met in

Kolkata to consider the Nehru report. On 1 January, 1929 under the chairmanship of Aga Khan, the largest Muslim gathering held in New Delhi adopted the fourteen points of Jinnah and demanded provincial autonomy too. In the round table conference of 1930-31, Jinnah strongly promoted his fourteen-point formula. In 1934, Jinnah returned to India from London after leaving his law practice and was elected as the president of the Muslim League, a party which till then was not representative of lower class Muslims, being the platform for only the upper and growing Muslim middle class (Jalal 1985).

The Muslim league meeting held in Bombay in 1936 authorized Jinnah to appoint and preside over a new central parliamentary board representing the Muslims of India. The first meeting of the board consisting of fifty four prominent leaders met in Lahore, during 8-11 June 1936, and included leaders such as Iqbal, Liyaqat Ali Khan, Suharawardy, and Ismail Chundrigar (Ahmed 2004).

After the result of 1937 provincial elections, communalism started spreading widely, especially in northern and eastern India. The result of the assembly elections made it clear that no single political party would be able to form a government. Bengal turned into a battleground for political hegemony between well-known Muslim leaders like Fazlul Haq, the leader of Krishak Praja Party (KPP), and Khawaja Nazimuddin of the Muslim League. While Haq proposed a coalition with Congress, Nazimuddin feared a Congress-led ministry, thereby agreeing to form a coalition with Haq instead. A KPP–Muslim League ministry was formed, under the leadership of Haq and with eleven ministers, six Muslims and five Hindus (Chaterjee 1994).

The Second World War started in 1939 and without consulting the Indians, the British declared India's participation in the war with Germany. As a response, the Congress minister resigned. At the same time, Fazlul Haq called for more than one state for the Muslims of India. It was the two-nation theory which was basically based on the concept of a separate Bengali Muslim state. In December 1941, Haq reconstituted his ministry without the participation of Muslim league and negotiated with Sarat Chandra Bose, by then the leader of the dissident Forward Bloc within the Congress, and Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, the leader of the nationalist Hindu Mahasabha, and these parties joined the cabinet. Haq countered all opposition by taking a nationalistic stand that all Bengalis must work together for the

freedom of Bengal (Baxter 1997). While this was one small aberration in the otherwise relentless use of communal political rhetoric by all communal parties, the British policy provoked a separate Islamic consciousness in Bengal. After Fazlul Haq was forced to resign on 29 March 1943, Nazimuddin became the premier of Bengal. His government was dismissed by Wavell in 1943 for the failure of the administration to prevent or cope with the famine issue (Khan 1989).

In the elections held in 1945-46 the Muslim League won a landslide victory and secured 115 out of 119 Muslim seats, leading to Suhrawardy becoming the premier of Bengal. The Congress won 86 seats while the Hindu Mahasabha only one and the KPP won only five seats. On April 1946, Jinnah convened a meeting in Delhi of those elected on the Muslim League's ticket. At the meeting he proposed an amendment to the Lahore resolution that would change the call for two independent states to a single "sovereign independent state" to be called Pakistan (Baxter 1997).

Jinnah started immediately demanding Pakistan and 16 August 1946 declared a 'direct action day' to press his case. Kolkata witnessed very serious communal riot and within four days, around 4000 people were killed and 15000 injured. The British lost all hope of a united India and in 1947 the British parliament passed the Indian Independence Act, East Bengalis were now independent but a part of united Pakistan. Thus, finally the Bengali Muslims supported the two nation theory based on Muslim nationalism in 1947, and East Bengal became the part of Pakistan.

Thus, the growth of Islamic consciousness in Bengal had a long history. The process started from the eighth or the ninth century, with a clear spurt marked after the invasion of Bakhtiyar Khilji in 1204, which proved to be significant in the growth of Islamic consciousness in the Bengal delta. Islam spread due to the merchants, traders, Sufi saints, new agricultural technology and egalitarian approach of Islam. Historically Bengal was known for syncretism; Brahmanism, different branches of Buddhism, Jainism, and Islam entered in the delta and a mix social-cultural life was developed. The pluralized heritage of Bengal created a multi-lingual , multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society. During pre-British period there developed many common rituals and customs which became part of the cultural heritage of Bengal, irrespective of the different religious beliefs that emerged in course of time. These

too were born of the interaction of Buddhist, Jain, Brahmanical, and local tribal practices of different parts of this region. The songs, the rituals, the cultural of these groups were very similar and it created a unique Bengali cultural pact among the entire religious and ethnic group.

But during British colonial period things started changing and a gulf between Hindus and Muslims created by colonial rule. Earlier in Bengal communalism was hardly found. But the advent of British created chaos and divisible norms and values in the society. History of east Bengal suggests that the society has existed and retained its secular credentials for a long time. In the pre-British period a kind of syncretic culture developed in Bengal but the scenario was changed after the British entered the delta. Curzon's partition of Bengal created religious boundary among Hindus and Muslims of Bengal. The Bengal's partition on the basis of so called administrative convenience gave a clear direction to religious gulf between the two. Due to their divide and rule policy they became successful in spreading communalism. Islamic consciousness in Bengal tilted towards separatism which ruined the social fabric of syncretic Bengal. British educational policy, divide and rule policy, economic policies, etc. paved the way to the gap between Hindus and Muslims which resulted in the partition of India.

2.4 Discriminatory policy in appointments

The other section of the emerging Muslim 'middle class' concerned themselves about their position in government services as well as administrative and political power. Amongst them there arose the idea that the Muslims as a community had suffered more than the Hindus in terms of government employment. Muslim politicians and journalists pleaded for increased appointments for Muslims in view of the backward condition of their community, their majority in the total population, their large contribution to the revenues of the province, their varied interests, their 'fitness', and their political importance (Chatterjee 1982). The point vigorously advanced was that where the Muslim population formed the majority, they had an inherent right to appointments in the proportion of that population share; at least they were entitled to increased employment. Muslims advanced another argument that the main portion of the government revenue was derived from land and stamps, and Muslim contribution to

these two sources of revenue was more than all other communities put together.(Chatterjee 1982).

Nineteenth century was the era of renaissance in Bengal, with several significant social and cultural advancements and achievements. However, this period, at the same time, also generated communal unrest and a cultural gap between Hindus and Muslims in Bengal and polarised communal identities. The growth of Islamic identity consciousness was found at large level in Bengal. The nineteenth century Muslim revivalism found expression in revivalist and reformist movements, like the Faraizi, the Tariqat-i-Muhammadiyah and the Taaiyuni movements. The founder of the Faraizi movement, Haji Shariatullah was a Bengali Muslim belonging to a petty taluqdar family of Madaripur subdivision. This movement was the earliest and foremost of all other religious movements in Bengal. These movements eventually paved the way for communalism in Bengal. These aimed at the complete establishment of the Quranic monotheism (Vanaik 1990).

Muslims were much slower to adapt to the changes brought by the British and would remain well behind the Hindus in education, commerce, government employment, etc. The majority of students at the college level were Hindus. In addition to the Calcutta Madrassa, another chain of madrassas was established in 1806 with the donation from Hazi Muhammad Mohsin to further Muslim education. These were established in Dhaka, Rajshahi, and Chittagong. The Sanskrit College was founded in Calcutta in 1824. Educational policy was established by 'the minute on education' written by Thomas Babington, Lord Macaulay, in 1835 (De 1974).

The noted British historian and essayist was a member of the Governor General's Council. His minute settled a conflict between the 'Anglicists' and the 'orientalists' in favour of the former. The Anglicists, favouring higher education in English, were supported by a number of Indians who foresaw that the future commercial and administrative language would be English. The orientalists' preferred that education of the natives be in the vernacular languages so that Indians would be fully acquainted with the past of their country. Macaulay dismissed oriental learning as not useful to the development of India, but while the Governor General William Bentick ordered the adopting of the minute, the British rulers also made it clear that any colleges or schools providing vernacular education would not be abolished (Baxter 2004).

It may be noted that Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vidyasagar and other leaders of the renaissance encouraged the people to adopt English education, not merely to secure jobs under the foreign administration but for proper acquaintance with the European arts, science and culture which, in their opinion, were essential for India's national progress. The Muslims, however, generally remained apathetic to the great developments which overtook Bengal during the nineteenth century. Muslim community of Bengal continued to adopt blindly the Madrasa education imparted in increasingly archaic and irrelevant Arabic and Persian.

Educational backwardness and their gradual exclusion from various government offices created unrest among the Muslims. Historically, it may be stated that the Revolt of 1857 had made the British government realise and adopt policies that created and promoted exclusiveness. It was the direct rule of Crown that helped the growth of policy of the divide and rule (Maitra 1984).

The post-mutiny period was marked by the development of modernism among the Muslims along with loyalty to the British government. It has been shown that the chief protagonist of Muslim modernism in Bengal, Nawab Abdul Latif Khan Bahadur (1828-1893), had anticipated in many ways the course of action adopted by the more celebrated leader of the Muslims all over India, Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1928), despite the latter being credited for the growth of Indian Muslim nationalism.

Syed Ahmed Khan believed that Muslims of India would be better off under the rule of the British and advised Muslims not to join the Congress as it was a Hindu-dominated organisation. Nawab Abdul Latif, Syed Amir Ali, Nawab Khwaja Ahasanullah Khan and many other prominent Muslim leaders advocated the educational consciousness among Muslims (Sarkar 1993). Syed Amir Ali founded the Central National Mohammadan Association in 1876, after his return from studying law in London. Amir Ali was different among other leaders as he maintained that Urdu should be the language of Bengali Muslims. He wrote many articles on Islamic law and the importance of Islamic religious teachings. All literate Bengali Muslims, however, did not accept the advice given by Abdul Latif. Mir Mossaraf Hussain and many other Muslim writers of nineteenth century made notable contribution to the development of the Bengali literature. The educated Muslims also brought out some standard literary magazines in Bengali. While giving evidence before the Hunter

Commission in 1882, Nawab Abdul Latif Khan claimed that the upper Muslim class and middle Muslim class of Bengal were descendants of the Muslim conquerors and demanded that they should be given facilities for education in Urdu. He contemptuously referred to the lower class Muslims as having their origin from the depressed classes of the Hindus and conceded that they might be given opportunities for education through Bengali at the primary stage. But even this Bengali, he said, should be completely reoriented with Arabic, Persian and Urdu words (Ahmed 1987).

The post-mutiny period witnessed the emergence of separate identity consciousness of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal. The Indigo Revolt of 1859-60, of the poor and oppressed Bengali cultivators, who were forced to work like slaves in the highly profitable indigo plantations of utterly unscrupulous British, marked the beginning of political consciousness in Bengal. The majority of these cultivators were Muslims. While the position of workers and peasants has in general become weaker after the introduction of commercial crops such as cotton and tobacco, the special target of the British, for their divisive strategy, were the Muslim cultivator class of *Jotedars*. The Land Law of 1859 gave land-ownership to cultivators who had tilled the land for twelve consecutive years, and unlawful evictions. This new law created tensions and unrest and increased awareness amongst the *jotedars* about their control and authority over the land. After more attempted rent hikes, an uprising took place in 1873 (Bhardwaj 2010).

After the 1857 mutiny, the British started considering the Muslims as a large and important class to counter Hindu socio-political leaders. In 1882, the Central National Mohammadan Association presented a memorandum to Lord Ripon enlisting some grievances of Muslims and seeking remedies of the same. The fact of Hindu domination in all spheres of the society in the nineteenth century and the first half of twentieth century was one of the essential underlying features of such representations. The social arrangement that took place between the Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal in the nineteenth century was accentuated further and resulted in sharp political differences between the two communities in the twentieth century. To an ordinary Muslim, a Hindu Zamindar was not merely a feudal lord but basically a Hindu tyrant. Thus, what was fundamentally a social and economic problems became communal one in the course of time (Bose 1986).

By the close of the nineteenth century, there was a change in the British attitude towards the Hindus and Muslims of India. The educationally advanced Hindus were rapidly becoming politically conscious. Through the Indian National Congress they were demanding a greater role in the government services and administration of the country. In their own imperial interests, the British government eventually decided to make a departure from their earlier policy by extending a gesture of goodwill to the Muslims, essentially discriminating against Hindus.

The Hindus of Bengal, like the Muslims of other parts of India, thought that, in their own economic and political interests, they should take advantage of the new British attitude. The beginning of the twentieth century was very important to Indian Muslims in many ways. Hindu-Muslims bitterness increased on the issue of partition of Bengal (Maitri 1984).

3. Role of Socio-Religious Reform Movements and Political Organisations

3.1 Introduction

South Asian social structures and interactions have become accustomed to the sub-textual, and often overt, presence of communalism and violence associated with it. Historical social transformations and their trajectories, as well as the political context within which such transformations occurred, have a causal link to the emergence and spread of communalism. The socio-political transformations lead to constant evolution of societal bonds and interactions, changing the way communities or social groups perceive and behave towards each other. Discrepancies and contestations in the social interactions, between individual members or groups, if allowed to grow unchecked or if exploited for narrow vested interests may lead to the emergence of communalism (Brass 1974).

T.K. Oommen (1989) has suggested six dimensions of communalism:

- assimilationist,
- welfarist,
- retreatist,
- retaliatory,
- separatist, and

- secessionist communalism.

The assimilation or integration of smaller religious groups into larger ones, either voluntary or coercionist is known as assimilationist communalism. Examples of such communalism include the oft-repeated claims that the people categorised as Scheduled Tribes are Hindus, or that the Jain, Sikh and Buddhist communities are technically Hindus and their personal matters should be adjudicated under the purview of Hindu personal codes.

The paramount importance attached to the welfare of a particular community, without necessarily supporting or causing dispossession or marginalisation of other communities, can be termed as welfarist communalism. This form of communalism focusses on issues like improvement in a community's living standards, provisions for health and education, etc. Examples may include various Christian welfare associations, or Parsi associations working for the upliftment of their community. Such welfare activities are categorised within the broad framework of communalism because these activities are limited to the members of a particular community. Retreatist communalism, the third dimension of communalism according to Ommen, involves, usually, a numerically small religious community keeping a measured distance from politics in order to protect itself from any backlash or adverse political fallouts. Example could include the Bahai community which proscribes participation in any form of political activities. As opposed to the preceding forms of communalism, the more harmful forms are those which involve active harm to members of rival or competing communities. Retaliatory communalism, thus, attempts to harm the interests or members of other religious communities (Ommen 2002).

Separatist communalism involves groups, not just religious but also cultural or even linguistic, which aim to maintain their cultural specificity and demands a separate territorial state to preserve the same. Indian examples would include the numerous separatist movements in North East India, including, but not limited to, the Mizo and the Bodo movements. Other examples include the tribal communities of Jharkhand, the Gorkhas for northern West Bengal, etc. Finally, secessionist communalism involves a religious community aspiring for a separate political identity, and aims for complete political independence as essential to achieve that identity. Examples of such extreme communalism include, the Naga movement, the Khalistan movement and the Kashmiri separatist groups. Of

these six types of communalism, the last three create problems engendering agitations, communal riots, terrorism, and insurgency (Ommen 2002).

Communalism in India has evolved through various stages, the rise of distinct Hindu, Muslim and Sikh Nationalistic fervours being the first phase. In the first stage these communities recognized owing to shared religious identities, their secular interests are common, at least at the macro level. In the 19th century, the emergence of various Hindu revivalist movements, such as the Shuddhi movement of the Arya Samaj, led to the growth of such feelings of shared communal distinctness. At the same time Islamic revivalist movements, such as the Faraizi movement, also instilled elements of communal distinctness among Muslims. Later, such modes of communal thinking and communal politics influenced even those leaders who espoused Western education and rational approach, a prime example being Syed Ahmed Khan who portrayed the Indian Muslim community as a distinct group from other communities, having its own peculiar interests and concerns. The second phase in the evolution of communalism involved what is termed as liberal communalism, which espoused communal distinctness while being politically liberal, meaning that it supported democratic, humanist and nationalist values. In India, this phase was experienced on the pre-1937 period and its main proponents were organizations such as the Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League, and personalities like Jinnah, Madan Mohan Malviya and Lala Lajpat Rai (Jalal 1985). The third stage of evolution was extreme communalism, with strong fascist tendencies. This phase involved an open confrontation among communities for mutually exclusive political goals, often achieved through a politics of fear and hatred. In this phase, there was a clear tendency for the use of violence of language, deed and behaviour on the part of the Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha, in the post 1937 period.

These three phases were clearly demarcated within the Bengali society as well. The Muslim League was an important medium and the chief perpetrator of communal violence caused by the ideology of communalism, which had penetrated down this society by the mid-19th century. It was also one of the chief actors in the entire episode of debate over independent, sovereign or greater Bengal. All These factors make an analysis of the Muslim League politics an appropriate entry point. The politics of Bengal Provincial Muslim League becomes the entry point to the study of communalism and communal Politics. This is

because of the fact that the Muslim League was one of the most important political parties in Bengal around which a lot of provincial politics revolved. Though it took sustenance from the All Indian Muslim League, the Bengal Provincial Muslim League always had leaders whose politics was rooted in Bengal. This sometimes created a hiatus between the party's central leadership and the provincial leadership which in turn created situations with important consequences (Batabyal 2005).

The accord between the Hindu and Muslim thoughts continued for several centuries until the 19th century when the Islamic purists purged non-Islamic traditions from Bengali Muslim life to a considerable degree. In the pre-colonial Bengal, people had a very vague idea about nationalism or loyalty to a country. They were more concerned with their loyalty to religion rather than territory, and they were hardly involved in politics. When, as a result of an alien rule under the British, the gulf of the material positions of the two communities widened and communal sentiments rose, the existing diversities among them gradually began to take shape of antagonism (Koimman 2002).

During the colonial period orthodoxy among the Bengali Muslims was on the increase due mainly to the following factors: the most important factor was the anti-Islamic Christian propaganda; secondly, due to the mystic and syncretistic influences, and thirdly, due to the growth of an aggressive Hindu chauvinism. The late 19th century activities of the Christian missionaries in Bengal included printing and distribution of essays, such as the *Prophet's Testimony of Christ*, *Muhammadan ceremonies*, or *Reasons for not being a Musalman*, attacking Islam and attempting to convert Muslims to Christianity. As these were in Bengali language, they also affected Bengali Hindu opinion against the Muslims.

Under the spell of nationalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth century's (and following some British examples) the Hindu intelligentsia turned their attention to history and viewed medieval India as a period of darkness compared both to their modern progress and their ancient glories. Even the best of the Muslim rule in Bengal, during the reign of Sultan Hussain Shah (1493- 1519), was painted as fanatical and oppressive by a well-known Hindu historian of Bengal. Often Mughal rule was described as 'foreign' and Shivaji was described as a hero of the Hindu nation. Dayaand Saraswati's (1824-1883) Arya Samaj movement was an attempt to convert a defensive and static Hinduism into an aggressive missionary religion

in the guise of nationalism. The nationalism preached by Swami Vivekananda (1834-1886) in Bengal also had its roots in Hindu religion and culture and, Hence, Muslims found themselves excluded from such a religion-inspired nationalistic programme. Thus, during the Hindu reawakening the Indian nation appeared to the Hindu mind as strictly Hindu, and Muslims were described as outsiders in India (Chandra 1993).

The clear separation and distinction of religio-cultural identities, between the Hindu and Muslim communities of Bengal, was deeply influenced and in some cases caused by both Hindu and Islamic reformist movements. The Hindus of north India, especially those belonging to the upper castes, started Hindu revivalist movements in the representation of Arya Samaj. Joya Chatterjee has rightly pointed out that the Hindu *Bhadralok* class of Bengal dominated the nationalist politics in the province of East Bengal. According to Chatterjee, these politics that always had a narrow social base in Bengal, and support from the masses, even in the heyday of Gandhi's influence, was limited and sporadic. Except for a brief interlude during the Khilafat agitation, the Muslims of Bengal, who were more than half the population of the province, kept away from the movements led by the *Bhadralok*. However, despite being overwhelmingly *Bhadralok* in character, the Bengal Congress remained a political force to be reckoned with until well into the 1920s and the initial three decades of the twentieth century, and exerted a powerful influence over the mainstream of Indian nationalism (Chatterjee 2007).

In the twentieth century, the *Bhadralok* identity came to rest increasingly upon a perception of itself as a cultured and enlightened class, heir to the traditions of the Bengal renaissance, and bearer of progress and modernity. This self-image informed *Bhadralok* politics justifying the claim for representations by early nationalists. In later years, it also served the demand that Hindus should continue to dominate Bengal, and ultimately that Bengal be partitioned. The timidity that characterized nationalist mobilization in rural Bengal was an expression of the same predicament. Notwithstanding the fact that it was led by the modern progressive and anglicised leaders, *Bhadralok* nationalism drew inspiration, to quite a remarkable extent, from Hindu revivalist ideologies, emphasizing religious precepts. Thus, Aurobindo Ghosh, educated in London and Cambridge, developed the philosophy of 'Political Vedanta' which preached the identification of the nation with the mother goddess Kali. Bipin Chandra Pal

and Sarala Debi, both from old Brahmo families, introduced Kali Puja and Shivaji festivals into the nationalist agenda. *Bhadralok* leaders saw themselves as the standard-bears of Hindu Bengal's destiny. Many of the idioms of Hindu communal discourse were thus recognized in nationalist and indeed the thought of the Bengal renaissance, and had been common currency since the beginning of the twentieth century. But they were subtly reworked in the following decades, with their emphasis shifting from anti-British themes to an anti-Muslim posture (Chatterjee 2007).

Many political organization had been established by Hindus till 1885; like The Bengal Land Holders Association (1837), the British Indian Association (1851), the *Jatiya Gaurab Sampadani Sabha* (1866), the *Hindu Mela* (1867), the *Jatiya Sabha* or the National Society (1870), etc. The Muslims had little to do with these organizations. The Hindu leaders did not make any serious attempt to draw the support or win the sympathy of the Muslims. Bipin Chandra Pal noted that in those days the Hindus regarded Muslims and Christians "as foreigners" . Similar was the attitude of the Muslims towards the Hindus. The Indian National Congress had always had some Muslims in its fold and it stood for secular nationalism and demanded the introduction of democratic institutions. But the bulk of the Muslim community, as well as several community leaders, kept away from it. For example, Nawab Abdul Latif kept away from the Congress because he did not believe that the time was "opportune for forcing the hand of the Government" (Seal 1968).

The Hindu-Muslim differences clearly served the British colonial imperial interests. In 1905, Bengal was partitioned by Lord Curzon and many Bengalis, particularly Hindus, felt that it was a move to split the politically articulate Bengali speaking people. The partition greatly intensified nationalist feeling in Bengal and gave rise to the *Swadeshi* movement. Very few Muslims were involved in these movements. The failure of the Muslims to support the anti-partition movement seemed to hurt Hindu feelings and sharpened communal antagonism.

3.2 The Hindu Mahasabha

Apart from the social-religious reform and revivalist movements, various political parties played an immense role in the proliferation of communalism in Bengal. The Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League were directly and unequivocally responsible for paving the

path of communalism in this province. In addition, several smaller political parties were already active in changing Bengal's political-religious fabric. To some extent the Congress could also be blamed for ignoring the rising divisions and eventually the wave of communalism in the delta region. There are quite a few major examples where the Congress could not recognize the actual problem of communalism.

In fact it could not attack the socio-economic pillars of communalism. The Congress started believing in dialogues with the socio-religious elites of Bengal; and did not make an effort to communicate with the mass of Bengal (Hashmi 1994). A well planned communicative approach might have worked, but unfortunately the secular Congress could not understand the emerging wave of communalism in the delta. For example, the Lucknow Pact of 1916, where the Congress surrendered against the Morley-Minto reforms and recognized the communal divide and rule policy of the British. Although the young leadership of Muslims came closer to the fight against colonialism, but stood no chance against the Congress' acceptance of separate electorates. It was not the only case, the other being the khilafat movement where Gandhi tried to consolidate Muslim agitation into the fight against colonialism. Gandhi eagerly wanted to create an integrated approach to fight against colonial power so he appealed to all communities, classes, gender and race to fight against British colonial power and in his view the post first world war era was the right moment to fight the British as the Muslims were showing anger against the British Raj as they imposed a treaty on Turkey's Khalifa, which hurt Muslim sentiments worldwide. Gandhi and the Congress were successful in consolidation of Muslims in the fight against British Raj; but to some extent it paved the way of communal wave as many communal politicians were recognized after the non-cooperation movement. It is immensely important to say here that due to khilafat movement many Islamic leaders were being recognized and 1922 to 1927 was the period known for many communal riots in India. Radical Hindu elements were also very active in 1920s (Islam 1981).

Congress couldn't initiate dialogues with common Muslims of Bengal. A series of dialogues with elite Muslims spoiled the secular fabric of Bengal and in the post-1937 period witnessed a series of communal riots. The Congress failed to communicate the message of secularism to the general public, making it almost impossible for the Congress to stop the wave of

partition. As far as the Hindu Mahasabha in Bengal is concerned, it worked under a different situational context than the All India Hindu Mahasabha, its central organ. This was because of the different socioeconomic and political realities of Bengal. However, the basic elements of the All India Hindu Mahasabha's politics i.e. fighting the Congress for space among the Hindus in order to legitimise its own standing as the sole spokesman of the Hindus, was the guiding principle even in the case of Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha. (Jalal 1985).

In the context of Bengal, the radicalization of the Muslim League politics and the rapid intensification of its communal overtones during 1940s had a direct bearing on Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha's influence and its politics. The events that Bengal witnessed during the "Direct Action Day" demonstrations in Calcutta, Howrah, Dacca and other places and subsequently the communal riots in Noakhali-Tipperah helped the Hindu Mahasabha increase its influence and appeal among those whose interest it claimed it had been championing. From the very beginning, the Hindu Mahasabha was conscious of its lack of mass base and organizational defects. The Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha leaders were quite conscious of the fact that this weak mass base would not enable them to initiate any large scale and militant political exercise. Nonetheless, the desire to lead a mass action programme was always present in the Mahasabha's agenda. For example, its representative from Sind, Bhojraj Ajwani, moved a resolution to the effect that "If the Government do not accept the Mahasabha demands, the Mahasabha should resort to direct action". The representative from the Punjab Lala Hardayal supported the amendment by saying that if "direct action will be carried out, the Congress would lose its popularity" (Khan 1985).

The response from the representatives from Bengal was, however, marked by caution. N.C. Chatterjee, President of the Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha, opposed the resolution and said that "it was useless to decide on direct action without making sure whether Mahasabha had adequate resources". Similarly Asutosh Lahiry, the Vice-President of the Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha, who was also the person in charge of the organizational matters, said that he had been to different places recently and nowhere had he found Mahasabha powerful so as to launch a 'Direct Action'.

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee had been emphasizing the need for solidarity and organization. He believed that if the Mahasabha remained an organization confined only to a section of the

educated upper classes, completely detached from mass contact, it was bound to prove a distant failure. However, if the Mahasabha had to take recourse to a movement or direct action, against who was it to be directed? Shyama Prasad Mukherjee saw the targets to be both Congress and the Government. “Some sort of movement by way of direct action would be taken up in September. This was not merely a movement against the Government but against the Congress as well so as to initiate the policy of Hindustani” (Batabyal 2005).

He also said that he had “no doubt that young men would rally under the Mahasabha and give account of them”. The organization of direct action or some such programme was important for the Mahasabha for another reason also. For Mukherjee, a strong and virile Hindu movement was a necessary part of India’s political life, in order to make the “saner elements among the Moslems realize that a harmonious communal relationship is essential for the safety and welfare”. For the Hindu Mahasabha, the logic of separate electorates meant that, given its overtly religious character, it had to contest only for the Hindu seats. This, in turn, implied that the Mahasabha had to capture a predominant space within the Hindu community, thus necessitating delegitimising all those political forces which also claimed to represent interests of Hindus as Indians (Khan 1985).

The Hindu Mahasabha was still in the phase of what Bipan Chandra calls liberal communalism till 1937. This was because of several factors which included its lack of mass base and the nature of its leadership, and last but not the least; it did not have any radical aggressive supportive front organization as the Muslim League had in the Muslim National Guard. The Mahasabha did try to create Hindustan National Guard but that was in 1947 (Hashmi 1994). The Mahasabha had declared that the Hindu interests were identical with national interests. Any act of compromise with the anti-Hindu demand of Pakistan could easily be termed as an anti-national act. The Congress, which had been trying to come to terms with the Muslim League, was attacked on this ground. Any overture towards the Muslim League was termed as an act of appeasement. This policy of appeasement, according to the Mahasabha, was the chief obstruction in the way of getting independence. Since the Mahasabha did not have to fight the Muslim League in elections, its only enemy was the Congress and its policies. As Shyama Prasad Mukherjee said, “the Indian National Congress does not itself claim to represent the Hindu point of view” (Chandra 1979).

It has therefore happened that although the Congress had entered the parliamentary bodies in India through Hindu seats, it allowed Hindu interests to be 'sacrificed' and 'jeopardised', in the words of the Mahasabha, in the vain hope of pleasing the reactionary Muslim demands. On the other hand, "the Hindus", Mukherjee declared, "will not accept any composite government which will give undue weightage or disproportionate strength to the Muslims or other minority in excess of what their proportion in the Must themselves and it is not a matter which is the primary concern of Hindus" (Hasan 1993).

Assumption of office by the Muslim League provided the Mahasabha the scope to sharpen its rhetoric of the threat of Muslim domination. The Muslim League government represented the physical manifestation of this threat of Muslim majority. However, this in itself was not enough to show that Hindus were suffering at the hands of the Muslims or the Muslim League Government. The Calcutta riots of August 1946 changed the entire scenario, and provided the Mahasabha with the political tool it was lacking. Now it could be easily shown how irresponsible and discriminatory the Muslim League Government could be. Noakhali-Tippera riots left no room for doubt in the Hindu mind of the truth of Mahasabha rhetoric.

The 'Direct Action Day' riots soon culminated in the larger disturbances in Noakhali-Tippera districts. It was the latter incidents which catapulted the Hindu Mahasabha into one of the most active political forces of Bengal along with the Congress and the Muslim League. From here onwards the Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha also began to assume the role of an opinion builder. One of the earliest and prominent victims of the Noakhali-Tippera riots was Rajendra Lal Roy Choudhury of Karpara, who had also been elected president of the Noakhali district Hindu Mahasabha in 1944. His death, along with quite a few members of his family, was the most talked about brutality of the Noakhali carnage. This also helped Hindu Mahasabha to attain certain mileage which became very clear when later on, in May 1947, the Mahasabha named the conference place at Tarakeshwar as Rajendra Lal Nagar. Further, the Noakhali-Tippera riots created an all India stir and people, especially the Hindus, reacted strongly against the Muslim League Government. The Hindu Mahasabha became one of the rallying centers for relief rescue and rehabilitation works. From Shimla to Pune and from Indore to Jammu, letters, appeals and volunteers began approaching the Sabha in large numbers.

3.3 The Muslim League

Since the last decades of the nineteenth century several Muslim leaders and thinkers had been debating the creation of an exclusive Muslim political organisation. Such an organisation was thought necessary and opportune to raise political consciousness and promote and defend the rights of Muslims throughout the country. The first stage of the Muslim League's formation was initiated by the September 1906 meeting in Lucknow which was attended by Muslim representatives from all over India. Here, the decision was taken to form a new political outfit exclusively to represent Muslim interests.

The objectives of the new party were framed during the December 1906 annual meeting of the All India Muhammadan Educational Conference, which met at Dhaka. This meeting was headed jointly by Nawab Waqar-ul-Mulk and Nawab Muhasan-ul-Mulk. The name of this organisation was suggested to be the All India Muslim Confederacy through a scheme published by Nawab Salimullah Khan (Chatterjee 2007). The leaders of the Educational Conference stressed the need for unity among the Muslims of India under the banner of a single political association, which could fight for its cause against the perceived Hindu dominance of India's political sphere. The formation of the new party was formally proposed by Salimullah Khan and supported by Hakim Ajmal Khan, Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar, Zafar Ali Khan, Syed Nabiullah and Syed Zahur Ahmad among others.

The founding meeting was attended by almost three thousand delegates from various parts of the country, where Sir Agha Khan III proposed the name All-India Muslim League. This name was adopted and Agha Khan was appointed the first president as well. The League's constitution was decided and framed the following year, in 1907, in Karachi. The League was the important medium through which the ideology of communalism penetrated down within the Bengali Society. It was also the chief perpetrator of riots of Calcutta and Noakhali-Teppera. It was also the chief actor in the entire episode of debate over independent, sovereign or greater Bengal. All these factors make analysis of the Muslim League politics an appropriate entry point (Chatterjee 1984).

Jinnah's Fourteen Points, on behalf of the Muslim League provoked the wave of communalism, especially Bengal. Just after the meetings held at Calcutta in December 1928, due to the pressure from Muslim communities, Jinnah was forced to make several amendments and community related changes to the Nehru Report. But the proposed amendments were not confirmed by Congress party, in addition it was also completely rejected. Consequently, Jinnah was refused to attend forth coming conferences. Repercussions were also reflected in the demands raised in the Muslim All Parties conference held in Delhi, in which the fundamental and nationalist Muslims framed a volume of demands on behalf of the Muslims. The meeting unilaterally took a decision that no Muslims in the country would accept the newly framed constitution until their community demands are not being incorporated in it. Later their demands were included in the conference and labelled as Fourteen Points. These points were:

1. A federal constitution with the residuary powers vested in the provinces.
2. All provinces shall be granted a uniform autonomy.
3. Minorities shall be given effective and adequate representation in all legislatures and other elected bodies.
4. One third representation for Muslims at the Central Legislative.
5. A separate electorate in the name of representation of communal groups shall continue and it shall be open to any community.
6. Any kinds of territorial distribution shall not affect the Muslims majority in the Punjab, Bengal and the NWF Province.
7. Religious liberty shall be guaranteed to all communities.
8. No bill or any resolution shall be passed in legislatures or any other elected bodies if three-fourth of the members in the body opposes the bill.
9. Sindh should be separated from the Bombay presidency.
10. Separate and effective reforms should be devised and vindicated in the NWFP and Baluchistan.
11. Adequate share and representations in all the services of the state and in local self-governing bodies.
12. The adequate protection and safeguards for Muslim culture, education, language, religion, personal laws and Muslim charitable institution.

- 13 No cabinet formation without having a proportion of at least one-third Muslim ministers.
- 14 No change in the constitution by the Central legislature without having a clear communal representation.

On 29 December 1930 Sir Muhammad Iqbal delivered his monumental presidential address to the All India Muslim League annual session. He said:

I would like to see Punjab, North-West Frontier Province now Khyber pakhtun Sindh and Balochistan amalgamated into a single state. Self-government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North West India (Baxtar 1997).

In the beginning, Iqbal did not use the word Pakistan but he wanted to project a new state or a separate Muslim state by amalgamating Punjab, Sindh, NWFP and Baluchistan into a big North-Western province within India. Apart from that, Muslim scholars have not argued for separation in the beginning. Rather Iqbal and his camp was an ardent proponent of a 'true' federal setup for India and wanted a consolidated Muslim majority within the Indian Federation (Broomfield 1968).

Iqbal's demand for a Muslim state within India was eagerly supported and forwarded by the Aga Khan (Jalal 1985). However, it was Chaudhri Rehmat Ali who gave it a name 'Pakistan'. It would be comprised of all the Muslim majority provinces in the North West: 'P' for Punjab, 'A' for 'Afghan' (the 'Afghan' Pathans of the NWFP), 'K' for Kashmir, 'S' for Sindh and 'B' for Baluchistan. The Lahore Resolution of 1940 did not mention the name Pakistan and demanded instead that 'the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the north-west and eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute independent states in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign' (Jaffrelot 2002). It was not clear from the Resolution whether the Muslim nation would comprise of one state or two. 1937 election was the point of departure in the history of communalism in subcontinent. The defeat of communal forces compelled them to turn into third phase of communalism- extreme communalism. Now the meetings of league started

held in mosques and ‘the Islam is in danger’ slogans were chanted by league leadership and in the Lahore’s 1940 summit of Muslim League passed the resolution of two nation theory. Communal forces became very active in all over India (Brass 1974).

In Bengal gradually the league received support from the influential heads of religious groups. The Muslim League had always been an urban-based political organization and its autocratic leaders had little contact with the masses. The name of religion and the services of the mullah’s were freely utilized by the league. Volunteer’s corps and national guards were organized (Batabyal 2005).

The propaganda of the Muslim League under the Suhrawardy government raising the cry of the Pakistan movement. Got hold specially the psychology of the educated Muslim community, with their large base at Dhaka. At the same time, after thirties, the richer Muslim peasantry was obtaining a definite political objective. What happened therefore was also a shift of the affluent and educated Muslims both in rural and urban areas, towards the Muslim league. Living aside the Krishak Praja party, which had formally brought the Muslim community together in rural Bengal. Thus the psychological tension of the Hindu *bhadralok* class was brought face to face with the rising affluent and educated Muslim community, leading ultimately to the struggle for power, in the twentieth century (Chatterjee 1994).

The Lahore resolution (1940) forwarded by A.K. Fazlul Haque of the Muslim League was quite vague on the issue of creation of a Muslim state. A.K. Fazlul Haque was one of the leading politicians of Bengal at this time. At that time, every famous person was comparable to an institution. There was the inception of parliamentary party politics, but it was not strong enough to keep the members within a chain. Fazlul Haque boycotted Muslim League in the year 1942 and a new ministry was formed, together with Hindu Mahasabha and Congress. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee was included inside the ministry and this was known as Shyama-Haque Ministry (Jafferlot 1996).

Lord Lingthigow gave the League the League friendly assurances and it was in that background that the League arrived at the Lahore resolution of 23 March 1940, calling for the independence of Muslim majority provinces. The Lahore resolution was point of departure in the history of communalism in India in general and Bengal in particular. Muslim

League paved the way of secessionist, separatist and retaliatory communalism. Now the communal proliferation was on its crest (Hasan 1993).

The election held in 1945-46 and Muslim league won a landslide victory in securing 115 out of 119 Muslim seats. The congress won 86 seats while the Hindu Mahasabha only one, KPP won only 5 seats, and Suhrawardy became premier of Bengal. On April 1946, Jinnah convened a meeting in Delhi of those elected on the Muslim league's ticket. At the meeting he proposed an amendment to the Lahore resolution that would change the call for two independent states to a single "sovereign independent state" to be called Pakistan (Baxtar, 1997).

Jinnah started immediate demand of Pakistan and August, 16, 1946 was the date declared by the all-India-Muslim league as 'direct action day', Kolkata witnessed a very serious communal riot. 16 August 1946 was fixed as the Direct Action Day and it turned into the "Great Calcutta Killing". Within a week more than 6000 cases of Hindus and Muslims being stabbed or shot were reported, while 20 thousand were maimed and raped. The Prime Minister of Bengal, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy made a request to the Governor of Bengal Sir Frederick Burrows to announce a holiday on 16th August. But the retaliation of Bengal Congress was different and they protested against this move. This movement was done due to this; they thought that it would have enabled the Muslims to enforce hartals. It is observed and understood that both these political parties had different and peculiar interests for observing or not observing (Pandey 1990).

Later, Congress leaders went into the streets and requested the Hindus to keep the public life normal and all shops open. But Urdu newspapers observed a complete strike on the same day. Through newspapers, a detailed plan of programme was circulated and says that the processions and demonstrations would commence from various parts of Hooghly, Calcutta, Howrah, 24 Parganas and Metiabruz would gather at the foot of the Ochterlony Monument where a joint mass rally presided over by Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy would be held (Sarkar 1972). The common understanding and demands of Hindus was making people understand and bringing all to agree with the idea of United India. But the troubles began to bounce on the very morning of the August 16. It went into worse and shops were forcefully closed. Later, it went into an another level where protesters started stabbing, throwing of

stones and brickbats. The same day, Muslim League's had come up with a big rally and Muslims with Iron Bars and lathes started gathering. This incident was noted with some notorious and fiery speeches delivered by Khawaja Nazimuddin and Suhrawardy. Within no time, the protest had been converted into riots in Calcutta. These riots spread to other parts of India, particularly North India and turned into a Civil War between Hindus and Muslims. The presence of Mahatma Gandhi had actually calmed down the situation, still in four days of time, around 4000 people were killed and 15000 injured (Sengupta 2001).

Thus, socio-religious reform movement and political organizations played an immense role in the proliferation of communalism in Bengal. Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha were immensely responsible behind the growth of communalism in Bengal. To some extent the Congress was also culpable as it couldn't stop the wave of communalism in Bengal, and it did not attack the socio-economic root of communalism; the lack of communicative approach towards the masses a lot.

Chapter 3

Ethno-Linguistic Nationalism: 1947-75

1. Introduction

The partition of India led to the creation of India and Pakistan in 1947. This partition was explicitly done on the basis of a religious principle with the Muslim majority regions going to Pakistan and Hindu majority regions going to India. While the Indian National Congress had not accepted religion as a meaningful principle to divide British India, it eventually agreed to the idea. However, true to their objections to the religious principle used for partition, when India was established, it was set up as a secular country. On the other hand, the Muslim League led by Jinnah had pushed the religious principle based on its two nation theory. This led to Pakistan being set up as a state with religion as one of the foundation stones from the beginning itself as that was what was projected to win the state in the first place. Thus, it is no surprise that religion played a key role in subsequent developments in Pakistan.

However, while religion was accepted an important factor, at least some leaders of Pakistan wanted to show Pakistan adhering to a larger secular principle as well. Further, Pakistan as it was created in 1947 was not a geographically contiguous state as East Pakistan was far removed, geographically and culturally from West Pakistan. This also led to its own set of complications. Much of the early leaders of Pakistan came from West Pakistan and the capital itself was in Islamabad in West Pakistan. This eventually led to a cultural clash between East and West Pakistan which East Pakistan seceding and forming the state of Bangladesh in 1971. In this context, this chapter will look at how secularism and religion evolved in East Pakistan and later Bangladesh from 1947 to 1975.

2. The United Pakistan Period, 1947 to 1971

As part of the united Pakistan, the East Bengali people faced severe socio-cultural, ethnic and economic disparities and differences. A number of issues divided the two wings of Pakistan. The vast linguistic, ethnic and cultural differences present in the subcontinent were far more apparent in Pakistan than in India. This was also because of the fact that the country was geographically divided unlike India where the physical unity of the country made these differences somewhat less impactful. Moreover, the lack of truly pan national leaders in Pakistan who could appeal to both East and West Pakistan was also a serious problem, especially after the death of Jinnah. In India on the other hand, the longevity of Nehru's leadership provided a much needed stability for the country.

It also appeared that the two nation theory, which posited the religious identity of being a Muslim or Hindu as two broad national identities, was challenged within Pakistan by the cultural and ethnic divisions between Bengali Muslims and west Pakistani Muslims. For example, the Pakistani government wanted to declare Urdu as the only state language in Pakistan which was resented in East Pakistan where there was much love for Bengali language. Pakistan in its post-independence period started emphasizing on Islamic unity and suppressed the demands of other ethnic minority groups. Jinnah visited east Bengal only once after independence. Sharif al mujahid points out in his book 'Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah : studies in interpretation' that in his principal public address on march,1948 Jinnah said -

Let me make it very clear to you that the state language of Pakistan is going to be urdu and no other language. Anyone who tries to mislead you is really enemy of Pakistan. Without one state language, no nation can remain solidity together and function (Mujahid 1981)

His views were supported by the then Chief Minister of East Pakistan, Naziumuddin, but they were rejected by a majority of East Pakistan people. Nazimuddin left Dhaka to become Governor-general after the death of Jinnah. Nurul Amin replaced him and he also supported Urdu as a national language. However, despite that, the language issue would emerge as the focal point of significant conflict between West and East Pakistanis. This was so because imposing Urdu was seen in East Pakistan as part of a mission to 'Islamize' East Pakistan, resulting into several general strikes in the East Pakistan. The census of 1951 showed that Urdu was the mother tongue of only two million citizens in

Pakistan, which constituted to 3.3 percent of total population, and that only 7.3 percent of Pakistanis could even speak Urdu. Urdu was predominantly spoken by people who migrated from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and settled in Karachi. In such a context, being the national language, Urdu was going to be the medium of education from primary to higher education and in East Pakistan, Bengali script was about to be replaced by Arabic script. This was seen by most in East Pakistan as an assault on their Bengali identity and an effort to erase their historical identity. This would also have serious implications for educated Bengalis who had to compete for jobs with their counterparts from West Pakistan, who would now have to learn two languages: English and Urdu, in addition to Bengali (Bhardwaj 2010).

Rahman Sobhan writes that the majority of population in East Pakistan, who had worked for the Pakistan movement before independence, were utterly disappointed and disillusioned once Pakistan was born. They were frustrated with the ruling coterie in Pakistan, and after their mother-language was attacked, the Bengalese became quickly resentful and even fearful of Pakistani nationalism. A kind of active conflict developed in the society of east Bengal, among different class of people. The language movement, or Bhasha Andolon, gave rise to new type of politicians in East Pakistan. This was the rise of Bengali speaking student agitators. Dhaka University students went on strike and decided to call a general strike or *hartal* and demonstration throughout East Pakistan on 21 February 1952 with long lasting consequences.

The events of February 1952 turned East Pakistan categorically against the Muslim League government of Pakistan. This became clear to all in 1954, when East Pakistan held its first provincial elections. Throughout East Pakistan, the ruling Muslim league was uprooted and deeply humiliated. By emphasizing on ethno-linguistic issues, Awami League managed to unite many dissatisfied factions on one platform. Awami league provided a political platform for vernacular elites. Meanwhile, Gantantrik Dal (GD) was founded in 1953 by radical and communist groups of East Pakistan. They also started demanding for autonomy and equality for East Bengal, abolition of feudalism and dissociation of Pakistan from the commonwealth group. By the mid-1950s, Awami league changed its name from Awami Muslim league to Awami league and GD faded

rapidly from Pakistan’s political scenario. The language movement continued till 1956, when the Pakistan Constituent Assembly agreed to accept both Urdu and Bengali as state languages and Pakistan finally had a constitution. Later in 1956 Bengali was recognised as one of the official languages. Despite this the Central Government, with a view to bringing the languages closer to Urdu, kept proposing policies to Islamize and change them.

TABLE- 3.1
Levels of Development: East Pakistan and West Pakistan
Selected Indicators: Census 1951

	East Pakistan	West Pakistan
Average density of population (persons per sq. mile)	777	259
Gross Regional Product per capita (Rs.)	293	342
Per capita cereal consumption (oz/day)	14.9	15-7
Adult literacy rate (%)	21.1	31.4
School enrolment at secondary level (per 1,000 of population)	12.5	15.1
Urban population (% of total population)	9.4	14.7
Share of the total labour force in the agricultural Sector (%)	83.9	71.0
Value of product in manufacturing (in Rs.millions)	472	961

Gross Regional Product (%)	0.06	4.3
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Sources: Peach, Uzair and Rucker, 1959; Sobhan, 1974, 1993; Stern, 1971.

The Bengali population saw this as some kind of conspiracy to impose Urdu upon them. The Bengali Nationalists articulated their ideology in the so-called Four Pillars of Mujibism - secularism, democracy, nationalism, and socialism. So the majoritarianism and the state sponsored Urdu language politics was seen as deliberately meant to distort the politically weak but ethnically emerging Bengalis. Serious problems were created by the repressive policies of the State, not only regional integration was affected by this, but also the elite-mass integration. With the increase in the disparity, the demand of the autonomy grew stronger. Participants from different fields, the students, politicians, economists, the press and the intellectuals made an effective use of the economic discussions to mobilize the mass support for regional autonomy in the East Wing.

It was the direct political domination by the West Pakistan that had led to economic subjugation of the East Pakistan. Though the Bengali speaking area was rich in raw materials, the financial proportion they were getting from West Pakistan was very marginal. Most of the industrial centres were located in West Pakistan. The concentration of economic power was totally in the hands of the Western wing.

In short, the local and national mobilisation of resources was successful, but when it came to sharing and distribution, the Eastern wing was marginalized and discriminated. East Bengal was facing a famine in February 1956, when the constituent Assembly adopted the constitution of Pakistan. The Bengali members were resentful on the denial of their provincial autonomy demand in the constitution. In a meeting, Maulana Bhasani said that East Bengal would be forced to prepare for secession from Pakistan if the central government did not fulfil their economic demands. The inequality in regional incomes was increasing. This was due to the process of industrial development of Pakistan. The larger urban population (33%) that lived in the Western Wing was getting the primary benefit of the industrial development and regional inequality.

Table-3.2
Rates of Development: East Pakistan and West Pakistan
 (Selected indicators)

Economic indicators	Year	East Pakistan	West Pakistan
Average annual rate of economic growth:	1950-59	1.9	2.7
	1960-69	4.3	6.4
Per capita income (Rs):	1949/50	288	351
	1969/70	331	533
Per capita grain consumption (cal/day):	1949/50	1,870	1,930
	1969/70	1,860	2,190
Share of industry in the Gross Regional Product	1969/70	8.9	19.6

Sources: Peach, Uzair & Rucker, 1959; Sobhan, 1974, 1993; Stern, 1971.

The economy of the East Pakistan was dependant primarily on agricultural sector and the 95% of population lived in rural areas. In the chain of event, the East Wing was left out of the development process an only a little gain was experienced in per capita income. Although, in 1947, there were certain disparities between the East and West Pakistan, but

these were allegedly only little in size. The rapid widening of the disparity in the per capita income between East and West Pakistan began in the early 1950s. On the Eastern side the per capita income rose only by 0.7 percent, while on the Western wing it rose at the rate of 2 percent, making it nearly three times higher than the former.

The educated middle class of East Bengal opposed the regional disparities in allocation of central funds, in public and private investments. Professor Mujaffar Ahmed of Dhaka University said in an article that East Bengal sent out goods in return for which she got nothing. The East Pakistan received only a share of 20 percent from the central government development expenditure during 1950-51 to 1954-55, despite bearing the 60 percent of the total population. This share reached to peak during the third Five Year Plan period (1965-66 to 1969-70), that too only at 36 percent. Not only in the allocation of the funds generated by the central government, inequality was also increasing in the provincial budget due to asymmetric fiscal rule of the Centre. The Eastern region bore the consequences of the rapid industrialisation happening in the West, as the government was systematically transferring the visible as well as invisible resources to West from East (Dasgupta 1971).

The East Bengalis were particularly sore about the transfer of resources from their wing to West Pakistan which was about Rs. 210 million per annum in the pre-plan period and Rs. 100 million per annum in the first period and although the situation changed in the sixties the specious excuse for such transfer had offended East Bengali feeling. It was argued by the ruling classes in West Pakistan that since 80% of the Central revenues are collected in their wing, East Bengal must treat this transfer as its payment for central services such as defence and administration. Yet, if one considers the circumstances which were responsible for this disparity in revenue collection from the two wings, this transfer of resources was seen as nothing less than a kind of *Jizya* on the Bengali citizens of the state (Dasgupta 1971).

So a clear cut economic exploitation was easily recognized by East Pakistani people. The East wing provided a large export earning commodity, jute. Before partition, Khulna, Jessore and Barishal were the chief supplier of food to Calcutta and numerous jute mills

of Calcutta helped to consume the jute from East Bengal. But after partition, export of jute to Calcutta was controlled by West Pakistan, and East Pakistan where jute was grown was never given her dues. All the money earned from exports was mostly spent on Pakistan. Generally, most of the Pakistan's export in each fiscal year originated in East Pakistan till 1969.

Every Year the percentage of West Pakistan's export earning returning Remained exceeded to that of East Pakistan. This was one of the major grievances of East Pakistan as they contributed heavily to foreign exchange earnings by producing export quality raw materials like jute and jute goods, and these goods constituted 90 percent of the total export earning of Pakistan. Despite this, West Pakistan kept accounting for the greater portion of foreign exchange to use for the industrialisation. All the industries that were supposed to be made according to the plan were largely situated in the West Pakistan. The income and wealth inequality were so large by the late 1960s, that according to Pakistan's Chief Economist Mahbb Ul Haq, only 22 families owned 66 percent of the Pakistan's industrial wealth and controlled 87 percent of the assets of the banking and insurance industries. Dr. Haq offers a still more significant correction on the basis of price of rice in east Bengal:

The staple diet of East Pakistan is rice and that of West Pakistan wheat. In national income terms, a ton of rice has roughly the same nutrition values as one tone of wheat. This means that even if an average east Pakistani is getting the same nutrition from his rice diet as an average west Pakistanis from his wheat diet; he is accredited with more income because rice is an expensive crop in national income accounting terms. If a correction is made for this factor, by attributing the same value added to rice as to wheat , the disparity in regional incomes become much larger...in fact, if an adjustment is made for differences in some of the other prices...the real income disparity will become even larger (Schendel 2009)

It seemed that East Pakistan was a colony of West Pakistan in terms of economic exploitation. The economists of East Pakistan were very deeply aware about this economic colonialism. Mujibur Rahman's six point programme was a plea for an economic partition of the country. The third point in the programme provides for separate currencies. The fourth point proposes power of taxations and revenue collections for federal units while the fifth point asks for separate foreign exchange accounts and the

sixth contemplates self-sufficiency of East Bengal in defence matters. Mujibur Rahman's 6 point programme actually contemplates two economic communities bound by economic agreements for the benefit of each (Dasgupta 1971).

Another big disparity that was found in united Pakistan was regarding its military composition. As British had declared the Bengali ethnic community as a non-martial race, West Pakistani domination of the Pakistani army in the beginning was understandable. However, it continued even after independence. One of the reports that came in the year 1956, stated that the officers from East Pakistan held only one of the sixty posts of the rank of brigadier or higher. While, for the field grade ranks of colonel, lieutenant colonel, and major, out of 850 positions, only twelve were filled by the officers of East Pakistan. In the same report it was also mentioned that in the air force the Bengali officers were fewer than 10 percent and barely one percent in the navy. (Maniruzzaman 1971).

Between 1962 and 1968 the Ayub regime, remained indulged in personality cult and continued its attack on the Bengali speaking section of population. Further, in the 1965 war with India, Pakistan realized that, it didn't possess the capability to defend itself, further adding to its unpopularity in the East Pakistan, which often felt cut-off from the mainstream. All this led to a charismatic East Pakistan politician to dominate the political scene in the region for the next ten years.

In early 1966, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of the Awami League captured the mood of East Pakistan by presenting a list of demands known as the six point program. It was more radical than previous demands for autonomy because it no longer advocated a federal structure for Pakistan. Instead, it demanded a confederation of two separate units. The source of the six-point programme lied on the original Lahore resolution, which consists of independent Muslim states. In 1967, five major parties, the Awami league, the council Muslim league, the Jamaat-e-Islam, the KSP, and the Nizam-e-Islam formed a political organization in the name of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). In order to hatch a conspiracy against Mujibur Rehman's six point program Bhutto instigated Maulana that

the six point program was an American ploy to check the growing friendship between Pakistan and China (Ahmed, 2004).

In January 1968, Ayub government arrested so many people and charged cases against them in what came to be known as the Agartala conspiracy. The statement alleged that some military personnel visited Agartala in India to meet first secretary of the Indian High commissioner in Dhaka regarding the secession of East Pakistan from the West with the help of India. Sheikh-Mujibur Rahman was also among them. However, they all pleaded not guilty. During the trial, Muzib became a hero in the view of East Pakistani people. Sheikh Muzibur Rahman started all party students eleven-point programme which was a combined demand of all the secular or leftist parties. Maulana Bhashani demanded the full implementation of original Lahore resolution, Ayub Khan arrested him. When Ayub Khan lifted the state of emergency on 17 February, many public meetings were held by Democratic action committee. On 18 February, Sheikh Muzibur Rahman and Maulana Bhasani refused the proposal of Ayub Khan's meeting with Democratic action committee. Salahuddin Ahmed writes, on 21st February, 1969 Ayub Khan announced that he would not stand for re-election as the president. In the broadcast he said-

People want direct election on the basis of adult franchise....people in east Pakistan feel that in the present system they are not equal partners, and also that they do not have full control over the affairs of their Province (Ahmad 2004; Sengupta 2011).

Ayub Khan called a round table conference on 10th march, 1969 to overcome the political problems, but Sheikh Muzibur Rahman refused to join until the Agartala conspiracy charges were withdrawn. In response, the government withdrew the charges and Sheikh Rahman joined the roundtable conference. Muzib placed his six-point Programme again in the meeting and he also demanded the transfer of capital of United Pakistan from Islamabad to Dhaka. He strongly demanded two currencies also to be implemented. Ayub Khan was ready to accept the norms of federal state but he was not ready to grant autonomy for East Pakistan. Later, Ayub Khan approached Yahya Khan who was the commander in chief of the army for a political solution, and on 25th March, Ayub resigned. Some political thinkers say that he was responsible for the disintegration

of Pakistan. It was clear that he disliked Bengali people. Even though he spent his early years of military career in East Pakistan, he could not develop affection for Bengali people and their culture. Hamid Yusuf in his book 'Pakistan in search of democracy 1947-77' writes

The unity of country was dear to his heart, but his rule, through exclusion of East Pakistan from a share in political authority and its economic subservience to the west wing, only contributed to the rise of the movement for regional autonomy in the eastern province (Yusuf 1980)

After the announcement of the resignation of Ayub Khan, General Yahya Khan declared martial law and he dissolved the national and provincial assemblies and all the ministries and provincial governorships ceased to hold office. He announced that all the law, regulations or any judgments would come under martial law. Yahya Khan became the president of the Pakistan on 31st march, 1969. He announced that a new constitution would be drafted. Yahya Khan proclaimed that the election would be held on the basis of adult franchise. On November 11, 1970 a strong cyclone hit East Pakistan, causing the death of over half a million people which saw only tepid government response. This also further fuelled anti-government sentiments in East Pakistan. Yahya Khan's regime was unable to overcome resentment after cyclone. East Pakistani people realized that the government is incapable or unwilling to deal with even natural calamities.

3. 1970 elections

1970 elections were the first and last elections ever to be held on the basis of population before the break-up of Pakistan. Sheikh Muzibur Rahman's Awami league scored a landslide victory in both the national assembly and the provincial assembly. The Awami league captured 167 seats out of 169 seats reserved for East Pakistan in the national assembly and 298 seats out of a total of 310 seats in the provincial assembly. In West Pakistan, on the other hand, Z.A. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party could win only 81 seats out of the 144 seats reserved for the West in national assembly.

Table 3.1

**Party positions in 1970 elections
(Seats and percentage of total vote polled)**

Party	Punjab	Sind	NWFP	Baluchistan	West	East	Total
Awami League	0 (0.07%)	0(0.7%)	0(0.2%)	0(0.2%)	0	160(74.9%)	160(38.3%)
Pakistan Peoples Party	62 (41.6%)	18 (44.9%)	1(14.2%)	0(2.3%)	81	0	81(19.5%)
PML(Q)	1(5.4%)	1 (10.7%)	7((22.6%)	0(10.9%)	9	0(1.0%)	9(4.5%)
PML (convention)	7(5.1%)	0(1.7%)	0	0	7	0(2.8%)	7(3.3%)
Jamaat e Ulema Islami	0(5.2%)	0(4.3%)	6(25.4%)	1(20.0%)	7	0(0.9%)	7(4.0%)
Markazi Jamiat Ulema Pakistan	4(9.8%)	3(7.4%)	0(0%)	0	7	0	7(4.0%)
National Awami Party (Wali)	0	0(0.3%)	3(18.4%)	3(45.1%)	6	0(1.8%)	6(2.3%)
Jamaat e Islam	1(4.7%)	2(10.3%)	1(7.2%)	0(1.1%)	4	0(6.0%)	4(6.0%)
PML (council)	2(12.6%)	0(6.8%)	0(4.0%)	0(10.9%)	2	0(1.6%)	2(6.0%)
PDP	0(2.2%)	0(0.4%)	0(0.3%)	0(0.3%)	0	1(2.2%)	1(2.9%)

			%)			%)	
Independents	5 (11.8%)	3(10.7%))	7(6.0%))	0(6.8%)	15	1(3.4%))	16(7.1%)
Total seats	82	27	25	4	138	162	300

Source:
http://
/elections.
com.

pk/contents.php?i=7#Party

The Awami league's overwhelming victory in the first ever national elections sent shock waves of alarm into the citadel of the military-bureaucratic ruling clique in Islamabad. The situation turned out to be all the more uncomfortable for the power elite when Muzib blared in a victory rally on 19 December 1970 that he warmly thanked the people for having given a historic verdict in favour of their six-point Programme. They pledged to implement this verdict (Roy 1983).

Bhutto claimed that government could not be formed without the co-operation of his party. And he said that the PPP is not prepared to occupy the opposition benches in the national assembly. He started doing undemocratic things, like he claimed that his party was the sole representative of the people of West Pakistan and so he could not be undermined in sharing the power with Awami league. Sheikh Muzibur Rahman was firmly determined for framing the new constitution based on his six-point and eleven-point programme. Yahya khan came to Dhaka to hold discussions with Sheikh Muzib and while leaving Dhaka, he gave a statement that Sheikh Muzib was going to be the future prime minister of Pakistan. Bhutto was shocked about this statement and On 27 January, 1971, Bhutto came to Dhaka with his party members to discuss the framing of the constitution. But Sheikh was very rigid about his six-point programme. The important thing to note is that while PPP had not got any support in East Pakistan, Awami league had a good number of members in West Pakistan, especially in the urban-centres.

On 16 February, 1971 Bhutto announced that his party would boycott the national assembly's inaugural sessions to be held on 3 March, 1971 unless the sheikh modified his programme for regional autonomy. Bhutto's uncompromising decision was very

objectionable as many parties opposed his attitude. While Maulana Bhasani took it as threat to East Pakistan, Nurul Amin, the president of PDP said that Bhutto's comment was deplorable.

People want direct election on the basis of adult franchise....people in east Pakistan feel that in the present system they are not equal partners, and also that they do not have full control over the affairs of their Province (Ahmad 2004; Sengupta 2011).

Ayub Khan called a round table conference on 10th March, 1969 to overcome the political problems, but Sheikh Mujibur Rahman refused to join until the Agartala conspiracy charges were withdrawn. In response, the government withdrew the charges and Sheikh Rahman joined the roundtable conference. Mujib placed his six-point Programme again in the meeting and he also demanded the transfer of capital of United Pakistan from Islamabad to Dhaka. He strongly demanded two currencies also to be implemented. Ayub Khan was ready to accept the norms of federal state but he was not ready to grant autonomy for East Pakistan. Later, Ayub Khan approached Yahya Khan who was the commander in chief of the army for a political solution, and on 25th March, Ayub resigned. Some political thinkers say that he was responsible for the disintegration of Pakistan. It was clear that he disliked Bengali people. Even though he spent his early years of military career in East Pakistan, he could not develop affection for Bengali people and their culture. Hamid Yusuf in his book 'Pakistan in search of democracy 1947-77' writes

The unity of country was dear to his heart, but his rule, through exclusion of East Pakistan from a share in political authority and its economic subservience to the west wing, only contributed to the rise of the movement for regional autonomy in the eastern province (Yusuf 1980)

After the announcement of the resignation of Ayub Khan, General Yahya Khan declared martial law and he dissolved the national and provincial assemblies and all the ministries and provincial governorships ceased to hold office. He announced that all the law, regulations or any judgments would come under martial law. Yahya Khan became the president of the Pakistan on 31st March, 1969. He announced that a new constitution would be drafted. Yahya Khan proclaimed that the election would be held on the basis of

adult franchise. On November 11, 1970 a strong cyclone hit East Pakistan, causing the death of over half a million people which saw only tepid government response. This also further fuelled anti-government sentiments in East Pakistan. Yahya Khan's regime was unable to overcome resentment after cyclone. East Pakistani people realized that the government is incapable or unwilling to deal with even natural calamities.

4. The Liberation War

Understanding the political scenario, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave a call for Non-cooperation movement from 1 March to 25th March 1971. His main motive was to paralyze the administration of government without his support. On 3rd March, Yahya Khan made an effort through radio to invite the political leaders for talk but it was rejected by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and others. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman announced a hartal and asked the people to stop cooperation to the government in every field. In response, Army started killing Bengalis in order to terrorize the Bengalis at this stage. Yahya Khan appointed Lt. General Tikka Khan, an infamous army officer for his ruthless temperament as the governor of East Pakistan. Bengalis were not very serious about seceding from Pakistan till this time and their rhetoric was also part posturing. However, the actions which were taken by Yahya Khan led to the end of the patience of East Pakistani people. Yahya Khan started transferring many troops from West to East Pakistan. Army indulged in killing unarmed Bengali civilians. On 7th March 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman called for a historic public meeting in Dhaka where he appealed to people for stopping cooperation with government and semi-government organizations, until six-point demand were accepted. He declared -

Let every house in Bangladesh be turned into a fortress and I would ask you to get ready with whatever weapons you can lay your hands on to resist enemy.....our struggle from now on is a struggle for emancipation, for independence (Banglapedia, 2006).

25th March, 1971 was one of the saddest days in the political history of Bangladesh. This was the day when the most barbaric military crackdown by West Pakistani army was unleashed against the unarmed innocent civilian people of East Pakistan (Feldman, 1975). Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested from his house on the day. On 26th March, 1971, the

Awami league proclaimed independence of Bangladesh and from then on, one of the bloodiest and ruthless civil wars in memory started. In this unprecedented genocide of modern times, about three million people lost their lives and damage to properties cost the nation around US \$ 1 billion (Ahmed 2004).

The main course of the battle between the Pakistan Army and Bangladeshi militia called Mukti Bahini. Mukti Bahini was headed by General Muhammad Osmani. They fought like guerrillas. The Pakistani Army also encouraged the Razakars, who were the Bengalis who did not want Bangladesh to become an independent country, to brutally suppress the rebellion. By May the first phase of the war was over. The army had established a semblance of control over most of the terrified delta, although resistance had not died down. Meanwhile the Awami League leadership had regrouped in India, where they formed a government-in-exile. With Indian support they formally proclaimed Bangladesh to be an independent state on 17 April 1971 and they declared Muzibur Rahman as its President. India gave shelter to Bangladeshi refugees and also trained its freedom fighters apart from providing them with arms and ammunition. Throughout these nine months, 50000 refugees reached India every day. The people of East Pakistan were fighting for their continuously denied rights even after the historic victory of Awami League in 1970 elections, which justified their demands. Thus, their disillusionment with the idea of united Pakistan was complete. The stage was reached when it was no more a fight for securing mere full provincial autonomy for East Pakistan, which had been denied to them for 24 years but it was a fight for the independence of Bengalis and establishing a home land for them (Ahmed 2004).

India gave shelter to Bengalis and by the end of the April, a million Bengalis left for India. With the onset of monsoon, the Pakistan army found it difficult to operate in Bangladesh which provided an opportunity for the freedom fighters. India also decided to assume an active role. And finally, the Indian armed forces and the freedom fighters fought together in the war. Without the help of India, the war would have been a prolonged one and would have involved more suffering for Bangladeshi people. The role of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was very effective regarding her commitment to come to the help of Bangladeshi people. She moved a resolution in the Indian parliament

against Pakistan. India invaded Pakistan in November, 1971 and Indian troops entered East Pakistan and Yahya Khan said that it was the worst situation for Pakistan as it was now facing Indian aggression. On 3rd December, 1971 Pakistan declared war against India. . Indira Gandhi ordered severe air and ground attacks against Pakistani troops. India, which had superior equipment and forces, launched a three-pronged movement on Dhaka from the Indian states of West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura. This easily overwhelmed the already overstretched Pakistani army.

During the war, as tide turned against his country, Pakistan's President Yahya Khan sent a message to General Niazi to surrender. So the Pakistani army surrendered on 16th December under the leadership of Lt. Gen. Niazi. They surrendered to the joint force of Mukti Bahini and Indian army. An Instrument of Surrender was signed by the defeated Pakistani General Niazi and the victorious Indian commander General Aurora. Although the help from India was very fruitful, Mukti Bahini's role was unforgettable during the liberation war. People of Bangladesh celebrated 16 December as victory day of Bangladesh. The war was over and an independent state had come into being. On 6 December, India was the first government who gave recognition to the government of Bangladesh. Around thirty countries recognized Bangladesh as independent country till February, 1972. Just after Independence major countries started recognising Bangladesh as a sovereign country. Warsaw countries recognised it first followed by Soviet Union in 1972. USA recognised Bangladesh in 1972 and Pakistan in 1974.

5. The Formation of Linguistic Identity

Language has a strong emotive appeal and forms an important pivot around which nation is made. Imposition of one language over a Babel of tongues wreaks havoc for the nations that are linguistically diverse. Same happened in Pakistan. West Pakistan dominated over east in terms of economic, military and political power and upwardly mobile Bengali Muslims felt dictated even in East Pakistan. The West Pakistani military bureaucratic elite dictated East Pakistani people. Even the economy was factored on the caprices of the Western elites. (Khan 2010).

Linguistic identity was playing the most important role in the growth of national consciousness among East Pakistani people. The ideology of Islamic unity was employed by Pakistan early in the post-independence period to deny the validity of the claims and demands of the minority groups – the Bengalis, Sindhis, Pathans and Baluchis, for the recognition of their distinct identity and needs. The first event of unrest in East Pakistan appeared only a few months after partition, and was provoked by the decision to impose Urdu as the official ‘national language’ of Pakistan. Many in West Pakistan knew very little about the Bengali language but thought of it as in need of ‘purification’ from Hindu influences.

Within a year of the establishment of Pakistan, the educated Bengali Muslims discovered that culturally they were in a kind of Egyptian captivity. From the country’s founding in 1947, Bengalis rioted against what they perceived to be the inferior status accorded to their language (Sisson & Leo E. Rose 1990). They thought they were aliens in their homeland where their language was slighted and their culture criticized for its Hindu smell. Later they saw that this disrespect for their language and their culture was only an aspect of a policy of colonial exploitation of the East by the West, their love for their language and culture deepened. In the past they had embraced their Muslim culture over the culture of Bengali Hindus who were now largely part of India. Now, they embraced their Bengali culture in opposition to the culture of West Pakistan. In the past their Muslim culture was only a weapon in their hands, now their Bengali culture was a thing of their soul. Their Bengali language soon became the very symbol of their cultural identity and they soon realized that they could save that identity only by saving the prestige of their language. The ruling classes in West Pakistan feared that the Bengali Muslim's love for their language might lead to the emergence of a Bengali nationalism which could weaken the very foundation of the new state.

Formation of Pakistan was a result of Jinnah’s two nation theory that Hindus and Muslims constitute two nations and cannot live together. The two nation theory of Jinnah could not give Pakistan a strong foundation for continued existence. Jinnah knew it in totality that this theory is based on shaky propositions. Therefore on 11, August 1947 he himself said that:

“In this division, it was impossible to avoid the question of minorities being in one Dominion or the other Now, if we want to make this great State of Pakistan happy and prosperous; we should wholly and solely concentrate on the well-being of the people, and specially of the masses and the poor.....even as regards Muslims, you have Pathans, Punjabis, Shias, Sunnis and so on and among the Hindus you have Brahmins, Vaishnavas, Khattris, also Bengalis, Madrasis and so on ... Indeed, if you ask me, this has been the biggest hindrance/in the way of India to attain its freedom and independence and but for this we would have been free peoples long ago ... you may belong to any religion or caste or creed-that has nothing to do with the business of the State ... we are starting with this principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State” (Jinnah, 1947).

It is to be noted with interest that in this historical address, Jinnah did not mention the Bengalis when he classified the Muslims into the Punjabis, the Pathans, etc., although the Bengalis of Pakistan were mostly Muslims, but he did mention the Bengalis when he made a classification of the Hindus. This act of both omission and commission could not be just accidental. Being the first speech of the Head of the new State before the Constituent Assembly, it must have been very carefully prepared. As one author notes -

It is, thus, clear that in spite of the idealism expressed by Jinnah: on the question of nationalism, it was due to the political circumstances created by him and his associates that Pakistan never had the opportunity of becoming one nation by discarding the ‘two-nation theory’. In the concept of the Pakistanis, the word "nations" mean (the Muslims and the Hindus, the former being identified with the West Pakistanis and the latter with the Bengalis of the eastern part of the country. The old conflict of the British period continued in a different form. In those days, the conflict, as Rehmat Ali explained, was between the Hindus and the Muslims for supremacy of the former and survival of the latter. But now it was between the West Pakistanis (among whom the Punjabis ultimately gained the upper hand) who wanted to establish their supremacy and the Bengalis who had to fight for survival (Roy 2014).

All the contradictions between Bengali Muslims and Muslims of Uttar Pradesh and the Punjabi Muslims, were unmistakably manifested even before Pakistan came into existence, now multiplied to a very great extent.

From the beginning, the Bengalis were conspicuous by their total absence in the ruling group of Pakistan After some internal conflict in that ruling group, the hegemony of the Bombay-Uttar Pradesh group was replaced by the supremacy of the Punjabis. The Pathan Generals who dominated the armed wing of the ruling group kept themselves aloof from the ordinary masses of the Pathans and were linked with the Punjabi feudal and

bureaucratic group. The latter group controlled the political and commercial life of Pakistan. Whatever might be the character of the ruling group of Pakistan it always wanted the economic development of West Pakistan (particularly Punjab) by exploiting the people of East Bengal. Thus, almost immediately after the birth of Pakistan, the Bengalis found themselves in a status of political and economic inequality. They found that their land was severely exploited in the interest of West Pakistan which was lying 1,200 miles away from them. The Bengali intelligentsia could realize that, in order to perpetuate this political inequality and economic exploitation, the ruling group of Pakistan was out to destroy the Bengali culture in the name of Islam and national unity (Basu and Khan 1995).

The culture of a people is deeply interwoven with the entire life of the people. It includes traditions, modes, manners and means of living, dance, music and theatres; literature, social relations, religious customs, the level of education and yet many more things. Some of the characteristics of culture are connected with simple day-to-day living. Others are connected with enjoyment of life and the instruments of enjoyment. Thus, of the economic life, fine arts and social manners, nothing can be separated from the culture of a people. Destruction of culture is the destruction of the entire value of life of a people and conversion of that people into a group of virtual slaves to be used as living tools for the benefit of their masters. This was the danger with which the East Bengalis were confronted when the new State of Pakistan came into existence.

Even before the birth of Pakistan, non-Bengali Muslim leaders were actively working to make Urdu the sole official or state language of Pakistan. It would have a distinct advantage for the non- Bengalis. The Bengalis, being forced to learn an additional language with which their own mother language had very little or no similarity, would be at a perpetual disadvantage in Central Services and other fields. It is to be noted with interest that when the move came from Ziauddin Ahmed, the then Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh University, in July, 1947, it was opposed by no less an intellectual than Shahidullah who clearly stated that Urdu was not the mother language of the people of any particular area of Pakistan. If English had to be rejected because it was a foreign language, the claim of Bengali to be treated as the State language of Pakistan could not

be accepted. The claim of Urdu should be considered only if there had to be two State languages. Shahidullah did not at all view the claim of Urdu from a religious angle and said that rejection of Bengali would be tantamount to political subjugation of the Bengalis.

The conference demanded that Bengali should be the medium of education and language in law courts in East Bengal. It further demanded that the question of the state language of Pakistan should be decided by the people of Pakistan. On its part, the Ganatantrik Yubo League published a Yubo-Istahar (Manifesto of the Youth) in which it demanded free and compulsory primary and secondary education for all through the mother tongue and clearly said that the Government should recognize the necessity of the development of different languages and cultures in different areas of the country and give sufficient autonomy to different areas so that they could develop their respective cultures in their own ways.

This being the position the enlightened Bengalis naturally wanted Bengali (spoken by 55 per cent of the population) to be the State language of Pakistan. If the West Pakistanis wanted their lingua franca (even if it were Urdu-the mother tongue of a mere 3 per cent) to be one of the State languages, the Bengalis would have no objection to it. But the Bengalis had reasons to be aggrieved when Urdu was sought to be made the sole State language of Pakistan to the complete exclusion of Bengali (Bhattacharya 2015).

A determined stand in favour of Bengali was taken by the Tamaddun Majlis, a cultural organization of the students and the teachers of Dacca University established on September 1, 1947. On September 15, they brought out a booklet in which they demanded both Bengali and Urdu to be the State languages of Pakistan. Abul Kashem said that the old illogical imperialist policy would be followed if either Urdu or Bengali was made the State language of the whole of Pakistan. Motahar Hossein was more specific. He wrote that it is badly necessary to remove social inequality, protect ourselves from foreign exploitation and distribute equitably, through industrialization and commerce, whatever national wealth there is, if we are to solve the problem of poverty. It is extremely necessary to remain watchful against the possibility of any foreign people or

people of a different province taking the place of the British. Another contributor, Abul Mansur Ahmed, warned that the imposition of Urdu on East Bengal would result in making the Bengalis an uneducated and inefficient nation (Bose 1983).

On December 5, 1947, the Working Committee of the East Bengal Provincial Muslim League also expressed its opinion against making Urdu the official language in East Bengal. About this time, there was a heated controversy as to the contents of a resolution on the issue passed in the Educational Conference held at Karachi which was attended by the Muslim League Ministers of East Bengal. At last, a Press Note circulated on December 15 by the Education Department of the Central Government explained that the recommendation of the Conference was to make Urdu the lingua franca of Pakistan and a compulsory language in schools throughout the country.

In February, 1948, the Congress members of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly brought two resolutions. In one of the resolutions, they demanded that the Constituent Assembly should meet in Dacca at least once every year. In the other resolution they wanted that, along with English and Urdu, Bengali should be one of the languages used in the Constituent Assembly. Liaquat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister, said that the real purpose of the movers and the supporters of the resolutions (who were all Hindus) were to develop a secessionist mentality among a section of Muslims. The Muslim League members from East Bengal took care to dissociate themselves from this move. Khawaja Nazimuddin, the Chief Minister of East Bengal, declared in a statement that the majority of people in East Bengal wanted Urdu to be the sole State language of Pakistan (Bose 1983).

This created deep resentment among, the students, politicians and educated circles of Dacca. Students of Dacca observed a *hartal* on February 26, 1948. In a meeting held on March 2, under the chairmanship of Kamaruddin Ahmed, a new 'Rashtrabbasha Sangram Parishad' was formed, taking two representatives from each of the following organizations the Gana Azadi League, the Ganatantrik Yubo League, the Tarnaddun Majlish and the East Bengal Muslim Students League.

East Bengal in general and Dacca in particular, were in great turmoil when Mohammad Ali Jinnah visited Dacca on March 19, 1948. He addressed a public gathering on March

21, in which he cast some aspersions on the character and motives of the leaders of the Language Movement. Without naming India, he said that they were supported and even given financial help by the foreign agencies that were determined to destroy Pakistan's unity. Jinnah said that while the question of East Bengal's official language was East Bengal's own business, Urdu had to become the sole State language of Pakistan. Those who were conducting the Language Movement, said the Head of State, were enemies of the country and deserved the severest punishment. To the public at large, Jinnah still held his emotional appeal and, in the public meeting itself, there were no more than murmurs of protest (Chatterjee 1995) .

When Jinnah reaffirmed this decision on the national language in his Convocation address in Dacca University, some students shouted against him and later there were demonstration in the streets against the Governor-General. These students were now active elements in the growing intellectual atmosphere in East Bengal. Very few of them belonged to the old upper class Muslim families where Urdu was preferred to Bengali as the proper language for a Muslim. They came from the families of small traders and manufacturers, school teachers and lawyers who cared for a useful English education, loved their own Bengali language and had neither the desire nor the resources to learn the Urdu script. And they were not expected to air knowledge of Urdu to distinguish themselves from a powerful Hindu Middle Class in what was now very much their own country. They also knew that Urdu was not the native language of any part of Pakistan where not more than 5% of the population spoke it. Incidentally, according to the Census Report of Pakistan of 1951 54.6% of the country's population spoke Bengali, 28.4% Punjabi, 7.2 spoke Urdu, 7.1 Pushto, 5.8 Sindhi and 1.8 English (Chatterjee, 1995). The students of Dacca University not only opposed the imposition of Urdu on the Bengalis who constituted the majority of the country's total population: they were particularly sore about the threat that any plea for Bengali would be an act of treason. So when many of them were arrested during the demonstrations against Jinnah. The University formed a Committee on National Language and declared 11 March, the day of the demonstration, a National Day. This was the beginning of the movement which became a war on Pakistan on 25th March this year.

From March 22nd to March 27th, Jinnah met different student leaders and leaders of the Rashtrabhasha Karma Parishad including Kamaruddin Ahmed, Abul Kashem, Tazuddin Ahmed, Mohammad Toaha, Aziz Ahmed, Ali Ahad, Naimuddin Ahmed, Samsul Alam and Nazrul Islam; but failed to persuade them to accept his own point of view. In fact, the official attempt to disparage the Bengali language and transform it by a heavy influx of Urdu or Arabic words or even to change its script into Arabic was at that time the main cause of discontent in East Bengal. In March, 1949, the Government of East Bengal formed a Language Committee to make the Bengali language easy by introducing suitable reforms. The real purpose of the formation of such a Committee was to secure a recommendation to write Bengali in the Arabic script. The Urdu Subcommittee indeed made such a recommendation on the ground of alleged complications of the Bengali alphabets. But the main Language Committee firmly turned down the recommendation. Frustrated, the Government suppressed the Report of the Committee for-about ten years.

The Bengalis (particularly the Bengali intellectuals) discovered from the beginning how the Punjabi bureaucrats and politicians had been trying to destroy their national identities in order to prevent them from asserting their rights in the affairs of their country. They found the Punjabi attitude to be a clearly imperialist one. Language in East Bengal, unlike that in West Pakistan, is much more than a medium of expression. In East Bengal, language is inseparable from life. The East Bengalis, therefore, always strongly resisted the official attempts to impose Urdu as the only State language and the connected attempt to make the Bengali language heavily Urdu or Arabic oriented or to change the Bengali script into Arabic (Dutt 1949)

On January 26, 1952, Prime Minister Nazimuddin declared a public meeting in Dacca that Urdu would be the only State language of Pakistan. This, at once, gave rise to a great movement. On January 27, the students of Dacca met in the famous "Madhur Canteen" of Dacca University and framed a programme of action: They decided to observe one day's strike on January 30, 1952. All sections of students spontaneously responded to the call of strike and agitation.

Another general strike was observed in the educational institutions on February 4, 1952. The same evening, Maulana Bhasani and other leaders demanded in a public meeting that Bengali should be made one of the State languages of Pakistan. They warned the Government that if their demand was not conceded immediately a general strike would be observed all over the province on February 21, 1952- the date on which the East Bengal Provincial Legislative Assembly was scheduled to meet for its budget session (Dutt 1950).

On February 20, the Government of Nurul Amin imposed Section 144 in Dacca in anticipation of disturbances. But it was defied by the students of Dacca on February 21, 1952. The police responded by making lathi-charge, shelling tear-gas and opening fire indiscriminately. At least 300 people were wounded and three famous students, Jabbar, Rafiq and Barakat, died. The Muslim League Government, headed by Nurul Amin, wanted to carry on the normal proceedings of the House, all members of the Opposition and even some members of the Muslim League came out from the Legislative Assembly in protest.

Next day there was a great, unprecedented but completely peaceful procession of mourning. But the police suddenly jumped upon the silent mourners. Again, there was lathi-charge, tear-gas and firing. The official casualty figure was five. But, according to the Chhatra Sangram Parishad, not less than 39 people were killed. Apart from that, there was a large number of injured. Those who lost their lives included Shafikur Rahman, Abdus Salam, a young and a blind beggar.

The Language Movement of February, 1952, is of the greatest importance in the history of the nationalist movement in East Bengal. What was mainly a cultural movement before 1952 became, from February, 1952, a full-fledged political movement by virtue of the great sacrifices made by the youngsters.

The experience of 21 February 1952 changed the earlier search for an Islamic identity founded on the cultural traditions of West Asia. On the contrary, there began a full assertion of the Bengali language, Bengali cultural and even social traditions, irrespective of their old Hindu associations.

In October 1953, in his presidential address to the literature section of the Sylhet Cultural Conference, the great savant and authority on Bengali language and literature, Dr Muhammad Shabidullah, said “we may have political differences with West Bengal, but we do not have any linguistic hostility. We cannot give up at someone else's bidding our inheritance of Bengali language and literature.”

Hassan Hafizur Rahman asserted that the writers of Bangladesh were the heirs of the entire tradition of Bengali literature, irrespective of its independent development in the two countries since 1947.

This was the spirit that now dominated Bangladesh. The Bengali language and literature was infused with fresh vigor. It was a rediscovery of their motherland and mother tongue by intellectuals. The language of the people, the spoken language of Bangladesh, triumphed over the language of the upper classes, the feudal aristocracy, and the ruling classes. Popular expressions and imagery, irrespective of their religious overtones, returned to the language, giving it the necessary universalization. The new sophistication and urbanization retained its rural moorings. There was a rediscovery of Bengali literary and cultural traditions. But the new expression was moulded by characteristic features of the region, its wide rivers and the tender soil they had created, and by the men and women that had been nurtured by them.

This creative rediscovery of their cultural roots was nourished by Dacca University, especially the Bengali Department, headed by Dr Shahidullah. He was assisted by Kazi Abdul Wadud who was ultimately hounded out of Pakistan. Once again was revived the healthy critical liberalism of the Muslim intellectuals of undivided Bengal, carefully guided and encouraged by such elders as Kazi Motahar Hussain and Abul Faza.

This cultural renaissance, as it has been called, was reflected in all the art forms, in every field of literature, painting, Sculpture, music and dance, and even in films. Jaisal Abedin, in his powerful paintings and sketches, expressed the new spirit. He created a new school which fused local folk tradition and the sub-continental heritage with styles of the industrialized West. A whole crop of new writers emerged, as also journals and institutions. A new world of thought opened up before the educated and even filtered

through to the illiterate rural masses. The finest expression was in poetry and short stories. An entirely new Bengali language and literature developed, sensitive, forceful, at times very close to the soil, and at others stretching beyond national boundaries. It was very different from trends in West Bengal since Independence; It had developed its own unique characteristics and temper. Through their literature, the people of Bangladesh were able to establish an identity of their own, distinct from West Bengal and, of course, equally distinct from the other sub-nationalities that constituted West Pakistan. Dr Shahidullah believed that Bengali would really come into its own when the best of Hindu and Islamic tradition would be so fused as to secularize and hence universalize the language. The writers of Bangladesh through their struggle have managed to achieve this.

This creative cultural revival also found expression in social life. Old folk rituals, drawn from both the pre-Islamic and post-Islamic heritage, and totally universalised into a secular character, returned with fresh vigor.

Thus the cultural or language movement gave a new dimension to the struggle for the social emancipation of women and the deprived classes, and to the growing political movement born of the economic distress of the masses and the economic and political deprivation of the rising middle-class intelligentsia, professionals, small traders and businessmen. All these factors combined to generate a demand for democracy and provincial autonomy, which soon became irrepressible. The compulsions of the situation demanding the widest participation of the masses necessarily gave the movement a secular character (Eisenstadt 1973).

When in June 1967 the Government of Pakistan put a ban on the singing of Tagore songs over the radio the Bengali Muslims' linguistic patriotism reached its peak. . Neither the exigencies of alleged Indian belligerency nor the slogan of Islam in Danger could moderate their wrath against a Government which could thus insult their literature and culture. The proscription only deepened their enthusiasm for Tagore. The educationists and writers of Dacca issued a statement protesting against this disrespect for a poet whose works they claimed were the most important part of the literary heritage of the Muslims of East Bengal. Only a month and a half after this ban the students of Dacca celebrated

the death-anniversary of the poet in a three days programme of songs, plays, dance and recitation, A progressive evening paper of the city, Aoyaj, wrote an editorial on the poet to say that East Pakistan could no more discard Tagore because he was the poet of an enemy country than she could discard the sun because it gave light to that country too.

The Bengali Muslims gradually felt the need for spelling out their ideas on their culture and social values. They realized that to fulfil their political aspirations they must first accomplish a cultural renaissance to sustain their new sense of nationhood. The most important aspect of this cultural renaissance is a free, uninhibited and creative response to what in the past the Muslims were asked to shun as Hindu tradition in art and Literature (Eaton 1993).

The Muslims of East Bengal have arrived at a secular, humanist view of culture, and art and literature; its two major manifestations have no longer any religious dimension for them.

The Muslims of East Bengal were asking for a new civil order because they have now a new awareness of their social and cultural identity. Discovering their true soul in an appropriate social milieu they think it would be going against their grain to try to have a Middle Eastern Saracenic paradise in the wet climate of eastern Bengal. It is this conviction which prompted one of their foremost scholars to suggest that there should be a Bengali word in their personal name and their provisional Government to adopt Tagore's song 'Amar Sonar Bangla' as their national anthem (Eisenstadt 1973).

In this way Bangladesh emerged from ancient times to the United Pakistan period, with ethno-linguistic factors had been recognized as the most important factor behind it. In terms of identities, Bangladesh undergone through many changes in different periods, the identity formation of Bangladesh took several decades and these factors shaped the nation in very specific form and Ethnicity and languages emerged as a symbol of identity.

6. The Mujib Era, 1971 to 1975

Thus, having such a history, the newly independent state wanted itself to be a secular one, as opposed to a religious one. Thus, the constitution the was eventually adopted by the

Parliament of Bangladesh in November 1972 accepted ‘nationalism’, ‘socialism’, ‘democracy’ and ‘secularism’ as state principles. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of the Bangladesh’s freedom struggle, defined secularism in the following words -

Secularism does not mean the absence of religion. Hindus will observe their religion; Muslims will observe their own; Christians and Buddhists will observe their religions. No one will be allowed to interfere in others’ religions. The people of Bengal do not want any interference in religious matters. Religion cannot be used for political ends (Ranjan 2016: 2)

Further, to put in practice a secular state, the Article 12 of the constitution stated that the principle of secularism will be realized by the elimination of -

- Communalism in all forms;
- The granting by the state of political status in favor of any religion;
- The abuse of religion for political purposes; and
- Any discrimination against, or persecution of persons practicing a particular religion. (The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972: 5)

As one scholar writes, secularism was the logical culmination of Bangladesh’s formation as an independent state -

“In the construction of nationhood in Pakistan, religion had been used as the main tool of domination of the Bengalis by the Pakistani regime. In 1971 the Pakistani regime again employed the rhetoric of religion in carrying out one of the worst genocides of history. Secularism was therefore a logical outcome of the Bengali nationalist movement. It would thus appear that the new state was set for a secular start. However, the new state, being a modern or nationstate, has within its very construction the quest for homogenization, which propels it toward the majority community. Nationalism’s inherent bias toward the majority community compelled Mujib to compromise on the question of religious secularism. It is true that Bengali nationalism, as it emerged in East Bengal, was secular in its content, but that was the logical outcome of a situation where Bengalis were being oppressed in the name of religion. Culture and language at that moment were the symbol of unity among the Bengali population of East Bengal, which differentiated them from “Muslim” West Pakistanis.” (Mohsin 2004: 471)

Since the struggle for freedom was led by the Awami League, the leaders of the Awami League who had been at the forefront of the struggle for independence came to power without much contestation. There was broad consensus among them that a parliamentary democracy which was secular would be the best course to take for Bangladesh. Thus, the Provisional Constitution Order of 1972 established a parliamentary form of government. On 4th November 1972, the Constituent Assembly passed the 1972 Constitution and parliamentary form of government became the mode of government in Bangladesh with secularism as one of the core principles of the newly independent state. The Jatiya Sangsad which comprised of the directly elected representatives of the people became the supreme body of the state and the cabinet was put directly responsible to the Sangsad and thus was answerable to it for its policies. The Awami League, having led the independence struggle had massive public support and became the ruling party of the new state with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the leader.

It has to be noted that the Awami League was largely a middle-class urban party that was appealing largely to the educated elites of the country. However, it also had well-structured student and labour organisations. An association of peasants called the Jatiya Krishak League (National Peasants League) and an organisation for the youth called Jatiya Jubo League (National Youth League) were also created in support of the Awami League. These groups were very important in appealing to different sections of the population and also provided policy inputs to the party. Using its clout, the party also strengthened its grip on the administrative infrastructure and party members assumed important advisory and top positions in the civil service while party affiliated interest groups wielded a great deal of influence on the polity in general. The party under the leadership of Mujibur Rahman was able to consolidate its position in the country. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who became the Prime Minister of the newly independent state was a leader of great stature and charisma and stood above the rest as the symbol of Bengali nationalism (Ahmed 2004: 14). It seemed like there would be no challenge to the political supremacy of Awami League for a long time in Bangladeshi politics much like how the Indian National Congress dominated Indian politics for many decades after India's independence owing to its role in the freedom struggle of the country.

In the initial years after the independence, the Awami League government did a fairly decent job of governing the country and managing the economy. With the help of relief operations carried out in cooperation with United Nations Relief Operations in Bangladesh and other international agencies, Bangladesh was able to avoid a major post War economic crisis. Owing to the bloody nature of the independence struggle, law and order in general had deteriorated in 1971 and early 1972. The Awami League led government was reasonably successful in improving the law and order situation in the country to a considerable degree. Indian troops who had come to aid the freedom struggle also withdrew by March 1972. As noted earlier, subsequently, the new Constitution was also passed by the Constituent Assembly within nine months of independence. General Elections also took place within six months of passing the constitution. Under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's able leadership, the First Five Year Plan was also released within a year and a half by the Planning Commission.

However, these initial successes of the government were overshadowed by the economic crisis that struck Bangladesh from January 1974 (Islam 2003: 221). This rose due to a combination of many factors. While the global inflationary trend of 1972 was partly responsible for this crisis, there were several important local factors too. It is undeniable that the ruling party's corruption and inefficiency, especially at lower levels was a visible factor that contributed to the crisis. There was rampant nepotism, leading to frustration among the people. It has to be noted that at this time in Bangladesh, close to 86 percent of industries and 87 percent of foreign trade were nationalized. However, the distribution of goods was carried out through private entities who were issued permits and licenses. This was a recipe for corruption and nepotism as a disproportionately high number of Awami League workers were issued lucrative permits and licenses (Baral 1992: 17). Many of them did not conduct any business but in turn sold these licenses and permits to others to make money out of nothing.

Similarly, since most of the managers of nationalized industries were also handpicked party members, many of them did not have any practical experience of running such industries in a competent manner. They were however picked over better qualified individuals. This led to productivity levels falling to a great degree in the country. As

production declined and people became wary of the nepotism of the new government, smuggling of food grains and jute to India reached huge proportions which caused a scarcity of agricultural products in the country, leading to both losses to exchequer as well as shortages. Thus, the economy was collapsing at a rapid pace by 1974 and the unprecedented floods of July and August 1974 only served to aggravate what was already a dire situation. The floods and dire economic situation of the country led to huge inflation in the prices of consumer goods and by September 1974, it was calculated that the rise was about 600 percent over the 1969-70 levels. Thus, a 'near famine condition' was declared by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Ahamed 1980: 151-152).

While this economic crisis was damaging the reputation of the Awami League, there were also political troubles brewing in Bangladesh along several lines. Conflicts based on class, religion and other social factors which had lied dormant for a long time due to the larger struggle for independence, began to resurface with increasing intensity. Many of these conflicts were led by radical actors who wanted to bring about a second revolution or from their perspective, complete the revolution. Bangladesh had a long history of radical organizations predating independence and many of them were working underground during the Ayub era in fear of retribution. Those forces started to reemerge and influence Bangladesh's polity. Some of them had leftist inclinations while some others had religious motivations. They made the argument that the Bangladesh Revolution of 1971 was unfinished. They argued that the revolution was hijacked by the interference of India and as a result instead of the common people inheriting power, it was the landed aristocracy and elites as represented by the Awami League that came to power. Thus, in their view the exploitation of the common people of Bangladesh continued unabated as the Awami League government was nothing more than a puppet of both local and foreign elites (Maniruzzaman 1976: 120-122).

Such radical forces started to gather strength during the economic crisis and they began to train their cadres to overthrow the Awami League regime by force. They started disrupting communication networks and murdering Awami League leaders. Political killings thus became commonplace and one government estimate calculated that over 6000 people were killed which included four Members of Parliament of the Awami

League. Bangladesh was descending into chaos and anarchy as robberies of private houses, lootings of shops and banks began to rise (Ahamed 1980: 157). People started feeling insecure as even police stations were attacked with impunity. The Awami League tried to address this deteriorating situation by increased policing, appeals and threats.

However, the strength of the Awami League was its party machinery and by this time there was factional strife within the party machinery itself, thereby significantly weakening its power. Awami League's student and labour fronts disagreed over whether pure socialism or a mixed economy is best suited for Bangladesh. This disagreement grew in time as senior leaders of the party also joined opposite sides of the debate. This greatly diminished the power and influence of the party. Moreover, the creation of a new class of rich intermediaries who seemed to be making money without doing anything, further led to people and even party members souring on the economic management of the government. Thus, in many ways, the Awami League was getting stagnated and rot from within. The party tried to address its shortcoming by aligning with parties like the National Awami Party (M) and Bangladesh Communist Party. However, such alliances could not stem the tide of discontent and frustration which was brewing against the Awami League government in the country (Nordlinger 1977:7-8, 75-76).

If there had been ideological clarity and competent, less corrupt governmental performance, then the radical forces could have been kept in check. The Awami League government fell short on both these counts. Mujibism, the ideology of the party was vague, confusing and was not coherent (Harun 1986: 29). It did not inspire people, especially after independence when there was no obvious enemy to point to for uniting people. The governmental performance which was promising in the initial years became a victim of corruption and nepotism. This became especially clear after the famine of 1974 which added fuel to the already burning fire of discontent among the people. Thus, in order to bring the situation under control, the government had to resort to strong measures including police action and bans which further alienated the people. It was a vicious cycle.

Moreover, the Awami League government was also seen as too close to the Indian government by many. It has to be stated that while the Bengali identity played an important part as opposed to Islam during the freedom struggle, with the removal of West Pakistan as a threat, people began to be appreciative of their Islamic identity. Bangladesh ultimately was a deeply religious society where secularization had not taken place even though the constitution established a secular republic. Thus, Mujib's close association with a Hindu India and his various initiatives to show the neutrality of the government with respect to religion backfired in a big manner. One author writes -

“In Bangladesh the State Radio and Television discontinued the practice of Pakistan days of opening the programs with recitations from the Holy Quran and substituted it with a program of “Speaking the Truth” based on secular ethics. Sheikh Mujib discontinued this religious neutrality of the mass media. He adopted the policy of equal opportunity for all religions and ordered citations from the Holy books of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity at the start of the broadcasts by the State Radio and Television. Citations from the Hindu Holy Book and coverage of Hindu religious festivals created a backlash among the Muslims. The policy of secularism also backfired in the education sector. During the Pakistan period in the primary and middle stage of education (Class VI to VIII) Islamiyat (religious education) was made a compulsory subject. After Independence the Education Ministry continued with the same policy. The Mujib government, however, set up an Education Commission in 1972, which submitted its interim report in May 1973. The Commission recommended the separation of religion from education. However, the report was submitted before public opinion on the issue had been elicited through the distribution of questionnaires. Subsequently, the questionnaires showed that secular education was acceptable to about 21 percent of the most educated section of the people of Bangladesh. About 75 percent opined that religious education should be an integral part of general education. These findings revealed the gap between the opinions of Bangladesh society and those of Sheikh Mujib's secular polity. A perceptible shift emerged in Bangladesh politics.” (Mohsin 2004: 472)

In his final days, Mujibur Rahman realized this shift to an extent and on 28th March 1975, he revived the Islamic Academy which had been banned in 1972 and expanded it into a foundation. However, it was too late.

In order to bring the law and order situation under control, the government had declared a state of emergency on 28th December 1974 which led to a suspension of the fundamental rights granted by the constitution for an indefinite period. The emergency also gave the government special powers of arbitrary arrest and the freedom of judiciary as well as the

press was compromised. To make matters worse, in January 1975, upon the wishes of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who felt that a strong executive form of government was needed to bring order to the country, the constitution was amended to establish a presidential form of government. This was against the wishes of most members of the Jatiya Sangsad and the President was vested with vast executive powers and was authorized to declare Bangladesh as a one-party state. This was a move by a party and a leader who felt threatened and increasingly cornered and as such this did not help their situation. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman then also went on to shut down all but four newspapers, two English language and two Bengali ones. He also formed the national party, the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL) which was patterned on Nyerere's Ujama i.e. African Socialism (Dowlah 2016: 166).

These desperate actions by the government and Mujib in particular not only antagonized the support base of the party but also took away the legitimacy of its rule. These measures alienated both right wing and liberal elements in the country. The liberal wanted a Western-style free and open parliamentary democracy and therefore were appalled by the authoritarian turn taken by the government. On the other hand, the banning of communal parties such as the Muslim League, Nizam-i-Islam, and Jamat-i-Islam alienated the right wing elements in the country. The economically radical left wing elements in the country were also not happy with the government because for them Mujib was not implementing pure socialism. Thus, young radicals from his own party broke away and formed new political parties. BAKSAL, was thus almost universally resented by factions from different parts of the political spectrum of Bangladesh (Dowlah 2016: 166-169). The popular sentiment wanted the Awami League government to fall and Mujib to be removed. All that was needed was a bold move by some other ambitious leader.

The final blow to the Awami League government came because of the enmities that Mujib had earned with some of the powerful military leaders of the country. The eventual coup which happened on 15th August 1975 that saw the murder of most members of the Mujib family except his two daughters was planned and executed by three Majors of the military who had been undermined by Mujib when he was in power. They had serious

personal grievances against Mujib and his rising unpopularity in the country provided them with an opportunity to make a move against him. After capturing power, they declared on the national radio ‘the end of an era of tyranny’ (Ahamed 2004: 105-106).

7. Conclusion

The tragedy of East Pakistan which resulted in nearly three million deaths during the war of independence began with the partition of the subcontinent. As a matter of fact, the long shadow of partition is continuing to influence a long and painful tale, which is refusing to die down even now. The India subcontinent was partitioned on the grounds of religion with Pakistan emerging as a state in the name of Islam and India emerging as a secular democracy. One has to note the role of British colonialists in this regard who left a long and painful legacy of divisive politics in the name of religion and violence in the name of religion, which is continuing to torment the sub-continent.

The deliberate British ploy to divide the Indian people by recognizing the Muslim League as the chief representatives of Indian Muslims right since its formation in 1906. The Muslim League as a matter of fact had some support only in Central provinces and thus this ignored Bengali identity which was more coherent than a pan-Indian Muslim identity. Muslim League was actually initially formed by erstwhile Muslim Nawabas and landlords who were later joined by a section of Muslim educated classes and elite. In no way it represented the whole lot of Indian Muslims.

After Partition West Pakistani elites dominated East Pakistan as well. They dominated in Army, bureaucracy, economy and polity. In 1970, Awami League of East Pakistan led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman won the polls and emerged as majority party in Pakistan. This legitimately elected party was not allowed to form government and thus ensued what we know as Bangladesh liberation war. Although Islam considers all men as brothers but politics in name of Islam discriminated between Muslims as well on the basis of language. This destroyed the whole fundamental premise of Pakistan of being nation of Muslims and thus it was no wonder the country disintegrated.

With Awami League being denied the option to form the Government and in the absence of democratic channels of protest, alienation grew in East Pakistan and Mujibur Rahman launched his massive and successful civil disobedience movement. Massive protests erupted in East Pakistan and West Pakistani army started a veritable butchery of its own citizens in East Pakistan. Millions were killed until the Mukti Bahini with the help of Indian army won the war against the military of Pakistan.

The formation of Bangladesh decisively showed the futility of the theory that nations are religions and that religion can be the basis of nationalism. One can even argue that the Two Nation theory which stated that Hindus and Muslims are two separate nations met its end in the formation of Bangladesh. However, the history of Bangladesh would not be without turmoil as can be seen from the takeover of the military in 1975. Religion would begin to play an active role in politics after this as will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4

Role of Religion in the Political Developments in Bangladesh during the Military Regime

Introduction

There have been divergent views among the Islamic thinkers throughout the world, ranging from liberals and moderates to orthodox Muslims. Some opted to keep politics

and religion separate, but others stuck to maintain governance with the coordination of religious norms. As secularists and communalists seemed to be at loggerheads with each other, there had been witnessed a sort of tug-of-war between the two. To quote, former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami, stressed on religion, but, the Indonesian president, the late Abdurrahman Wahid rejected the notion of an Islamic state on account of intolerance. He spoke of tolerance and wanted that the both Muslims and non-Muslims should be treated equally and religion and politics be kept separate (Wahid 1983). Incidentally, both Bangladesh and West Bengal have been 'Bengali' nations in different ways. In 1911, Bengal repelled the British move of partition with its strong language and cultural roots. However, in 1947, during India's partition, the East Bengal became East Pakistan with Islamic predominance. In the 1971 Indo-Pak war, the Bengali language and culture once more seemed to dominate the scene instead of Islam.(Ghosh 1993). Though after Independence, Bangladesh initially adopted secularism, the military regime, gradually, used Islam to serve its own political ends. Initially, Bangladesh stuck to secularistic credentials and prohibited religious parties. Later on it was overpowered by Military who kept secularists at bay and took to orthodox Islam to serve their own political ends (Riaz, 2003). Moreover, Mujibur Rahman and Maulana Bhasani stood divided in their opinions over maintenance of Bangladesh's relations with India. Mujib had friendly relations with India, whereas, Bhasani stringently followed 'Islamic Socialism' and was strongly against India. Everything was based on Quran and the Constitution was trampled under it (Chakravarti 1994). Initially, Bangladesh was guided by the principles of secularism, socialism and democracy. But few amendments in the Bangladeshi constitution have proved that Bangladesh is swinging between secular and religious ethos.

Later on, during military rule it went on the path of retaliatory communalism when the military personals started humiliating minorities in Bangladesh. Bangladesh was not recognized by many other states having similar thought (Bhardwaj, 2010). Mujibur was criticized for compromising with the sovereignty of Bangladesh. Mujibur had projected himself as the champion of the new nation's Bengali identity, along with supporting the very idea of Islamization of Bangladesh. In 1973 Mujib declared a general amnesty for all those being held as collaborators with the Pakistanis in the 1971 war. He started

attending religious gatherings and gradually dropped the use of the valedictory joy Bangla (victory to Bengal) (Hussain, 1991). In 1972 he had abolished Islamic Academy but it was revived later on, and in March 1975, five months before his assassination, it was upgraded to a foundation. He attended a conference in Pakistan in 1974 in lieu of diplomatic gain with favour of Pakistan. The Islamic Summit proved to be fruitful. It also opened the door for contacting the Middle Eastern countries which offered aid. Later in 1974 Mujib visited Egypt, Kuwait, and other Muslim nations to promote understanding. It was followed by the visit of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Algerian President Boumedienne with a perceptible change even towards Pakistan. At this stage, the Awami League government became concerned and arrested some old Muslim Leaguers who had earlier been released under a general clemency (m.rashiduzzman,1991). Bangladesh was understood to be striving for its independent identity through an opposition to Indian influence and predominance. Following the Indian model, the orthodox Islamic parties were shunned by the Awami League. Though Bangladesh remained a secular state, the Islamic identity was continuously stressed among the public. Islamic parties aligned with the opposition and a few violent incidents occurred in 1972 in the state during a Hindu religious festival. The year 1973 witnessed Islamic movement against the Awami government. There started a whispering campaign against India with the growing public frustration caused by spiraling inflation, food shortage, and corruption in Bangladesh. The Islamic forces began to support Maulana Bhasani who was against secularism (Rashiduzzuman, 1993). The anti-Indian feelings roused by the right-wing forces found a fertile soil in the growing public frustration caused by spiraling inflation, food shortage, and corruption. Several coups followed in Bangladesh ever since independence in 1971. In 1975 alone, three coups took place between August 15 and November 7. The first caused the demise of Mujib, the father of the Bangladesh, and brought Khondakar Moshtaque Ahmed to power as President. The second coup brought an end to Moshtaque's 87-day regime on November 3, 1975. The coup brought Major General Khalid Mosharraf into power, widely known among the Bengalis for his pro-Indian sentiment as well as for his personal ambitions. Khalid's regime lasted only for four days. The third coup was staged on November 7, 1975, as thousands of soldiers of the Dacca Brigade mutinied and murdered dozens of officers, including Khalid himself. Major

General Ziaur Rahman became popular among the armed forces and civilian population as he was known to be an honest person and an able administrator (Tayyeb, 1983). Assassination of Mujib was followed by rise of Islamization in Bangladesh. His successors took to making political use of Islam, along with those who had been disillusioned with Mujib. During the rule of Khandaker Mustaque, foreign policy was modified and diplomatic relations were diverted. Mujib's stance of pro-India was negated. The Constitution was amended by Ziaur with more emphasis on Islam instead of secularism. Expression of joy Bangla to was called un-Islamic and, in its place was popularized Bangladesh zindabad (long live Bangladesh). The government work came to be done "in the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful" (Ghosh, 1993). After the assassination of Mujibur in 1975, the healthy India-Bangladesh ties were disrupted. The state was acquiring Islamic identity for all purposes to rule (Hashmi, 1994). Bangladesh's relations with Pakistan improved. Both wanted to balance India. A Pak-Bangladesh accord was signed, with gradually improving their mutual relations for a common cause (Jacques 2000). Major General Ziaur Rahman amended the article 8(1), removing secularism in the name of so-called nationalism. Islamic fundamentalism increased globally to which Bangladesh adhered to for economic need. The state professed 'economic and social justice' to strengthen relations with the Muslim countries. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of president Zia preached its own Nationalism (Ahmed 20002). A new clause, 'Islamic solidarity', was added to the Constitution in 1977 which misused religion for political motives. A number of Islamic bodies came into existence for Islamization of the state through unconstitutional means. (Nurul, 2011).

It will not be an exaggeration to state that the assassination of Mujibur Rahman on August, 1975 marked a critical shift in Bangladesh's politics. It signaled the beginning of an era in which political power in Bangladesh shifted from the hands of elected democratic officials to autocratic military rulers. The subsequent series of coups ultimately brought Zia to power in 1977 who set out to establish an authoritarian regime that changed the national character of Bangladesh considerably. Religion came to play a critical role in Bangladesh's politics and the secular nature of the country was altered to give Islam a prominent role. The reasons that led to such a radical change are important to understand.

This chapter will start by laying out the historical background of the military take over and then proceed to show how the Military regime used religion to consolidate its position in Bangladesh's politics and thereby altered the secular identity of Bangladesh.

2. Historical Background

Bangladesh became an independent sovereign state on 16th December 1971 after a bloody struggle with the government of Pakistan. East Bengalis had long felt that West Pakistan was using religion as a tool of domination to suppress the cultural identity of Bengalis which was distinct from the identity of the people of West Pakistan. Hence, to counter the Islamic nationalism of West Pakistan, a secular nationalism emerged in East Bengal which emphasized on Bengali language and culture as opposed to Islam. The Language movement which was in full swing from 1948 to 1952 saw bloodshed on 21st February 1952 when Pakistani officials shot and killed four protesting students in Dhaka who were opposing the imposition of Urdu as the state language (Karlekar 2005: 145). By mid 1960s, these grievances were further aggravated by economic and social injustices perpetuated by West Pakistan on East Bengal and thus demands for economic and political economy began to grow louder. This eventually culminated in the country achieving independence in 1971 after which as noted in the previous chapter, a democratic and secular constitution was adopted with the Awami League led by Mujibur Rehman coming to power. However, this experiment with democracy would not last long for Bangladesh.

2.1 Rise of the Military

In many post-colonial states, the military ends up playing an important role largely because of their comparatively stronger organizational strength than other bureaucratic structures. Since, other bureaucratic structures in post-colonial states tend to be weak and corrupt, the relatively disciplined and centralized hierarchy provided by the armed forces put them in a good position to seize power if they choose to. However, the armed forces of Bangladesh were not a disciplined, cohesive entity from the beginning. This was the main reason that they could not emerge as a significant force in the initial years after independence. There were conflicts and factions within the armed forces which were

largely a legacy of the 1971 war of independence. As a matter of fact, a large section of the people saw the army as an entity that was in cahoots with Pakistan's military rule before 1971. Thus, the armies along with bureaucracy were seen as enablers of Pakistan's brutal rule while it lasted and hence people distrusted them to a large extent.

However, a significant number of military officers and bureaucrats did play a significant role in the independence struggle even from the 1960s. They were aligned with the Awami League and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was personally close to many of them. They passed on sensitive information to the Awami League during the Ayub era which helped them make the case for independence from Pakistan. So when Mujibur gave the call for civil disobedience and non-cooperation in March 1971, many of them gave their full support which led to a complete paralysis of administrative functions in what was then East Pakistan. This was true of sections of armed forces as well and that was the reason when the Pakistan army initiated an attack on 25th march, one of the chief targets was the Bengali Military Office Corps. Military officers also took it upon themselves to train the Mukti Bahini (Freedom Fighters) at various covert training centres inside and outside Bangladesh apart from fighting the Pakistan army directly (Alagappa 2001: 212). However, despite such contributions, the military could not consolidate its influence during the initial years after independence and emerge as a strong pillar due to many reasons.

In the first place, at the time of independence, the size of the armed forces of the new state was very small. Even by 1975, the armed forces of Bangladesh consisted of 36000 men. 30000 of them were in the army with 500 in the navy and 5500 in the air force and Apart from them, the paramilitary forces of Bangladesh were comprised of 30000 personnel including, there 30000 personnel in the Bangladesh Rifles and about 16000 in the Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini (National Security Force). It also has to be noted that out of the 36000 men, there were about 1000 officers and close to 30000 men who were earlier part of West Pakistan's army while the remaining men were from the former East Bengal Regiment and some recruited from the Mukti Bahini. There were fewer than 250 majors in the army which had about 1250 officers. Secondly, even though the army was small, the level of factionalism within the army was high. There were conflicts between

Bangladesh Rifles and regular army forces which continued throughout the post-independence period, especially in 1972. Even within the regular armed forces, there were rivalries and distrust. Those officers who came back from West Pakistan army were either forcefully retired or made to serve under junior officers who had been promoted due to their role in the independence struggle. The officers who took part actively in the independence struggle were given two years' seniority and were also given preferential treatment. This caused a lot of resentment and infighting between the officers serving in the army (Grover 2000: 103).

The repatriates, the term used to denote those who had served earlier in West Pakistan's army saw the independence fighters as socialists, secularists, and pro-India. On the other hand, the freedom fighters saw them as pro-Pakistanis who had betrayed the nation. They also thought of them as opportunists who had enjoyed the benefits of West Pakistan while Bangladesh suffered under its brutal rule and now had come ready to enjoy the fruits of hard won freedom without contributing to it (Ahamed 1988: 52-56). The fact that the repatriates were numerically higher in strength also made the freedom fighters feel insecure. Thus, such acrimony between officers and even common soldiers in the armed forces had a negative impact on the morale of the armed forces in general and caused intense polarization within the armed forces. These two groups were also ideologically different.

The repatriates were conservative in their outlook whereas the freedom fighters were radical in their views. The former favoured the retention of the army's institutional role and framework along the pattern of British India whereas the latter advocated for a more activist and dynamic army along the lines of the Chinese People's Army. Some officers who had the latter view went on to join underground groups of political parties like the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and began to organize Biplobi Shainik Sangstha (Revolutionary Soldiers Association). These were obviously inspired by the Soviet of Soldiers groups that had developed in Russia before the Communist Revolution of 1917. Colonel Abu Taher and Colonel Ziauddin were the two best known proponents of an active, productive army. Thus, the army was clearly divided along nationalist, ideological

and institutional lines and this was the major reason why they could not take decisive control in the early years of Bangladesh's independence (Lifschulz 1979:85-88).

However, as time went on, all these different factions, started developing a common resentment against the Awami League government because they felt that their interests were not being taken care by the government. The military leaders were upset that the government had not allocated necessary funds for the reconstruction of the training centres and cantonments that had been destroyed during the independence struggle. This meant that the armed forces were poorly trained and ill equipped. Similarly, the budget allocated by the government for the armed forces was also seen as inadequate. Further, these budgets which were already considered less by the military top brass, started to come down every year owing to the financial stress the regime was under. Military expenditure was around 16 percent in 1973-74 and it was reduced to 15 percent the next year and in 1975-76, this was further reduced to 13 percent (Grover 2000: 126).

Moreover, the establishment of the Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini (National Security Force) which was affiliated to the Awami League created a parallel organisation that competed with the armed forces for funding and was seen by many in the military as a direct threat to their influence. The government appeared to spend a lot more time and money in developing that militia, rather than developing the regular armed forces. The government plan for the Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini called for a regular increase in the size of this militia such that by 1980, the strength of that militia would be 20000. There was also a plan to place one regiment of the Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini under the command of each district governor. These proposed plans were seen as existential threats by many in regular armed forces as they feared that over time the Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini would become more powerful than them as they were getting a lot of attention and funds from the government.

Moreover, many in the armed forces of the Bangladesh also had strong anti-Indian sentiments despite India's role in the independence struggle. This was because of a variety of reasons. Some thought that the Indian Army joined the freedom struggle when the war had been nearly won at the end of 1971 and thereby taking credit for what was a victory of the Bangladesh military alone. Secondly, several senior military officers also

suspected that the Mujibur government had struck a secret deal with the Indian government which was a threat to the sovereignty of Bangladesh. They suspected that Mujibur was not giving enough importance to the development of the armed forces of Bangladesh chiefly because it was part of the deal struck with India. It was their understanding that the Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini was an idea of the Indian Army to develop a parallel organisation that would safeguard the interests of the Awami League regime in Bangladesh and undermine the armed forces of Bangladesh. Such strongly held anti-Indian sentiments among the military elite later developed into anti-Mujib sentiment because he was seen as pro-Indian in his foreign policy. However, as noted before, despite such sentiments, the armed forces remained powerless for a while because of internal differences and schisms.

However, as internal troubles mounted in Bangladesh, Mujibur demanded that the army work together with the civil authorities for smooth functioning of the state. Thus, from July 1973 to July 1974, the Bangladeshi military was involved in wide ranging operations alongside Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini and the police. These included preventing smuggling at the border, dealing with extremists and maintaining general law and order. However, this exposure to day to day functioning of the state led the army officers to believe that only the army could stabilize Bangladesh and save the country. Through such operations, they also became aware of the fundamental weakness of the Awami League regime, especially the corruption and nepotism at local levels and also got a sense of its growing unpopularity. It was inevitable that they sensed an opportunity especially in the troubled days after the economic crisis of 1974.

Thus, in hindsight it was no great surprise that on 15th August 1975, a pre-dawn coup was staged by a group of twenty to twenty five majors and captains with the help of two battalions of the armoured corps and 1500 soldiers. It ended the Mujib era and paved way for the rise of military as the ruling force in Bangladesh politics. The period that followed can be better analyzed as two parts, the Zia Era which lasted from 1975 to 1981 and the Ershad Era which followed that and lasted till 1990.

3. The Zia Era

Major General Ziaur Rahman emerged as the military dictator of Bangladesh after the assassination of Mujibur Rahman. The transition was neither simple nor smooth as there were a series of coups and countercoups but over a period of time Zia extended his influence over all the three branches of the military and also the country. Zia was born in a middle class family at Bogra, a northern district of Bangladesh in 1936. He enlisted in the Pakistan army at the age of 17 in 1953 and was commissioned in 1955. He belonged to the group of officers who was close to the Awami League and he sided with the freedom fighters during the 1971 war of independence. Following the arrest of Mujibur Rahman and the breakdown of talks, on 27th March 1971, Zia announced in a radio broadcast from Chittagong that he was the provisional head of the new Republic of Bangladesh. This was an early indication of his ambition and drive to attain political power. As one scholar puts it - *'It was an ambitious self-appointment that has been bitterly resented by many of his friends and foes'* (Ahamed 1988: 95).

Having played an important role in the Liberation War, his star rose after independence for a while. He was appointed as the leader of the 44th Brigade at Comilla immediately after independence. Later, in 1972, he was appointed as the deputy chief of the army. The officers who organized the coup against Mujibur did approach him for his support. While Zia refused their offer, he did nothing to stop them from executing their plans and nor did he warn Mujibur about the threat to his regime. After the successful coup, one of Mujibur Rahman's cabinet ministers and an ally of the coup, Khondaker Mostaq Ahmad became the President who then appointed Zia as the army chief.

However, on 3rd November 1975, Brigadier Khaled Mosharraf and the 46th Brigade of Dhaka Cantonment led by Colonel Shafat Jamil led a counter-coup which forced Zia to step down as the army chief and he was put under house arrest. However, just four days later, another coup against the counter-coup known as the Sipoy-Janata Biplob (Soldiers and People's Coup) took place which saw Zia getting freed and reappointed as the army chief. This led to the formation of an interim government with Justice Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem as the chief martial law administrator and Zia and the chief of the other two services as his deputies. Zia felt that by this time there was serious damage done to the discipline of the army due to successive coups and decided to take decisive

action against senior figures such that order is restored. Several senior officers were put on trial and some of them were executed. He also sought to heal the divisions within the army by granting appropriate senior positions to repatriated officers. Zia was appointed as the chief martial law administrator following Justice Sayem's elevation to the presidency on 19 November 1976 and subsequently became the President of Bangladesh on 21st April 1977.

3.1 Islamisation under Zia

Zia faced several challenges on assuming the presidency. The country's social fabric was under severe stress due to the long period of instability and political uncertainty since the assassination of Mujibur Rahman. People lacked trust in institutions and there was a general sense of insecurity. Zia set out to change the national identity of Bangladesh such that he can undertake the reforms that were needed to be done. He used Islam as a political tool to unite the country and to win support for his initiatives. It is helpful to look at some of his initiatives and look how Islam played a part in the conception and execution of them.

In Zia's period, Bangladesh saw one of the most critical paradigm shifts in the country's identity which continues to have implications even till today. Before Zia, the nationalism which drove the freedom struggle and held the country together can be called as 'Bengali Nationalism'. This obviously originated from the Bengali ethnic and national identity. However, Bangladesh was a plural society where people from diverse ethnic backgrounds lived. Hence, Zia felt that Bengali nationalism was inadequate to foster unity among all these people who spoke different languages and had varied cultural practices. Hence, he introduced the concept of Bangladeshi Nationalism which was more of a religion based civic republican nationalism rather than an ethnic nationalism based on Bengali identity. Bangladeshi nationalism stressed on the territory of Bangladesh being sovereign and the motherland of all people from different cultures and races who lived there. Thus, he emphasized the territorial aspect of Bangladesh more than the Bengali aspect. This he believed would unite all the people of Bangladesh together.

Such a territorial conception of Bangladeshi nationalism also served the purpose of differentiating Bangladeshi people from the larger ethnic Bengali identity that spread into India as well, especially the Bengali identity shared with the Indian state of West Bengal. This he thought would promote a stronger sense of self that is different from the larger Bengali identity. Zia saw such a conception of Bangladeshi nationalism as a positive force that would emotionally bind together the country. It would in his view create an autonomous self-identity with no reference to India that would in turn promote self-reliance and national pride. In a way, he was seeking to reconcile several competing nationalistic narratives that had torn Bangladesh apart and was hoping for a grand compromise that would define the Bangladeshi identity from within and without.

However, Zia also realized that such a nationalism cannot have strong foundations without a strong glue. This he sought in Islam. Thus, after becoming the head of the state, he issued a proclamation order which amended the Constitution by inserting the phrase *Bismillah-ir-Rahmanir Rahim* (In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful) to the Preamble of the Constitution. Moreover, to Article 8(1) and 8(1A) of the constitution, the principle of 'absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah' was also added. Further, in Article 8(1) of the constitution, socialism was defined as 'economic and social justice'.

In another clear sign of these amendments seeking to give an Islamic identity to the state, Article 25(2) of constitution was amended to include that "the state shall endeavour to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity" (Kamal 1994:56). The principle of secularism which had been set forth in Article 8 as one of the state principles, was dropped completely. Article 12 of the constitution which had banned communal political parties in Bangladesh was also dropped from the constitution along with Article 9, which had stressed on the lingual and cultural unity of Bengali nationalism. Clause 2 of Article 6 of the constitution now stated that citizens of Bangladesh were now to be known as Bangladeshis instead of Bengalis. All these changes were given effect through the Fifth Amendment to the constitution on 5 April 1977.

This was a landmark move by Zia as it changed the secular character of the Bangladeshi state and infused religion into the political realm overtly. Such a direct and authoritative reference to Islam in the constitution itself buoyed the religious sentiments of a vast majority of the people of Bangladesh and also increased the influence and reach of various radical religious groups in the country who had been previously kept in check by the Mujibur Rahman government. The predominant reason behind Zia's move to incorporate religion into the constitution was to develop a common identity based on Islam and Bangladeshi nationalism as opposed to Bengali nationalism. Adding Islam to the identity of Bangladeshis would add another differentiating factor with Bengalis of India who were predominantly Hindus. Thus, it was another attempt to carve out a separate identity for Bangladeshis that was distinct from the Bengali identity of Indian Bengalis. The impetus given to Islam in the constitution led to revival of radical groups who discarded long followed local Islamic practices and demanded adherence to a Saudi Arabian interpretation of Islam. Thus, began a fundamentalisation of Bangladeshi Islam which continues to have repercussions till today.

Infusing religion was also useful for Zia to take control of the armed forces as well. He had been witness to successive military coups that led to assassinations of leaders. He was thus well aware of his precarious position as the leader of Bangladesh. The armed forces of Bangladesh, as noted before, like in most post-colonial states was involved in the freedom struggle and after independence was an integral part of the day to day functioning of the state as other institutions were either weak or non-existent. This is in stark contrast to Western States where armed forces are primarily used to counter external threats. However, in a state like Bangladesh the role of armed forces was largely internal and they in many cases tipped the balance of power domestically to one leader or another. If one was perceived to be on the wrong side of the army in a country like Bangladesh, the fate met by Mujibur Rahman and his family is a likely outcome. Zia was aware of this threat and thus in order to bring the army under his political and ideological control as well, he used religion as a tool. Thus, during his period, the army became highly politicized with the religious Bangladeshi nationalism being projected as the pillar of the state. Kabir Md. Bhuiyan writes -

It is felt necessary because they want to give the system an ideological and political institutional shape that would sustain the reproduction of the system. It is also true for various Bangladeshi military-authoritarian regimes which used religion (Islam), in their attempts for political legitimization (Bhuiyan 1999:23).

Thus, Zia was used religion as an organising and uniting principle for the country as well as the army. This he believed would strengthen the fabric of the country and give it a modicum of unity -

Zia was an ardent nationalist and freedom fighter and represented the soul of the liberation war of Bangladesh. Very soon, he realized that Mujib's nationalism in post-independent Bangladesh was no different than what it was in pre independent era. So, he came with new and different model of nationhood for Bengalis. The idea was to build such a nationalism which would have focused and appealed to the major and dominant community at that moment. It was religion and this new model of nationalism turned up and known as 'Bangladeshi nationalism'.

This step was analyzed as step to secure and strengthen Zia's own political position. For this position, Two section needed to support him were 'People and Military'. For People, Islamization was appealing enough to secure support from major community. But, master stroke was adoption of Bangladeshi Nationalism. It could distinctly disassociate his regime from Awami League which was key to get support from second section, Military. (Mohsin 2004: 473)

However, it has to be acknowledged that he also ended up strengthening some of the most radical Islamic elements in the country. He did such a drastic reconceptualization of Bangladeshi identity largely because he had to take a series of tough steps to bring order back into the country. For example, while the Mujibur government had relied on the public sector to a large extent for development, as noted earlier, this led to a serious economic crisis from 1974 onwards. Due to a combination of incompetent and corrupt management practices and increased smuggling, the Bangladeshi economy was severely hamstrung. Thus, Zia had to confront the reality that if he had to alter the difficult course his country was in, then he had to drastically alter its economic policies.

Thus, he had to undertake a privatization regime to stabilize the economy. Bangladesh was heavily dependent on foreign assistance and investments and international institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were pressurizing the Bangladesh government to deepen the privatization process. The price of consumer goods were soaring and thus Zia undertook a privatization process which was not popular with many sections of the society. Thus, having the identity of the country refocus on Islam was a useful distraction that got most of the attention of the people while he pushed through what he perceived as tough but necessary reforms.

One also has to keep in mind that the trend towards Islam in Bangladeshi polity began before presidency of Zia itself. In fact, the military regime that took over after the murder of Mujibur found it useful to use religion to gather support and legitimacy. Thus, even the coup of August 1975 was declared in the name of the Islamic Republic of Bangladesh. Kondokar Mustaque Ahmed, who became the President after the coup initially, gave a speech on August 15 which was filled with Islamic expressions even though he made the address in the name of People's Republic of Bangladesh. Zia who came to power in 1977, just expanded on the already developing Islamic consciousness among the people and made it into a systematic ideology. Since Muslims constituted the majority population in the country, it was thus a politically savvy way to appeal to their loyalty and also differentiate himself from the politics of Awami League. It also has to be kept in mind that the army was dominated by repatriates who were more in number and also had a conservative, more Islamic outlook. Thus, Zia's use of religion was appealing to them as well.

A series of changes began to take place in the media sphere and the education sector that reflected the Islamic turn of Bangladesh. They started from 1975 and accelerated as time went by. As noted earlier, noticeable changes favoring Islam were made in the field of education as well with Islamism introduced as a compulsory subject for Muslim students from Class I to Class VIII and as an elective subject from Class IX to Class X. along with minority oppression a kind of forced Islamisation is also on the rise through various public platforms like national TV or even in public schools, which is against the secular fabric envisaged by the founder of Bangladesh, Mujibur Rahman, as it has been seen that

increase in duration and times of religious recital from the holy Quran has been increased while suppressing other religious recitals at public places.

It is also evident from a recent terrorist attack at a café in Bangladesh where militants ordered to hostages to recite verse from the quran and tortured and killed all those who could not . simply showing orthodox, Islamic nature of terrorists attack to torture and kill minorities. There were several evident changes in Administrative policies towards it. For instance, on 21st May 1979 when second parliament of Bangladesh met, it started with recitation from Quran. Trend of citations from holy book of all religion was shrunk to Quran only. Also, similar changes were seen in some of the slogans as well. For example, 'Joi bangla' was a Bengali slogan which was replaced by 'Bangladesh Zindabad' which was in Urdu.

It also has to be noted that 'Joi Bangla' was closer to the Indian slogan 'Jai Hind' whereas 'Bangladesh Zindabad' was similar to the Pakistani slogan of 'Pakistan Zindabad'. Zia also declared Friday, the holy day for Muslims as a half-holiday. Through these measures, Zia was able to consolidate his power, both among the people and the military and also substantially differentiate himself from the Awami League which had been seen as too close to a Hindu India.

3.2 Bangladesh Nationalist Party

Zia also wanted to gain democratic legitimacy for himself, however farcical it may be and thus a national referendum was held on May 30, 1977 in which people were asked to approve Major Zia as president. Zia won a massive vote of confidence with 98.88 percent of people voting for him in a 88.5 percent voter turnout (Kukreja 1991:168). To maintain an appearance of distance between civilian and military structures, Zia relinquished the post of Chief of Army Staff in 1978 to become the president. Zia's lasting impact on Bangladeshi politics is the creation of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party which espoused his ideals of religious, Bangladeshi nationalism. A party document defines Bangladeshi Nationalism as follows -

Religious belief and love for religion are a great and imperishable characteristic of the Bangladeshi nation ... the vast majority of our people are followers of Islam. The fact is well reflected and manifest in our stable and liberal national life (Mohsin 2004: 473)

Zia formed the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in 1977, which went on to win a majority of seats in the parliamentary election, held on 18 February 1979 (Islam, 1986:234). Unlike the other political parties, BNP promoted “Bangladeshi Nationalism” against the “Bengali Nationalism” upheld by the Awami League. The BNP continues to be a torch bearer of Zia’s Bangladeshi nationalism till this day and is a major force in the politics of Bangladesh.

While conducting elections to maintain an appearance of democracy, Zia also gave space and role for military officers in his administrated. One scholar notes –

Zia’s appeasing and trust on Military was openly seen in the Administration. He positioned many serving Bangladesh Army officers in key leadership position in civil administration. It helped BA to avail special concessions from the civil government in subsequent years. If we look n records, it says everything. On march 1. 1979, only 4% military officers were in senior policy pool who were responsible for policy making in the secretariat. This participation was rose significantly later on. In June 1980, out of 101 chairmen and managing directors of public corporations, 42 were military officers. It was 42% then. Also, in June, 1981 out of 40 district superintendents, 22 were military officers. It was 55%. More than 500 officers were employed in Industrial section. s(Bhattacharjee 2010: 11-12).

Similarly, in his 30 member Presidential cabinet, six were retired army officers and some of the most important portfolios were given to his army colleagues (Maniruzzaman 1980: 287). In the elections of 1979, he gave tickets to many retired army officers and 12 of them were elected to the Parliament. However, such attempts to win the loyalty of the army could not prevent his own demise in a coup as he could not fully reconcile the division between repatriates and freedom fighters in the army. This would claim his life and later lead to further Islamisation of the polity of Bangladesh.

3.3 End of Zia Era

Zia constantly faced the threat of being removed from power through a coup. As early as in October 1977, a group of airmen and some Junior Commissioned Officers tried to stage a coup when the Zia government was busy dealing with the fall out of hijacking of an airplane by members of the Japanese Red Army who had forced it to land in Dhaka. They killed 31 air force officers and stormed to control tower but the Dhaka based 46th Brigade came to the rescue of Zia and suppressed the mutiny. Major General M.A. Manzur, the then Chief of General Staff played a critical role in suppressing this coup attempt which killed nearly 230 people (Grover 2000: 107). One scholar notes -

It was an attempt made by the followers of Tahir, the late army General who was one of the masterminds in 1975 coup. It was a planned effort to oust Zia and his regiment, its objective was to glide Bangladesh away from the Anglo-American axis. It failed because of the tough resistance of the officers and soldiers loyal to Ziaur Rahman (Franda 1982:45)

Zia punished and executed all those officials involved directly and indirectly in this coup attempt. From 1975 to 1981, Bangladesh saw as many as 26 coups against Zia (Zaman 1984:97). Several other attempts on his life were made and despite his concerted efforts to keep the army disciplined and loyal to him, ultimately he was assassinated on 30th May 1981 in a coup in the city of Chittagong. This coup was led by Major General Manzur who was the commander of the 24th infantry division. It was an attempt by the freedom fighters in the army to retake power from the repatriates. A section of the army had also started to resent Zia's efforts to give a civilian character to the government to gain legitimacy. They wanted a more direct role. Some 10 days before the assassination, Major General Manzur had met the President in Dhaka and criticized him for 'over-democratising' Bangladesh. The army wanted re-imposition of the martial law, press censorship and restrictions of fundamental rights (Franda 1982: 27). General Manzur also had a personal grudge against Zia because of his recent transfer. However, General Manzur and his allies did not succeed in capturing power as they were arrested and some were executed while some other were punished by other means. 12 death sentences were executed on 23rd September 1981 and most of this retribution was on the freedom fighters section of the army. Thus, by 1981, the strength of freedom fighters in the Bangladesh army as opposed to the repatriates was a meagre 10 percent. Many of them did not also have leadership positions. It has to be noted that with the killing of Manzur, there was no

longer any more freedom fighters who were in command position in the armed forces. The high command of the armed forces of the Bangladesh was now comprised solely of repatriate generals. They set about the task of reshaping the army according to their priorities and sought to build a disciplined and cohesive army in Bangladesh. Thus, by the end of 1981, the repatriate faction of the armed forces became the most dominant socio-political force. With one of their own at the top in Lt. General H.M. Ershad, their ascension to power was complete.

4. The Ershad Era

After his election of President in 1977, Zia had appointed Lt. General H.M. Ershad as the chief of army. He was a repatriate officer. After the assassination of Zia, the constitutional process was followed atleast outwardly for public consumption. Therefore, according to due process, Vice President Abdul Sattar became the acting president. Sattar announced on 4th of June that in accordance with the provisions of the constitution, a Presidential election would be held in six months. Sattar himself thought of contesting as the BNP candidate for President but a section of the BNP was opposed to his candidature on a technicality. Since he was holding the post of Acting President, they argued that he was supposedly holding an ‘office of profit’ and therefore was ineligible to stand for Presidency under the rules of the existing constitution. In reality, this technicality was just a cover for some sections of the party to oppose the candidature of Sattar. This deadlock was proving to be causing instability in the polity. However, sensing an opportunity to increase his political clout, General Ershad took the initiative to resolve the constitutional deadlock and persuaded the BNP to propose a constitutional amendment that would allow Sattar to contest for President without resigning his post. His efforts were successful and thus on 8th July 1981, the sixth amendment was passed which excluded the office of President and Vice President or acting president from being ‘office of profit’ (Maniruzzuman 1994: 43).

Ershad’s successful brokering in the selection of presidential candidate strengthened his influence and later he demanded a more substantive and active role for the armed forces of Bangladesh in decision making. In an interview given on 7th October 1981, Ershad

argued that the army had murdered two presidents and several coups and counter coups have been attempted in the past. So, to prevent further coups from happening, he suggested that the army be given a role in the administration of the country such that they have a feeling that they are also involved and not be frustrated (Keesing's Contemporary Archives 1984: 313). Thus, Ershad managed to successfully consolidate power during chaotic period that followed the assassination of Ziaur Rahman. To his credit, he did it without any bloodshed and employed tact and political maneuvering.

Subsequently, on 24th March 1982, he ousted President Sattar in a bloodless coup and imposed martial law across the country. He claimed in a broadcast that followed that the armed forces had taken over the government to save the country from a social, economic and administrative breakdown (Keesing's Contemporary Archives 1982: 21). He assumed the role of the Chief Martial Law Administrator and two other service chiefs were appointed as Deputy Martial Law Administrators. The country was divided into five martial law zones and many sub-zones and each of those zones were given to repatriate officers to administer. Thus, repatriates became the principal political power structure in Bangladesh. It has to be kept in mind that the repatriates were the conservatives and the freedom fighters were the radicals in the Bangladeshi army. Zia, being a freedom fighter, tried to appease the repatriates by moving Bangladesh closer towards Islamic nationalism while maintaining some degree of Bengali identity and a liberal polity. However, with the death of Zia and the removal of freedom fighters from all positions of command in the army, the course was set for Bangladesh to become even more conservative and Islam was set to become a central pillar of Bangladeshi identity.

4.1 Islamisation under Ershad

One can argue that the death of Zia saw the contours of Bangladeshi nationalism shifting from liberal Islamic nationalism of Zia to Islamic nationalism under Ershad. Ershad was not a freedom fighter but was a repatriate and while he accepted the Bangladeshi nationalism propounded by Zia, he further made its tone more religious by giving it a complete and total Islamic orientation. While Zia also had made attempts to deemphasize

the Bengali identity of Bangladeshis, Ershad completely abandoned it and focused solely on the Islamic identity of Bangladeshis as he was that as more useful to his political end.

Thus, he even tried to change the significance of February 21 and the language movement which is considered as a marker of importance of secular Bengali nationalism. In 1983, he argued that the Alpana drawings on the premises of the Shaheed Minar was an un-Islamic practice and they should be replaced with recitations from the Holy Quran. While discussing the importance of February 21, he asserted that now it was time for the establishment of an Islamic state. This was in diametric opposition to the original spirit of the day as the language movement had fought the hegemony of West Pakistani nationalism which was peddled on the name of Islam. One author writes -

February 21, which stands as the very epitome of secular Bengali nationalism, was given an Islamic twist by Ershad. In early 1983 he declared that the drawing of “Alpana” (painted designs) on the premises of the Shaheed Minar was an un-Islamic practice and should be substituted with recitations from the Holy Quran. Referring to the significance of February 21 he declared: “This time the movement is for the establishment of an Islamic state.”¹⁴ This stand negated the very spirit of the day, as it symbolized the struggle of Bengalis to fight the hegemony of West Pakistanis in the name of Islam (Mohsin 2004: 476)

However, this policy faced stiff opposition from the Bengali community and thus could not be fully implemented. However, this gave insights into where Ershad intended to take Bangladesh. Subsequently, Ershad called for the creation of a mosque-centred society and also wanted to make Islam as the state religion of Bangladesh. These two policies need to be examined in some detail.

4.2 Mosque-centred Society

From 1986, Ershad started propounding the idea of making Bangladesh a mosque-centred society. Thus, the government granted a lot of funds for the construction as well as maintenance of mosques. The government also encouraged and facilitated foreign assistance for the development of mosques. Ershad also took active interest in religion publicly and made it a point to regularly address at different mosques on Fridays. He also regularly visited various religious leaders in the country. Scholars have argued that

Ershad was attempting to build his own political base through such outreach (Mohsin 2004: 477).

4.3 Islam as the State Religion

Ershad also encouraged Bangladesh adopting Islam as its state religion and due to his efforts, the Eighth amendment to the Constitution of Bangladesh was passed on 7th June 1988 which declared Islam as the state religion of Bangladesh as per Article 2, Clause A. While it also had a provision that stated that other religions can be peacefully practiced in harmony in Bangladesh, Islam was given the status of being the official religion of the state. Thus, the transition of Bangladesh from a secular state to a religious, Islamic state was complete. There were Bangladeshis who opposed to this formulation and questioned its coherence. For example, Justice Kamaluddin Hussein raised the following question -

The question is fundamental, can Islam be the state religion even in a Muslim-dominant polity? And can a sovereign state have Islam as state religion? ... If Islam is the state religion then it becomes the sovereign power, it cannot be subordinate to the sovereignty of the state ... a religion like Islam ... cannot be controlled by the state, and again a sovereign nation-state cannot be dictated by the canons of Islam (Kamaluddin 1993: 27).

Ershad also tried to make changes in the education sector. As early as 1983, he made Arabic also compulsory along with Islamiyat. However, he was unable to implement this policy due to opposition from students and political parties. He also promoted madrassa education and gave it equal status to general education. The government had already introduced the Imam Training Programme in 1979 which was also greatly expanded by Ershad. This programme encouraged Imams to engage in national development efforts. There were several other changes that were implemented as well. Friday was made a full holiday and the name of the Red Cross in Bangladesh was changed to Red Crescent. Encouraged by the patronage provided by the government, a number Islamic political parties began to proliferate in Bangladesh (Mohsin 2004: 477). Ershad was as clear as he could be in his stated objectives. He once stated -

Islam is our ideal and it is the only way to our emancipation. The existence of the country will be at stake if we fail to establish Islam in Bangladesh. We, the nine crore [ninety million] Muslims (of Bangladesh) will certainly speak about Islam, think about

Islam and dream about Islam. This is our only way for emancipation. (Cited in Rahman 1985: 2)

Ershad's rule was indeed a watershed moment in the history of Bangladeshi politics. His efforts of Islamization included the following measures which are significant enough to be highlighted:

- As noted earlier, the declaration of Islam as the state religion of Bangladesh through the eighth amendment of the constitution (Ahamed and Nazneen 1990).
- Created a Zakat fund to be headed by the President (Ahamed 1983).
- Adopted a new education policy that intended to introduce compulsory Arabic and Islamic Studies in both elementary and secondary schools (Riaz 2004). This was an expansion of Zia's Islamisation of education.
- Directed the broadcasting of azan (call for prayer) five times a day and increased broadcasting of Islamic programs in greater numbers in state-run electronic media (Ahmed 2004).
- as noted earlier, the attempt to turn the Shaheed dibas (Martyrs' Day/21 February) into a religious occasion through prayers and recitations from the Qur'an, instead of the customary barefoot procession at dawn and the effort to replace the traditional colorful paintings known as alpana with citations from the Quran (Hakim 1998).
- Formed a separate directorate under the Ministry of Education for madrasa education and making considerable contribution to the mushrooming growth of religious institutions including madrasas (Ahamed and Nazneen 1990).
- Sanctioned huge amount grants to shrines and mosques, especially for their repairs, reconstruction, and beautification (Ahamed and Nazneen 1990).
- Made Friday, the holy day of Muslims, instead of Sunday, the weekly holiday (Ahmad 2008).
- Changed the name of Red Cross to Red Crescent.

- Revived the Jamaat-i-Islami to counter secular opposition.

With respect to his contribution to the development of Bangladeshi identity, one author states the following -

Ershad accepted the Bangladeshi model of nationhood but made it more rigid and totalitarian by giving it a totally Islamic orientation. This move was ostensibly taken to secure and legitimize his own power base; unlike Zia, Ershad was not a freedom fighter and, more importantly, he was generally considered to be a usurper of power. Ershad de-emphasized the “Bengaliness” (unlike Zia) of the Bangladeshi nationalism and instead attempted to consolidate the Islamic contours of this model of nationalism (Mohsin 2004: 475).

4.4 Jatiya Party

Ershad has to be given credit for his role in stabilizing the Bangladeshi polity, especially its military. In order to prevent the military from challenging his rule, he coopted them into his initiatives. For example, in 1983, he announced his 18 point socio-economic programme. However, for this programme to achieve any success, he needed the full support of the military. He constituted a committee called the 18-point Implementation Committee for the purpose of executing the programme and also to garner support for it across the country. He appointed retired and serving military personnel to many decision making bodies and important posts in the government. They were also given judicial and managerial posts. There were several army members in his 18 point implementation committee. Thus, Ershad managed to give the armed forces as say in the developmental and governance process of Bangladesh which kept them satisfied and content. In all affairs, he gave military requirements the top priority.

However, Ershad also wanted to emulate the success of Zia in creating the BNP and thus set out to achieving that goal from 1986 onwards. His efforts to create a stronger Islamic identity among the people can be understood in this light as an attempt to differentiate himself from Zia and his BNP. Thus, his politics and party would be to the right of BNP which in itself was to the right of the Awami League. BNP and Awami League were the two parties that were dominating Bangaldeshi politics during this time with a widespread support base and Ershad wanted to make inroads into their support base by creating his own political party (Hossain 1988: 107).

On January 1, 1986, Ershad declared that presidential and parliamentary polls would be held and he created the Jatiya (National) Party to secure his position in the national politics and to gain democratic legitimacy to his regime. However, his political party could not achieve the level of success of BNP or the Awami League. Thus, since he did not have a strong political base as Zia, Ershad continued to use Islam as a tool for legitimacy. He continued to stay in power chiefly because of the support of the armed forces.

4.5 Ershad's Legacy

Ershad was able to achieve quite a bit of progress in the economic sphere as well as in his attempts to instill professionalism in the army.

In the economic sphere, when Ershad came to power, the economy was in shambles and the growth rate of the GDP was hovering around a measly 1.4 percent. Savings and Investment rates had also fallen sharply (Ziring 1992: 171). This was primarily because of the fact that after Zia's death the country went through a period of political uncertainty which led to economic priorities taking a back seat.

Hence, after taking power, Ershad swiftly introduced a wide range of fiscal measures with the goal of stabilizing the economy. As noted earlier, Zia himself had started privatisation of the economy, under Ershad the economic policies of Bangladesh were liberalized in a swift manner. He withdrew government's control and restrictions on the economy and followed a robust policy of deregulation. He also allowed liberal entry of foreign funds into the economy and apart from a few restricted sectors, he opened up the economy for foreign and private investments.

In a very bold move, he also completely did away with the ceiling of investment for both domestic as well as foreign investors. The government also facilitated the banks to make long term investment in industries. He even gave considerable autonomy to public sector companies and enterprises to run their own operations on a commercial basis without political and bureaucratic interference. However, it has to be noted that consistent with his policy of giving priority to the military, he did appoint a whole host of serving and retired military officers to various positions in state run corporations. On the whole,

Ershad's privatization programme was ambitious in its scope. Many jute and textile mills which had been nationalized in 1972 were returned to the heirs of the original owners. Over five hundred industries were sold by action in a span of just six years. His economic reforms, though not wildly successful, did pull out Bangladesh's economy from stagnation.

In the military sphere, Ershad came up with the idea of 'total national defence'. He argued that Bangladesh lacked a well-equipped army due to constraints of resources. The only alternative was to have a large number of trained soldiers to compensate for the technological weakness. Hence, he proposed the training of large number of soldiers and then effectively using them for nation building process in a variety of ways instead of letting them sit idly in the barracks. He also proposed that civilians should also be trained for a certain number of years before going back to their professions. Ershad's vision was thus have sufficient number of people from all walks of life trained in military service such that they can contribute to the defense of the country. He also proposed the setting up of a National Security Council or Defence Council in order to decide vital issues of strategic importance while not compromising on the democratic framework of the system.

Perhaps Ershad's biggest contribution was his success in restoring discipline and stability among the ranks of armed forces, especially in the army. Ershad met the officers and rank and file of the army frequently which consolidated his personal standing among them (Kamaluddin 1983:28). He exercised complete control on promotions and postings and he gave plum postings to those who were loyal to him. Institutionally, in order to establish a clear centralized hierarchy within the army, he constituted the office of the supreme commander of the armed forces.

Any major movements of the army or redeployment or internal security operations can be carried out only with the express permission of the supreme commander of the armed forces. Ershad also streamlined the operations of the armed forces and set up military intelligence organisations to closely monitor the mood among the troops. Ershad also made sure that most of the freedom fighter officers were removed from the armed forces.

So much so that by 1990, out of 20 Major General, only 5 were freedom fighters. It was also from Ershad's time that the military started participating in United Nations Peace Keeping Operations across the world and currently Bangladesh is one of the largest contributor of troops to UN Peace Keeping Operations. On the whole, Ershad has to be given credit for bringing much needed discipline to army and it is to his credit that the Bangladesh army has not attempted any major coup after 1982.

4.6 End of Ershad's Regime

Ershad did not face any serious political unrest or opposition from any of the major political parties until 1990 largely due to the strong support he got from the military. Despite his several attempts to gain political legitimacy through various democratic facades, ultimately his rule lacked legitimacy even though he succeeded in stabilizing the economy and the army. However, starting from the late 1980s, opposition started to grow against his military regime and ultimately he was forced to relinquish his power on 6th December 1990. Author Lawrence writes -

Ershad's rule had ushered in a period of comparative stability and the majority population did not want the overall decorum jeopardized by frustrated, unhappy politicians. He was largely cynical about the democratization. In his view, Bangladesh was unlikely to ever become a democratic state in the European standards and tradition, rather, he believed that the politicians who blandished the notion of democracy are repeatedly failed to give its substance. The politicians had proven themselves to be poor caretakers of the country's national interests (Ziring 1992:171)

Eventually, Ershad's came to an end when the army abandoned him in favour of the popular uprising that rose against his regime in late 1980s.

5. Conclusion

East Pakistan's struggle with West Pakistan that ultimately resulted in the creation of the independent state of Bangladesh in 1971 which was a blow to the idea that all Muslim areas of former British India naturally formed a coherent state. As noted before, East Bengalis saw the religious nationalism imposed by West Pakistan on them as oppressive and as an intimidation to their ethnicity, culture and language. The Awami League raised the Bangla language movement and it based itself on Bengali nationalism which was not

particular to any specific religion. When Bangladesh became independent in 1971, it was the sole country in the Indian subcontinent with a dominant language group and very few ethnic or linguistic or religious minorities. Thus, the Awami League party which came to power sought to establish the country as a secular entity with no religious nature to it.

However, as discussed in this chapter, subsequent developments led to Bangladesh developing an Islamic identity during successive military regimes. One should not forget that even when Bengali nationalism was at its peak, there was always underneath a strong Muslim undercurrent which was lying dormant. Or else, if Bengali nationalism had been the sole focus, then there was nothing that stopped East Bengal to merge with the Hindu West Bengal which was predominantly Hindu but shared the same language and culture. Thus, despite not being very overt, the Muslim identity very much existed in the national consciousness of the country at some level. Thus, one scholar writes -

It is important to remember that a Muslim element has always been present; otherwise what was East Pakistan could have merged with the predominantly Hindu Indian state of West Bengal, where the same language is spoken. The importance of Islam grew as the Awami League fell out with the country's powerful military, which began to use religion as a counterweight to the League's secular, vaguely socialist policies (Lintner 2002).

The Mujibur Rahman government did not appreciate this consciousness and in an effort to show the secular nature of their country, they inadvertently antagonized many religious elements in the country.

Thus, when the Awami League became unpopular with the people owing to failures of governance and economic management, the military saw an opening to assume power. Hence, after the overthrow and murder of Mujibur Rahman, the military began to use religion as a counterweight to Awami League's secular and socialist policies. Thus, as discussed in this chapter, the military used religion to provide legitimacy to its rule as it did not have democratic legitimacy. The military, especially the repatriate wing of it was also not socialist and hence both Zia and Ershad wanted to privatize the economy and took several steps in that regard. The religious nationalism thus provided them a basic platform from which they could reshape the country in a manner they wanted.

Thus, it is undeniable that the military generals who apprehended power in the mid-1970s in Bangladesh changed the national character of Bangladesh from a secular liberal Islamic country to a radical and conservative Islamic orthodox country. Some scholars have argued that secularism was never properly understood in Bangladesh. The Bengali term for secularism is ‘dharma mirapekshate’ which literally translates to ‘religious neutrality’. Secularism was thus not understood in the same manner as in the West where a wall of separation between the religion and state was understood to be secularism (Kabir 1994: 201). However, in the case of Bangladesh, during the era of Mujib, the state tried to treat all religions on equal footing by providing avenues for all religions equally in the media and in the public sphere. However, this led to resentment among the people who feared that Mujib was too close to Hindu India. Thus, secularism came to mean appeasement and began to be resented by a wide section of the people. Mujib himself had to respond to these allegations in persons and thus once remarked -

The slanderous rumor is being circulated against us that we are not believers in Islam. In response to this, our position is very clear. We are not believers in the labels of Islam. We believe in the Islam of justice. Our Islam is the Islam of the holy and merciful Prophet (Cited in Hakim 1998: 104).

In the end, when Zia came to power in 1977, as noted before, he did away with the term secularism itself from the constitution and established the Bangladesh Nationalist Party as an Islam oriented party that recited verses from Quran as a regular practice in their meetings. It quickly became the second largest party in the country after the Awami League. Zia took several other steps in various fields to bring Islam back to the national mainstream. These were discussed in this chapter.

The longevity of the changes he brought out to the national character of Bangladesh became clear after his assassination in 1981. His removal from power did not weaken the Islamic forces in the country and in many ways the opposite happened. As one scholar puts it -

The marriage of convenience between the military—which needed popular appeal and an ideological platform to justify its opposition to the Awami League—and the country’s Islamic forces survived Zia’s assassination in 1981. In some respects, it grew

even stronger under the rule of Lt. Gen. Hossain Muhammed Ershad (1982–90) (Lintner 2002).

Ershad put Islam even more in the centre of Bangladeshi polity and eventually ended up making Islam the state religion of Bangladesh in 1988. He even resuscitated the Jamaat-I-Islami, an organisation which had supported Pakistan against the Bengali nationalists during the liberation war. Most of its leaders had fled to West Pakistan after 1971 but they were rehabilitated under Ershad and Islam became a political factor that cannot be discounted. As one scholar writes -

Throughout his reign he remained enthusiastic about continuing the process of Islamisation as initiated by his predecessor, General Zia. His personal style, frequent visits to shrines and mosques, liberal grants to Islamic institutions, pirs (holy men) and imams (religious leaders) adornment, Bangladesh's further close relations with the Muslim world, establishment of zakat fund (Islamic charity fund) headed by the President himself bore a testimony to his apparent devotion to Islam... During his long rule spanning over years (1982-1990), the regime remained volatile suffering from legitimacy crisis. This might have prompted him to declare Islam as 'the State Religion' on June 7, 1988 (Eighth Amendment to the Constitution) purported to win popular support for the regime (Rashid 2012: 34).

However, in evaluating the role of religion during the military regimes in Bangladesh, one also has to ask whether secularism was ever a welcome idea in Bangladesh. Maniruzzaman has argued that "*secularism in Bangladesh did not reflect Bangladesh's societal spirit and history. It arose as a utilitarian expediency in the political field*" (Maniruzzaman 1990: 69). Some scholars have made this point in even stronger terms -

Secularism in Bangladesh, currently perceived as the rejection of Islam and its symbols from the political and social landscapes, was imposed from the above, not established according to the consensus of the people. A serious gap between a secular state and a secular people was evident. Throughout history, people in Bangladesh have never rejected religion in their sociopolitical life. This is why secularism collapsed within a short time of its introduction and instead religious influence strongly emerged in the sociopolitical realm of Bangladesh (Nazrul and Saidul 2018: 14).

The biggest success of the military regimes in transforming the character of Bangladeshi polity was evident from 1990 itself after the fall of Ershad regime. In the democratic elections that followed, every party including the Awami League and even the Communist Party were competing with each other in some way to show that they are not anti-Islam. The Communist Party was said to have held religious gatherings in its office.

Such was the impact of the Islamisation of Bangladeshi society from 1975 to 1990 that its effect has become widespread and deeply ingrained in the Bangladeshi polity.

Chapter 5

Role of Religion in the Political Developments in Bangladesh during Democratic Era

Introduction

Democratic politics depend on the proper functioning of political parties within the constitutional framework of a country. This is especially true of representative democracy. Since people do not get to make policies directly in a representative democracy, healthy and mature political parties are needed to perform a variety of roles. Firstly, political parties are needed for interest aggregation and articulation. Parties seek to collect the demands of different socio-economic groups and turn them into useful policies, articulate them effectively and based on that they try to get elected and enact those policies.

Political parties are thus essential to provide voice to various interest groups in a country and a successful political party is one which is able to aggregate the interests of many social groups and forge a winning alliance among them. Secondly, political parties are also important for political training of future leaders of a country. It is political parties

who engage with the people and among them select leaders who then go through a learning curve and rise up in ranks of the party, gain experience and if successful, eventually end up getting elected to the high offices of a country. Thus, political recruitment in a representative democracy happens through political parties and hence the robustness of political parties are important for shaping the leaders of a country (Gunther and Diamond 2001: 6-8).

Thirdly, political parties are also important for keeping the government of the day accountable to the people. This is especially applicable to representative democracies where people get involved in the electoral process only in regular intervals and thus in the intervening time, it falls up on the political parties to keep the government accountable. Fourthly, political parties also shape the political discourse and debate in a country by choosing to highlight specific issues in specific times. This enables them to set the agenda and also shape the politics of a country. Lastly, political parties also connect citizens with the government. Through their campaigns and other means of outreach, they inform the public either positively or negatively about the government's policies and also function as an important feedback mechanism for the ruling elite to gauge the pulse of the people. Thus, political parties play a key role in the establishment of a stable political system in a country (Gunther and Diamond 2001: 6-8).

In this context, this chapter will look at political parties in Bangladesh and analyse what role religion has played in the democratic politics of Bangladesh. In general, political parties in the developing countries suffer from a democratic deficit and are hindered in many ways by the legacy of a colonial past. Prevalence of feudal structures and lack of strong government institutions are all challenges which political parties in developing countries have to encounter. As one scholar puts it -

“The democratic deficits in the party practices of developing countries often originate in structural factors of these countries such as long tradition of colonial or military rule, which leaves behind autocratic leadership practices that become embedded in political culture. Lack of development of formal institution make informal personal access to decision-makers an important vehicle of representation of interests. Political parties in developing countries face these challenges constraining their development as democratic institutions” (Jahan 2014: 2).

A rich and long time practice of multi-party politics is witnessed by Bangladesh. . The Awami League was founded nearly 70 years ago in 1949 and the party went onto lead the nationalist struggle against West Pakistan which eventually led to the creation of Bangladesh as a newly independent state. Zia was the founder of the other major party of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Nationalist party (BNP) in 1978. Jammat-i-Islami, the major Islamist party in the country was established as far back as in 1941. The chapter aims to trace the evolution of party politics in Bangladesh and later proceeds to show how religion has emerged as the primary division in Bangladesh's party politics.

1. Evolution of Party Politics in Bangladesh

The party politics of Bangladesh can be analysed through three distinct phases. The first phase lasted from 1972 to 1975, followed by 15 years of military rule (1975 to 1990) when there was a façade of democratic showmanship at different points and lastly the restoration of multi-party democracy since 1991. These three periods need to be discussed in some detail.

2. The First Phase: Domination of the Awami League (1972-1975)

Having led the national struggle for independence from West Pakistan, the Awami league initially emerged as the dominant political party in Bangladesh. Even before the independence of Bangladesh, the electoral dominance of Awami League was there to see for anyone in the 1970 National Assembly and Provincial Assembly elections which was the first free and fair elections to be held in Pakistan. The campaign of the Awami League was designed around the Bengali Nationalist agenda, and league won a majority of seats in both the National and Provincial Assembly elections. In the National Assembly, it won 167 out of 169 seats from East Pakistan and in the provincial elections, the party won 288 out of 300 seats (Ahmad 2010: 14).

Despite winning a majority of seats in the National Assembly, West Pakistan prevented the party from coming to power and this is what eventually precipitated the liberation war which ended in 1971 with the creation of Bangladesh as an independent country. Awami League was in a prime position to assume power and also to shape the polity of the country. The constituent assembly of 1972 was formed by the elected leaders of national

and provincial election of 1970. Interestingly, while only one belonged to the National Awami Party (NAP), 400 out of the 403 members of the Constituent Assembly were members of the Awami League only and the remaining two were independents. The constitution of Bangladesh was drafted within a year by the constituent assembly which was established one year before and acted as a national parliament.

The opposition to the Awami League, in the early years after the independence was fragile and not well organized. Islamist political parties like Pakistan Democratic Party the Muslim League, Nizam-e-Islam, Jamaat, and had all opposed the independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan and hence they were seen as traitors to the national cause for collaborating with Pakistan. Jamaat especially was seen as a traitorous party for it was believed to have been involved in committing war crimes in Bangladesh. Bangladesh collaborators (Special Tribunal) Order which was promulgated on 24th January 1972 saw the arrest of many Jamaat leaders along with many other members of other Islamist, pro-Pakistan parties. As a final blow, Jamaat and other religion centric parties were banned under Articles 12 and 38 of the new constitution. The article 12 and 38 prohibited political parties with religious ideologies to thrive (Karlekar 2005: 48).

Thus, with the banning of Islamist and right wing parties, Awami League's position became even more strengthened in the short term. However, in the long term, these parties were driven underground and there rose a sentiment among some sections of the population that in the name of 'secularism' Awami League was restraining Islam. This sentiment would be later used against the Awami League by its enemies. For a while the leftist parties offered some sort of competition to the Awami League. However, they were weak and the only serious opposition came from Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD). JSD was formed in October 1972 by a group of student leaders who were once leading the Awami League and separated from Awami League because they felt that it was not implementing pure socialism (Grover 2000: 160).

However, none of these parties posed any serious threat to the electoral dominance of the Awami League. Awami League won 276 out of 300 seats in the parliament When the first parliamentary elections were held in March 1973, Only three of them could muster

four seats while independent candidates won nine seats, Despite the fact that eleven other parties contested in the elections.

Ironically, the electoral dominance of the Awami League did not bring political stability to Bangladesh. As one scholar writes -

“The AL’s continued dominance, however, did not bring political stability. As the massive victory in the first parliamentary elections did not give immunity from attacks by the underground extremist parties, or the opposition parties operating in the open, debates started within various factions of the ruling AL about the need for changing the political and party system. Finally, in January 1975, through the fourth amendment of the constitution, passed by the first elected parliament, drastic changes were brought about. A presidential form of government and a single-party system was introduced” (Jahan 2014: 5).

As noted in the previous chapter as well, the governance failings of the government and the onset of economic crisis led to a rise in the political clout of underground extremist parties and factionalism also hit the Awami League, thereby led to its weakening. The law and order situation also began to deteriorate in the country along with the economy. The Awami League high command sensed the tide was changing against them and in order to bring stability and order, a whole lot of radical changes were done by the fourth amendment in January 1975.

A Presidential form of government was included and the introduction of a single party system for Bangladesh was done. Bangladesh Krishak Shramik Awami League (BAKSAL) the name of the single party and consequently all other political parties were dissolved. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman became the President as well the chairman of the newly formed BAKSAL. Thus, Bangladesh moved from a single party i.e. Awami League dominated party system to a single party system in a matter of few years (Dowlah 2016: 166). However, there was growing discontent among the people about government’s performance and rising corruption in Bangladesh (Nordlinger 1977:7-8, 75-76). Thus, the single party system did not last for long, as the military seized on the unrest that was developing in the country. On the fateful day of 15th August 1975, Mujibur Rahman and his family was killed by a group of military officers. This was followed by a serious coups and counter-coups and led Bangladesh to 15 years of military

rule. The military which was earlier divided by factionalism and therefore was unable to wield decisive influence on the people in the early years, later got its act together (Lifschulz 1979:85-88). Some scholars have also argued that the kind of secularism promoted by the Awami League in the initial years was not deeply rooted in Bangladeshi society (Maniruzzaman 1990: 69).

3. The Second Phase: Military Sponsored Political Parties during Military Rule (1975-1990)

As discussed in the previous chapter, from November 1975 to December 1990, Bangladesh was governed basically by two military rulers in the form of Major General Ziaur Rahman who ruled from 1975 to 1981 and Lieutenant General Hussain Muhammad Ershad who was in power from 1982 to 1990. Their regimes were dominated by the presence of military personnel, both retired and serving in government posts (Maniruzzaman 1980: 287). Justice Sattar , a civilian President had a brief tenure from June 1981 to March 1982 but even during that period, it was the military that was essentially calling the shots. While both these rulers ruled through an iron fist with little regard for real democratic norms, they did follow certain common strategies to ‘civilianize’ themselves by building political parties that offered them a façade of political legitimacy (Lewis 2011: 88).

They started their own state sponsored parties which received the support of the government machinery, intelligence support and several other benefits. In particular, through a carrot and stick approach, they sought to exploit the factionalism in other political parties to increase their political support. These parties also saw a steady influx of retired civil and military officers who were given plum positions as a reward. In order to differentiate themselves from the Awami League and also to cultivate their own support base, both Zia and Ershad used Islam as a political tool and thus encouraged religious organisations to get involved in politics alongside them (Lintner 2002). Many of these organizations and political outfits had been banned earlier by the Awami League government (Riaz 2008: 141).

This was because both Zia and Ershad felt the need to organized presidential and parliamentary elections which always saw their parties winning huge majorities but however neutral observers did not perceive these elections as free or fair. They were stage managed by the government and the military to maintain a farcical but necessary degree of political legitimacy. Jahan notes,

“To increase political support, both Zia and Ershad made political use of Islam and rehabilitated the Islamist groups who had gone underground or became politically inactive after the national liberation war of 1971. Both military rulers were committed to presidential form of government. Both organized presidential and parliamentary elections which resulted in victory for them and their parties. But these elections were never perceived as free and fair. They were widely regarded as ‘engineered’ by the government” (Jahan 2014: 5).

4.1 Zia’s Bangladesh Nationalist Party

While the coup of 1975 saw the banning of political activities and martial law was imposed, the military government that was led by Zia began discussions with various political leaders to arrive at a possible consensus. Zia wanted to be pragmatic and thus sought to appeal to both right and left wing forces. He was able to get the support of the leftist Bhashani party in the initial days. In a smart political move that will have far reaching implications on Bangladesh’s political future, Zia repealed the Collaborator’s Act of 1972 which led to the reemergence of Islamic parties which had earlier opposed Bangladeshi independence. These parties swiftly became allies of Zia who also pragmatically incorporated Islamic identity as a core element of his political strategy. By 1977, Zia, through the strength of his political maneuvering became the president of Bangladesh and immediately he dropped the word secularism from the constitution and the phrase “absolute trust and faith in Almighty Allah” was added to the constitution. This further cemented his political based among the religious conservatives in his country (Alam 2016: 150-165).

More importantly, this paved the way for many religion centric political parties like the Muslim League, Jamaat and Nizal-e-Islam to reenter Bangladeshi politics. Their dark days that continued during the Awami League government were over and now they were close to the man in power that was Zia. These parties together formed an ideological coalition among them and called it as Islamic Democratic League. Maulana Abdur

Rahim, a leader of Jamaat became the leader of this formation and several exiled leaders like Professor Ghulan Azam of Jamaat also returned to Bangladesh during this period (Bhuiyan 2006: 68).

In September 1978, Zia established his own political party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) with himself as the chairman. This party had both people from the left and right as they were both united by their common antipathy to the Awami League and also the incentive offered by aligning with Zia, the most powerful man in Bangladesh was also too good to miss for many. These different factions within the party were in relative harmony with each other as long as Zia was alive. His unopposed hold over power kept the warring factions in check. However, after his assassination in May 1981, these differences boiled over and Zia's successor, Justice Sattar found it impossible to mediate between the warring factions within the party. He neither had the backing of the armed forces nor the experience of Zia to deal with such a situation (Ahmed 2004: 221). The situation was salvaged with the widow of Zia, Khaleda Zia being brought into leadership position in the party, initially as Vice Chairman and from 1984 onwards as the chairperson of the BNP. Khaleda has since held on to that post and she transformed the party from a state sponsored party to a mass party. During the rule of Ershad, the BNP refused to participate in government engineered electoral politics and sought to return Bangladesh to being a real democracy. Jahan notes,

“In the initial years of the BNP the different groups within the party, the left and the right, freedom fighters and the non-freedom fighters were kept within the party discipline by Zia. But after Zia's assassination in May 1981, the feuds between the various groups became acute and his successor, Justice Sattar, found it difficult to manage and balance the various factions. After much persuasion Zia's widow, Khaleda Zia was brought in as the executive vice chairman of the party. In late 1984 Khaleda Zia became the chairperson of the BNP when Sattar relinquished his position as the head of the party. Since then Khaleda has remained the chairperson of the BNP. She succeeded in transforming the BNP from a state-sponsored sarkari party to an opposition party as she decided not to participate in parliamentary elections organised by the military ruler Ershad” (Jahan 2014: 6).

4.2 Ershad's Jatiya Party

Ershad became the military ruler of Bangladesh in 1982 after staging a bloodless coup against the Sattar government. He pursued Zia's tactic of civilianizing the regime through state sponsored parties and he also used Islam to define a political space for himself (Rashid 2012: 34). However, since Zia's BNP had already acquired a large amount of that space, Ershad had to go even further and thus his brand of Islamic politics was even more radical as was discussed in the previous chapter. After floating and experimenting with a couple of party formations, eventually in January 1986, he formed a new political party called the Jatiya Party with himself as the chairman. Learning from the tactics of his predecessor, Ershad managed to break way factions from the BNP, United People's Party, Muslim League and the Ganatantrik Dal to strengthen his Jatiya Party. However, this was period of intense political mobilization in Bangladesh. Ershad had to face street protests and election boycotts from popular parties like BNP under Khaleda Zia. Even the Awami League which had participated in the 1986 elections, later resigned from the parliament. Both BNP and Awami League mobilized their supporters for massive street protests demanding a return to democracy. However, Ershad's regime promoted economic and political stability for a time (Ziring 1992:171). In response, Ershad dissolved the parliament and called for another elections in March 1988 which was also boycotted by BNP and the Awami League. However, in a sign of shifting tides, even the Jamaat also did not participate in this election and joined ranks with the pro-democracy movement which was getting stronger in the country. This period saw massive strikes and hartals which brought the country to a standstill. Eventually, sensing that the public sentiment was strongly in favour of democracy and also realizing that the armed forces were not ready to brutally suppress the people, Ershad resigned on 4th November 1990 -

The country was repeatedly shut down by continuous hartals (general strike). Finally, Ershad resigned on 4 November 1990. A Non-Party Caretaker Government (NCG) with Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed as its head, took over on 6 November 1990, and parliamentary elections were organised within the next three months (Jahan 2014: 7).

The reason one needs to discuss how party politics unfolded during the military regime in a chapter focusing on the role of religion during the democratic era in Bangladesh is because it is during the military era, the political battle lines between parties were drawn and redrawn. A clear division between secular parties with Awami League as the leader

and Islamic parties with BNP as the leader emerged in Bangladeshi politics. Before the military regime, the Awami League was the most popular party in the country and its form of secular Bengali nationalism was assumed to be the national consensus of the new state and was reflected in the constitution. However, the emergence of BNP and the reemergence of parties like Jamaat and the Muslim League, that consensus was shattered forever in Bangladeshi politics.

4. The Third Phase: Awami League and BNP Rivalry (1991 to Present)

After the resignation of Ershad, Non-Party Caretaker Government (NCG) with the then Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed as the head assumed power to conduct elections which was done in three months. This historic election, the fifth parliamentary election, which was widely observed to be free and fair, was held on 27th February 1991 and the election results indicated the emergence of two major politics in Bangladeshi politics. Both BNP and the Awami League had won around 31 percent votes but the BNP had won far more seats, 140 seats to Awami League's 88. However, the BNP did not have the numbers to form a government on its own. Ershad's Jatiya party had come in as the third largest party while the Islamic Jamaat had won around 6 percent of votes and emerged victorious in 18 seats. Eventually, the BNP formed an alliance with the Islamic Jamaat and Khaleda Zia became the Prime Minister.

5.1 BNP's First Government (1991 to 1996)

In the initial period after the ascension of Khaledia Zia to the post of Prime Minister, there was some non-partisan cooperation among all the political parties of Bangladesh including the BNP and the Awami League to properly restore parliamentary democracy once and for all. As a result of that, the 12th amendment to the constitution was passed in 1991 which restored parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh. However, these initial coming together of political parties gave way to bitter animosity especially between BNP and the Awami League in the subsequent years. Religious politics continued to be the contentious issue between the Awami League and BNP. For example, one contentious issue was the leadership role assumed in the religious Jamaat party by Professor Ghulam

Azam. The Awami League accused him of collaborating with West Pakistan during the 1971 Liberation War (Ahmed 2008: 109-11).

Another issue that became contentious was the conduct of elections. In 1994, there was a by-election for the Magura constituency and the media reported massive amount of vote rigging by the BNP. This led the Awami League led opposition parties to boycott the parliament and demanded that future elections should take place under a NCG only to ensure fairness. The Awami League began to organize massive street protests and hartals which brought the country to stand still. In the end, even the Jamaat supported the proposal to have a NCG conducting elections. However, the BNP did not relent and eventually all opposition parties resigned from the parliament on 28th December 1994 as a sign of their protest and they also went on to boycott the next parliamentary elections which were held on 15th February 1996. This elections thus had a very low voter turnout and the BNP won 278 seats. However, due to the boycott it lacked democratic legitimacy. Recognizing that, the newly elected BNP members, as their main order of business approved on 28th March 1996 the 13th amendment to the constitution which created the provision of NCGs to conduct elections. On the successful passing of this amendment, the BNP government resigned and fresh elections were held in June 1996 under a NCG (Jahan 2000: 174). This election was generally perceived to be fair and free by both internal and external observers and the Awami League emerged as the single largest party with a 37 percent vote share and 146 seats. BNP had acquired a 33 percent vote share and bagged 116 seats while the Jatiya Party came third again with 32 seats. The Islamic Jamaat party only secured three seats. The Awami League formed the government with the support of the Jatiya Party and Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Mujibur Rahman became the Prime Minister of the country.

5.2 Awami League's First Government (1996 to 2001)

The Awami League's rise to power after being in the political wilderness for more than two decades was a remarkable feat engineered by Sheikh Hasina who transformed the image of the party and made it adopt a moderate, centrist image. During the tenure of the Awami League, one of the most important achievements of the regime was the signing of

the Ganger water sharing treaty with India (Ahmar 2001: 149). As noted earlier, the Awami League historically was seen as being close to Hindu India. Hence, sensing a political opportunity, this treaty was vehemently opposed by the BNP which right from its beginning projected itself as an Islamic party that was independent of Indian influence. The BNP also opposed the signing of the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord which brought to close the tribal insurgency in that region. Further, taking a leaf out of the playbook of the Awami League, the BNP boycotted all local body elections and all parliamentary by-elections argued that all such elections should be held under the control of a NCG. It also indulged in intensive street mobilization against the government by organising a series of hartals and demonstrations against the Awami League government.

During this period, the BNP also forged an alliance of all Islamic parties by bringing together the well known Four Party Alliance including Jamaat, the Islamic Oikkya Jote party and a faction of Jatiya Party. The forging of this alliance further reinforced the secularist vs Islamist divide in the politics of Bangladesh. The next elections were held on October 1, 2001 and the Four Party Alliance won 47 percent of the votes and cruised to victory by getting two thirds majority in the parliament by winning 216 seats. Khaleda Zia became the Prime Minister once again and when she formed the cabinet, there were members of the Jamaat party as well in it. Thus the Islamic party which had originally opposed the independence of Bangladesh and was later banned by Mujibur government had not become part of the ruling coalition in Bangladesh. It was a sign of how important religion had become over the years in Bangladesh's politics.

5.3 BNP's Second Government (2001 to 2006)

The 2001 elections were followed by a period of extreme unrest and violence in Bangladesh. This violence had clear religious undertones. The supporters of the BNP led alliance started targeting secular and minority voters who were seen as supporters of the Awami League. This led to widespread political killings and intimidation across the country. Mohsin (2004) suggests that politics became a game of numbers in majoritarian democracy where human beings are mere vote banks and communities have been turned into constituencies.

October 1, 2001 elections in Bangladesh was announced and The de-humanizing phase of politics became more apparent when it took a horrible form in terms of minority hunting. specifically, the Hindu community was targeted in minorities . The logic behind the eruption of such violence were not limited to communal and religious factors alone, rather, the main factors behind such actions were purely structural and political. The Hindus were considered the vote bank of the Awami League, hence they were easily targeted by supporters of the BNP and its alliance partners. In some instances, Awami League supporters had also attacked Hindus, thinking that the local Hindus did not vote for them as had been expected.

Moreover, terrorists took advantage of such simmering situation and indulged in extortion and looting. The violence started fifteen days prior to the October 1 elections and continued till about October 27, that is largely over a month. Apart from large scale violence and hatred, it spoilt the Durga Puja, the most important religious festival of the Hindu community in Bengal (Mohsin 2004: 485).

The scale of the violence was so shocking and huge that even Awami League Members of Parliament including a former finance minister of the country were assassinated. There was even an attack on an Awami League rally in Dhaka on 21st August 2004 which targeted Sheikh Hasina herself, who narrowly escaped while 23 people including some senior Awami League leaders were killed. In the same time period, there were also lot of other intraparty political killings and a general deterioration of law and order in Bangladesh.

Importantly, emboldened by the presence of Islamic parties in power, many Islamist extremist groups began to function more openly and aggressively. This included groups like Harkat-ulJihad Islami (HUJI), Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Hizbul Tahrir and Hizbut Tawhid. Some of these groups were also involved in fostering terrorism inside Bangladesh. The BNP led alliance for the most part turned a blind eye to their expansion and growing terror instances in Bangladesh. However, after much pressure from the media and also because of international attention, the government action and some of these fronts were banned and

their leaders arrested. It has to be noted that the government's indifference for a long time or what the opposition called as tacit support meant that religious extremism was able to take strong roots in Bangladesh which is continuing to be a problem (Riaz 2012: 1-2).

On the other hand, the Awami League was learning from the electoral victory of BNP in the previous elections and put together a broad alliance for the next elections which came to be known as the Grand Alliance. Its major alliance partners included Ershad's Jatiya Party, JSD, Bangladesh Workers' Party apart from ten small parties. The Grand Alliance worked with civil society groups and took proposals from them and put up a platform that promised political and governance reforms. However, by the end of the tenure of Zia's regime, there was growing distrust between the BNP and the Awami League over the constitution of the NCG that would conduct elections. The Awami League accused the BNP of seeking to appoint a partisan NCG that would give it an advantage. This standoff resulted in hartals and also increase in political violence and the military finally intervened on 11th January 2007 by taking control and declaring a state of emergency in the country (Yap 2017: 167).

5.4 Military Rule (2007 to 2008)

The military appointed a NCG to conduct elections and initiate reforms which ended up ruling the country for two years. However, it could not succeed to a great degree in cleaning up Bangladesh's politics. This was because the military backed NCG's biggest idea was to democratize both the major political parties which till then functioned like the personal fiefdoms of Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina. So, the NCG wanted to get rid of these two leaders and that it believed would lead to a more democratic politics. This was dubbed as the 'Two Minus Strategy' (Vaughn 2011: 7).

The military backed NCG sought to achieve this ambitious strategy by aligning with some of the senior members of the Awami League and the BNP. It also tried to threaten and make Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina go into an exile. However, both of them refused to budge down and instead were ready to go to jail. Eventually, the senior leaders of BNP and the Awami League who had aligned with the military could not generate support among the members of their party for getting rid of Zia and Hasina. The military

backed NCG realized the failure of the ‘Two Minus Strategy’ and thus eventually released the two leaders along with many other senior party leaders and allowed them to take part in elections (Vaughn 2011: 7).

In the elections held on 29th December 2008, the Awami League led grand alliance won 57 percent of popular vote and got 262 seats as opposed to the BNP led Four Party Alliance which got a mere 34 seats.

5.5 Awami League’s Second Government (2009 to Present)

The Grand Alliance formed the government under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina on 6th January 2009. There was hope among the civil society groups that this government will undertake political and governance reforms which will reduce corruption and inefficiency while also changing undemocratic practices. With the recent experience of military intervention which was in a way brought about by the bitter fighting between the two main political parties, one would have expected both the parties to behave in a mature manner so as to not to invite another military intervention. However, this was not to be the case.

Once again, both the parties went back to their old tactics with the BNP boycotting the parliament and initiating a series of street demonstrations and hartals. The Awami League government which now had two thirds majority in the parliament also chose to ignore the opposition and push ahead with its preferred policies. In a major move, it passed the fifteenth amendment to the constitution on 30th June 2011 which made the following key changes -

- Scrapping of the system of NCG for holding elections as the Awami League feared that it would allow external actors like the military to intervene as it had happened in 2007.
- Restored Secularism to the Constitution.
- Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was declared as the father of the nation. (Islam 2016: 66)

These changes to the constitution led to a battle of sorts between the Awami League and the BNP. The Awami League was seen as pursuing its own ends, forgetting its pre-election promise of building consensus. BNP was especially suspicious of the move to abolish the NCG system and refused to participate in any election till its restoration. The restoration of the term secularism in the constitution after it was removed by the Zia led military regime created consternation among the Islamic parties in the country who saw it as another evidence of Awami League's anti-Islamic ideology. This led to polarization in the country. However, it has to be noted that the Awami League government had not acted on its own in this regard. A 2005 High Court judgment which was upheld in 2010 by the Supreme Court of Bangladesh had held that the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution which had removed the term secularism from the constitution apart from other things was illegal. Thus, this provided the impetus to the passing of the fifteenth amendment in 2011 which reinstated secularism in the constitution.

However, Sheikh Hasina made it clear that the Awami League government would not ban religion centric political parties nor it would try to remove the mention of Islam as the state religion in the constitution. This was a centrist position unlike the Mujibur Rahman Awami League government of early 1970s which had banned religion centric parties and was against having any declared state religion at all. However, it can also be argued that the Awami League had always been not opposed to Islam as a religion and its secularism only meant government neutrality (Ranjan 2016: 2).

Another emotive issues during this period was the promised trials of the war criminals of 1971. The Awami League had committed itself to conducting a war crimes trials for those who indulged in acts against Bangladesh during the 1971 liberation war in its election manifesto for the 2008 elections. This was once again a provocative move against the Islamic parties as it was chiefly them who had opposed Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan and had collaborated with West Pakistan to suppress the freedom movement. Thus, the activists of Islamic parties, like the Jamaat and other parties resorted to massive street agitations, many of which ended in violence to protest against these trials. This became intensified especially after the verdicts started coming out from early 2013. There was counter mobilization from the Awami League and like-

minded groups which saw several student and youth groups led by young internet activists resort to street mobilization in support of war crimes trials in February 2013. This came to be known as the Shahabag Movement (Bhattacharya 2015: 126). This movement wanted capital punishment to be given for all convicted war criminals and wanted the banning of political parties like Jamaat.

The Shahabag Movement met with a stiff response from the Islamic forces in the country who in turn mobilized their supporters in April-May 2013. They demanded an implementation of an Islamic agenda and these protests turned violent in many places. However, a 2013 High Court judgment eventually led to cancellation of the registration of Jamaat and the party was banned from participating in the elections. This also led to widespread polarization in the country between secular forces and Islamic forces. Despite massive street protests and the accompanying violence, the Awami League government pushed ahead with the elections and war crimes trials. Efforts by domestic and international actors like the United Nations to bring together the two major political parties for a negotiated settlement on the way to move forward did not make any progress. The government used force to suppress the street protests and went ahead with its measures (Berger 2017: 62).

The BNP tried to stop the conduct of elections, demanding a NCG and it called for several blockades and hartals. The Awami League government went ahead with its plans through severe measures that included the arrests of senior BNP leaders. There were also widespread clashes between Jamaat activists and the police. Eventually, the government did organize a parliamentary election on 5th January 2014 which was boycotted by the entire opposition. As a result, there was a very low voter turnout and the Awami League easily won most of the seats. The legitimacy of this election was questioned by many domestic and international observers but the Awami League pushed ahead to form the next government (Cantey 2016: 224).

There was however some hope that the Awami League government would do what BNP did in 1996. It was expected that the government would pass an amendment to create a NCG and then resign to allow for the conduct of a contested, free and fair elections.

Initially, the government did give signals that hinted the pursuit of such a policy. BNP also seemed to be ready to accept such a compromise without mounting any serious street protests. However, eventually, none of this materialized as the Awami League accused the BNP of being in cohorts with the Jamaat which is now a banned political outfit. So, the BNP was asked to discontinue all its ties with the group before any meaningful dialogue could be undertaken.

This impasse has continued and the next elections are scheduled to take place by the end of 2018 with the BNP considering the possibility of taking part in the elections. However, the conviction of Khaleda Zia in February 2018, in a corruption case which would debar her from participating in elections has left the future wide open.

5. Role of Religion in the Democratic Era (1991 to Present): An Appraisal

The fall of the Ershad Regime in 1991 paved way for Bangladesh to enter into an era of democratic politics after 16 years. As noted before, it was the BNP who got the first shot at forming the government and it came to power through free and fair elections in 1991. However, the prominent role openly religious parties would come to play was clear from the beginning itself as Zia did not have a majority of her own and had to rely on the support of the Islamic Jamaat party. Thus, a party which had been opposed to the idea of independent itself found itself centre stage in the democratic era for the first time in its history. Even the Awami League, which had strong secular credentials, understood the importance of religious parties and fine-tuned its image such that it did not come across as antagonistic to religious sentiments of the people. As a matter of fact, when the party launched its anti-government agitations in 1995-1996, it took the support of the Jamaat, which indicated a conceding of the political importance of Jamaat and its religious ideology. This also granted political legitimacy to religion centric parties like Jamaat who were no longer political untouchables in Bangladesh politics.

During this period, another development which needs to be noted is the return of the many Bangladeshi Mujahideens who had gone to fight against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. These militants who had been radicalized during their time in Afghanistan would slowly build pro-Islam militant organisations and started demanding a

more Islamic state. However, this threat would become more evident in the second BNP government and was not out in the open in the 1990s.

However, the 1990s, especially during the BNP regime that lasted from 1991 to 1996, there were some incidents which pointed to a growing intolerance in Bangladeshi society and a rising polarization of the society. For example, a female writer by the name of Taslima Nasreen was declared as a heretic by clerics due to some inflammatory passages in her novel called *Lajja* (Shame). There were strong demands from several conservative quarters of the society to the government to arrest her and eventually she was forced to leave the country and seek refuge abroad. There were also a number of fatwas issued by clerics against liberal NGOs who were working for empowering women in rural areas and the government was accused of turning a blind eye to many of these developments. There were also threats made against prominent secular writers and university professors which were not adequately investigated by the government. The minority sect of Ahmadiyya Muslims faced intense violence and intimidation in the hands of clerical organisations like the Ahle-Hadith as they were not seen as belonging to mainstream Islam.

This period also saw a remarkable expansion of the Madrassa education as the state invested huge sums of money on them. Bangladeshi economy was also getting increasingly intertwined with that of Islamic Middle Eastern countries as there was a huge migration of unskilled workers from the country to these countries for work and therefore foreign remittances from those countries became an important part of Bangladesh's economic framework. The government also allowed the funding of several Islamic NGOs and organisations by Saudi Arabia which began to proliferate in the country.

However, there was some respite from this growing trend of Islamisation when the Awami League came to power in 1996. The Awami League was a self-proclaimed secular party that trumpeted its ideology of Bengali nationalism over the religious nationalism of BNP. However, by then religion had acquired such an indispensable role in Bangladesh's politics that even the Awami League had to compromise to get to power.

Sheikh Hasina therefore had to use Islamic symbolism during her election campaign and even made frequent visits to Saudi Arabia to project herself as a good Muslim to the voters. She wanted to show that the Awami League was not a threat to the Islamic fabric of the society. This was in response to the general attitudinal change among the people in Bangladesh who were now more Islamic than 20 years back. During her tenure, there was growing militancy with several terror attacks including threats on her life.

2001 was an important year in the rise of religion in Bangladesh politics as the BNP - Jamaat alliance came to power with two thirds majority in the parliament. In an unprecedented development, two leaders of the Jamaat, Matiur Rahman Nizami and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Muzahid were inducted into the cabinet which was a symbolic milestone in Bangladesh politics. This period saw high levels of support for Islamisation by the government and also radicalization of the country. A wave of violence against the Hindu minorities began which saw many of them seeking refuge in India. The government was either complicit or remained indifferent to such violence and since Hindus were seen as supporters of the Awami League, there was political expediency at work as well. This period also saw the rise of internationally networked pro-Islam terror groups such as the Jam'atul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) and Harkat-ul-Jihad-Islami (HUJI). These groups derived their support from the uneducated rural power and began to unleash a wave of terror on minorities and on Awami League, which was seen as a pro-India and anti-Islam party by them.

Further, the emergence of a transnational Islamist group called Hizb-ut-Tahrir in the late 1990s with the state aim of a creation of a Khilafat or Islamic Rule in Bangladesh further radicalized Bangladesh's politics. This outfit was headed by a Dhaka University Professor and had the support of college and university educated youth who were inspired by the ideals of political Islam. These militants caused a series of terror attacks in 2004 and 2005 which shook the foundations of the Bangladesh state. As noted before, on 21st August 2004, a grenade attack on a public meeting of Sheikh Hasina left many dead and she herself escaped narrowly. This was followed by the dramatic simultaneous

bombing campaign in August of next year during which 63 out of Bangladesh's 64 districts were targeted and as many as 450 bombs were used.

This showed the increasing capability of these organisations and also raised doubts about the government's will to bring them under control. In fact, many critics of the government felt that the government was actually conspiring with them. During this period, Bangladesh also became an exporter of terrorism as in April 2004, ten trucks with weapons and ammunitions for the ULFA guerillas in Eastern India were recovered in Chittagong. Facing increased international pressure and strong public opinion against the spate of terror attacks, the BNP government did take some action against these terror networks during its final years in power. However this was not perceived to be enough by the minorities in the country and also by international observers.

Amnesty international reported in December 2001 tht hindu minority was under attack in Bangladesh that constituted less than 10 percent of bangladesh's total population which was 30 percent when india was partitioned in 1947. It is clearly seen that hindus and their religious palces wwere under the arattack frm the majority communities which enjoyed political patronage for their hate against the hindu minority. The suppression was so barbaric that Hindus were forced to fled the country if they had to save the lives, honors and prides of their wiwves, sisters and daughters. Among the various Islamic orthodox and extremist group cum militants wxisting in Bangladesh, the most radical of them, Harkat-ul-jihad-ul-Islamic (HUJI or the movement of Islamic holy war), is reported to have been grown up in tgousands, simply because they are enjoying the favour given to them in the form of of economic resources as well as social security and benefits given to their families, without that thes roups were not grown so rapidly.

It was however the care taker government that was in place from 2007 to 2008 which acted more decisively and during its tenure most of the top leaders of the JMB were executed in accordance with a court verdict.

In the general elections that were held in December 2008, the Awami League and its allies came back to power with a two thirds majority owing to the excesses of the BNP government. Sheikh Hasina had pledged to ban militancy and use of religion in politics

and offered protections to religious and ethnic minorities in the country. On assuming power, the new government immediately started taking steps to curb Islamist Extremism in the country. The Hizb-ut-Tahrir was banned in October 2009 for activities against the state and perhaps more importantly, four top leaders of the Jamaat, including its President and Secretary General prosecuted for their war crimes during the 1971 liberation war. As noted earlier, following a high court verdict, Jamaat itself was banned later. This was thus a full circle for Jamaat who had been banned by Mujib government in the early 1970s and then later were rehabilitated during the military rule and rose to the level of being part of the government during BNP's second government. Sheikh Hasina has also committed herself to fight terrorism at a regional level by sharing intelligence and other means. This is generally seen as an overture to India who has been concerned about rise of terrorism in Bangladesh for quite some time.

Another important milestone during this period was the landmark Supreme Court judgment that came out in 2010 which declared that all proclamations, Martial Law Regulations and orders that were in contradiction to the fundamental character and structure of the state made during the period from 15 August 1975 to 9 April 1979 are illegal and void. This judgment effectively brought back the 1972 constitution in the public political discourse and gave an opportunity to the Awami League to restore the liberal and secular values of the 1972 constitution. Thus, Sheikh Hasina created a 15 member parliamentary committee with representation from different political parties to study the issue and issue recommendations. The BNP boycotted this committee and declined to cooperate.

Finally on 3rd July 2011, the fifteenth amendment to the constitution was passed which tries to strike a balance between secularism and religious sentiment. The important elements of this amendment are as follows -

- The ideals of Nationalism, Socialism, Democracy and Secularism have been restored in the Preamble and under separate Articles (8,9,10,12) of the Constitution.
- The preferential relations with respect to Muslim countries based on the idea of solidarity of Islamic countries as a fundamental state principle of foreign relations

was adopted during the military rule. Thus has been deleted under the new amendment. This is seen by many as an overture to India as the previous provision was seen as giving preference to Pakistan over India based on the idea of Islamic solidarity.

- With respect to the phrase “Bismillah-Ar-Rahman-Ar-Rahim”, while it has been retained in the Preamble of the Constitution, room has been made for other faiths by coining the term “In the name of the Creator, the Merciful.”
- On the very important question of Islam being the state religion, Article 2A of the constitution has been amended and it now reads as follows - “The State religion of the Republic is Islam, but the State shall ensure equal status and equal rights in the practice of the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and other religions.” Thus, this was a compromise struck as Islam continues to be state religion but protections are granted for all religious groups.
- Article 12 of the original Constitution which provided measures for implementing the principle of secularism has been revived.
- Further, instead of prohibiting directly the formation of political parties with a religious identity as it was provided in the original Constitution, the post fifteenth amendment Article 38 now says that any organisation that intends to destroy “the religious, social and communal harmony among the citizens” will not be allowed to operate. Thus, this allows for political parties with a religion centric agenda to exist but this provision can be used to ban extremist parties which seek to divide and polarize the society.
- The amendment also calls for a complete ban of organisations who are formed “for the purposes of organizing terrorist acts or militant activities against the State or the citizens or any other country”. Such organisations have been categorically prohibited, which is in line with the focus on anti-terrorism exhibited by the Awami League government. The fact that even terror activities in any other country would also not be

tolerated is mentioned is a nod to the concerns of India, a political ally of the Awami League party for a long time.

On the whole, the passing of the fifteenth Amendment marks a historic step in Bangladeshi politics. It is the first time since 1977, the constitution has become more secularized instead of vice versa. Moreover, the pragmatic approach taken by the Awami League is also commendable as they did not go for complete banning of religion centric political parties nor did they remove Islam as the state religion. Some have argued that this shows an evolution in Awami League's interpretation of secularism which is in line with the realities of the day -

As a pragmatic political party, the ruling Awami League has taken 'a real politic approach' while amending the Constitution following the Court verdict. Needless to say that Bangladesh has gone through a process of enormous changes during the last forty years. A great deal of Islamisation has taken place mainly at the behest of the military rulers. Being fully aware of religious susceptibility of the people, the Awami League government under Sheikh Hasina has made a very cautious move by not dropping the element of religion from the Constitution. Rather it preferred giving a new face to the ideal of Secularism by contextualizing it to the changed scenario. Indeed the Constitution as it now stands after the Fifteenth Amendment reflects the ruling party's perception of secularism being understood in terms of religious plurality.

The Awami League seems to have learned from its mistakes of the past and is now adopting an approach which is centrist and moderate. However, as noted before, following a High Court verdict, Jamaat had to be banned subsequently from contesting elections. This has led to increased polarization. The fact that the fifteenth amendment was passed without the cooperation of main opposition party BNP also indicates a lack of political consensus. It has to be kept in mind that it was the founder of BNP, President Zia who passed the Fifth Amendment that removed secularism from the constitution and made it overall more Islamic. So, if BNP returns to power in the future with enough majority to amend the constitution, it remains to be seen whether it will try to tinker with the fifteenth amendment. Hence, one cannot conclude the issue as settled.

To conclude, one can see that religion continues to play an important part in Bangladesh's politics even in the democratic era. It has emerged as the main divide on which Bangladesh's polity is centred.

6. Religion and the Ideologies of Major Political Parties of Bangladesh

The four main political parties in Bangladesh during the democratic era have been the Awami League, the BNP, the Jatiya and the Jamaat. As discussed earlier in this chapter, political parties play an important role in democratic societies. This is especially true with respect to the setting of agenda. Hence, it is important to look at the evolution of the ideologies of these major political parties of Bangladesh. The following table gives an overall view of the ideological planks of these parties -

Table

Political Party	Ideologies
Awami League	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bengali Nationalism - Democracy - Secularism – freedom of all religions and non-communal politics - Socialism – establishment of exploitation-free society and social justice
BNP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bangladeshi nationalism - Democracy - Free market economy - Preserve the teachings of Islam, religion of the majority and other religions
Jatiya Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Independence and sovereignty - Islamic ideology and freedom of all religions - Bangladeshi nationalism - Democracy - Social progress and economic emancipation
Jamaat*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish Islamic way of life - Establish just, exploitation-free society and state - Faith and trust in Allah, democracy, economic and social justice - Ensure basic needs of all citizen irrespective of religions and ethnicity - Fraternity with World Muslims and friendship with all states

5.1, the role of religion is self-evident because three out of the four major political parties of Bangladesh, BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat espouse Islamic principles in one way or other. It is only the Awami League which does not explicitly outline an Islamic agenda. It is helpful to look at the ideologies of each of these parties in some detail.

7.1 The Awami League

The Awami League led the struggle for independence from West Pakistan and describes itself as a 'pro-liberation force' in Bangladesh politics. It fought alongside other likeminded forces seeking independence from Pakistan (Alagappa 2001: 212). It is committed to promote the nation's founding principles which was originally drafted by the party itself as it had an overwhelming majority in the Constituent Assembly that drafted the 1972 constitution. These founding principles were, nationalism, democracy, secularism and socialism. Over its long period of existence, the party has indeed shown a strong commitment to these principles while maintaining a pragmatic approach.

The Awami League was originally founded in 1949 and initially carried the name Awami Muslim League. However, as one of the early examples of its commitment to secular principles, the party dropped the 'Muslim' tag from its name in 1953. One also has to understand the political context of the time. Bangladesh, which was East Pakistan at that time was facing oppression from the Islamic nationalism propounded by West Pakistan that promoted an Islamic culture over the Bengali culture of East Bengal. Thus, the nationalism which Awami League began to espouse was an explicit Bengali nationalism that was devoid of any religious orientation. This was a political necessity as well for it provided the greatest contrast to the religious nationalism of West Pakistan.

Awami League was also focused on ending the political and social discrimination perpetuated by West Pakistan on East Bengal. This was reflected in the 21 Points programme that was part of the manifesto of the party for the legislative elections of 1954. While the Awami League had socialist leanings from the beginning, it did not fully commit itself to socialism and its early programmes were more focused on Bengali nationalism than anything else. Thus, its 6 Points programme which was enunciated in 1966 gave a more prominent space for Bengali nationalism than anything else. However, the 11 points programme which was formulated in 1969 had a more socialist agenda. Again, this was also partly because of political expediency as West Pakistan was supported by the Western Capitalist countries and Awami League's closest foreign allies including India were socialist leaning.

In the end when the national elections were held in 1970, the Awami League amalgamated the 6 points and 11 points programme. Thus, the resulting document showed a strong commitment to democracy, nationalism, secularism and socialism. Thus, when the Awami League assumed power after independence in 1971 and set out to frame a constitution for the new country, it remained committed to its 1970 election manifesto. While over a period of time, the party's commitment to socialism has softened a bit due to practical concerns which led to dissention within its tanks, the party's commitment to other ideals have remained more or less firm during its period of existence (Maniruzzaman 1976: 120-122). The military regimes that came after 1975 started privatizing the economy and by the time the Awami League returned to power in 1996, there was no Soviet Union and its close ally India was also liberalizing and moving away from socialism. Hence, it became somewhat flexible with respect to socialism. The first regime of Awami League under Mujibur Rahman was also accused of being corrupt and promoting nepotism (Baral 1992: 17).

However, its commitment to secularism remained intact and it was a distinguishing factor for it over the other three major political parties. It continued to support secularism but the party was also pragmatic as it did not hesitate to join hands with the Islamic Jamaat party to oppose the BNP in 1995 and later formed an alliance with the Jatiya Party which also has strong Islamic ideology at its core.

This pragmatism was also evident in the way the party pushed through the fifteenth amendment in 2011. As one author writes -

Though AL retained secularism in the party constitution, the fifteenth amendment of the constitution, pushed through the parliament by the AL-led Grand Alliance government in 2011, reflects contradictory stands on the issue of secularism. The fifteenth amendment restored secularism as a guiding principle of state, but at the same time retained Islam as the state religion of Bangladesh which was first incorporated by H M Ershad in the constitution in 1988.

However, these compromises do not reflect a diluting of Awami League's commitment to secularism and whenever the party has been in power, it has fought religious extremism. There seems to be a realization among the Awami League in recent times that Islam is an integral part of Bangladeshi society and hence its secularism has to be cognizant of that

reality (Nazrul and Saidul 2018: 14). The Awami League also has maintained a close relationship with India despite the fact that India is seen by some conservative sections of Bangladeshi society as a Hindu country. This has been another central source of disagreement between the Awami League and the BNP.

7.2 Bangladesh Nationalist Party

The party constitution of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party identifies Bangladeshi Nationalism, democracy, free market economy and teaching of Islam as the core principles of the party. The party pitted Bangladeshi Nationalism which was a territorial with more Islamic complexion than Bengali complexion. This was propounded by President Zia in order to differentiate BNP from the Bengali nationalism of the Awami League (Bhuiyan 1999:23).

Ironically, even though BNP was formed by a military ruler who filled his government with army officer during his rule, since the mid-1980s the party has been active proponent of democracy and was the first political party to come to power in 1991 through free and fair elections (Bhattacharjee 2010: 11-12). The party has been opposing secularism consistently and it was indeed its founder President Zia who removed secularism from the constitution of Bangladesh in 1977. It was he who also allowed the rehabilitation of religion centric political parties in Bangladesh. This tacit alliance with Islamic forces in the country became formal with the coming to existence of the Four Party Alliance in 2001 in which BNP was in alliance with the Jamaat. As noted earlier, this enabled extremist forces in the country to operate with impunity and a series of terror attacks across the country jolted the consciousness of the country. While the BNP led government eventually did take some actions to curb extremists, it was perceived to be too little, too late.

In line with its Islamic approach to foreign policy as well which calls for a solidarity of Islamic countries, BNP has been somewhat antagonistic towards relations with what it sees as 'Hindu' India. Hence, whenever BNP had been in power, relations with India have been cold.

7.3 Jatiya Party

The Jatiya party was created by Ershad after he secured power through savvy political maneuvering after the assassination of Zia in a military coup in 1981 and its key ideological principles include Bangladeshi nationalism, Islamic ideology and economic emancipation (Maniruzzaman 1994: 43). In many ways, the Jatiya Party is not dissimilar to BNP in its ideology. In fact, it was the Jatiya party led government which made Islam as the state religion by passing the eighth amendment to the constitution in 1988 and its leader, Ershad was publicly very enthusiastic about making Bangladesh an Islamic state (Rahman 1985: 2).

However, in the last two decades, the party has shown incredible pragmatism and has aligned with the Awami League in various times. The fact that the party had to operate in what is essentially a two party system with BNP and the Awami League as the two poles has made it more pragmatic and flexible.

7.4 Jamaat

The Jamaat-i-Islami was founded in 1941 with an express objective to establish an Islamic state and Islamic society. It explicitly rejects secularism, socialism and nationalism as it sees all of them as contradictory to its objective of establishing an Islamic state. Since these three principles were fundamental elements of the 1972 constitution, the Jamaat was directly opposed to the core aspects of the first constitution of the independent state and thus it was no wonder that it got banned by the Mujibur Rahman government. As noted earlier, it got eventually rehabilitated under the military rule and its commitment to Islamic principles remain intact -

It excludes non-Muslims from membership. Party leaders and workers at all levels are obligated to be well versed in the Quran, Hadith and Islamic literature, as well as to regularly attend discussion meetings, contribute to the Jamaat funds and recruit new workers (Jahan 2014: 13).

Jamaat reached its peak of political power during the second BNP led government during which it had cabinet posts and exercised a larger influence in shaping the debate in the country. However since then the party has been facing several issues. The Representation of People Order (RPO) of 1972 was amended in 2008 by the NCG which asked the political parties to conform their constitutions to be in line with the constitution of the country. In response, the Jamaat changed several provisions in its constitution. For example, it changed its logo which contained Allah and Aqimuddin and also deleted the phrases “establishing just rule of Islam through organised efforts” and “bringing about necessary changes to the state system to ensure complete observance of Islam” from its constitution. However, in 2013, due to a High Court decision, the party was banned from electoral politics.

7. Conclusion

The rise of Political Islam in Bangladesh started during the military regime that dominated Bangladesh politics from 1975 to 1990. This was due a variety of factors. There were several reasons for that rise -

The quick rise of political Islam in Bangladesh may be attributed to the debates over secularism, ethnic vs. religious nationalism, gap between aspiration and performance, inherent tendency among the majority community (religious, ethnic) to gain domineering position at the state level, politics of alliance building among the power contenders, role of traditional Ulema (religious leaders), the increasing influence of madrassa (religious school) education, large poverty, high unemployment, low literacy rate, Bangladesh's increased dependence on the Middle Eastern countries for man power exports, the Afghan war, the demise of the former Soviet Union as an alternative global ideology, impact of internationalization of political Islam and a new sense of domination among the Bangladeshis by neighbouring India (Rashid 2012: 39).

When democratic politics returned to Bangladesh in 1991, it was hoped that there will be a more progressive turn. However, instead of becoming a stable liberal democracy, Bangladesh has been continuously oscillating between an Islamic majoritarian state and a progressive state. Muslims constitute the largest majority of Bangladesh's population being up to 89.4 percent of the population. They are followed by Hindu who constitute up to 9.6 percent of population. There is also a small Buddhist and Christian population in Bangladesh. Thus, it is undoubtedly a Muslim majority state and minorities do not have any electoral strength in the country. Hence, if democratic politics happens based on

religious polarization, then undoubtedly religion will continue to play an important role in Bangladesh politics.

However, Bangladeshi Islam is different from Pakistani Islam. It is much more moderate. Most Bengali Muslims were sons of the soil and did not come from outside and a majority of them are converts from low caste Hindus. Islam was also spread in Bangladesh not by sword but to a large extent by Sufi saints who preached a very moderate Islam. Several Hindus were also followers of such teachings. Similarly, teachings of Buddha and Buddhism were also an influence on Bangladeshi Islam. Overall, Islam in Bangladesh has a much more moderate history and culture. Sri Chaitanya's Vaishnava cult also had a moderating influence on Bangladeshi Islam.

However, in the last few decades, Bangladeshi Islam is becoming increasingly radicalized owing to both domestic and international factors. This was used by the military rule initially and later democratic politics has also continued to operate in the same reality. The biggest victims of this radicalization have been the minorities. This reached a peak during the second BNP led government which was in power from 2001 to 2006. Minorities faced intense persecution during this period. One author documents the extent of the persecution faced by minorities, based on the Amnesty reports, suggests that the minorities were subjugated drastically.

The repression and oppression of minorities in Bangladesh were not limited to Hindus only as it has been reported by the Amnesty International that even the Christians and Buddhist were meted out with the same fate of political killing, their family were forced to tortured and even sometimes brutally killed just because of religious hatred spread by few extremists and orthodox Islamic groups supported by political spectrum in the Bangladesh.

The gangs also demanded ransom of 10,000 to 20,000 Bangladeshi taka (\$175–350) from men in the villages for their daughters. The villagers had also had their crops taken away after the October election. In April 2002, a well-known Buddhist monk, Ganojyoti Mohasthobir, was murdered by a group of thugs who demanded “infidel protection tax” (Linter 2002: 431).

Thus, one can argue that democratic politics has not reduced the role of religion in Bangladeshi politics. While the passing of the fifteenth amendment which has reintroduced secularism into the constitution and the coming to power of the Awami League since 2009 have given hope to liberals in the country, it remains to be seen where the trajectory goes in coming years.

Chapter 6

Role of External Factors in the Growth of Communal Politics in Bangladesh

1. Introduction

This chapter aims to bring out the role played by external actors in the rise of political Islam in Bangladesh. It will start by bringing out how Bangladesh was viewed suspiciously but many Muslim countries at the time of its birth owing to her opposition to the Islamic nationalism espoused by Pakistan. Thus, in order to allay these concerns, Bangladesh had to take steps to assert its Islamic identity to win the trust of Islamic countries which also ended up playing a role in communalizing its politics. The chapter will then move further to look at how political identity is formed among a population. This is important to understand from a theoretical as well as practical perspective. Hence, this section will first start by identifying some theoretical perspectives that ground the ensuing analysis of Bangladesh. It will then also discuss the global factors which have in the last few decades influenced the rise of political Islam across the world, including in Bangladesh.

2. Bangladesh's Relationship with the Muslim World

Bangladesh, being one of the largest Muslim countries in the world has to necessarily take Islam into view while formulating its external as well as internal policies. Bangladesh has nearly 87 percent Muslim population (Kalam 1996: 299). Over the period of its existence, the country has established closed external relations with Islamic Countries. Its relationship with Islamic countries exercise significant political and

economic pressures on the country which needs to be understood for a holistic understanding of the rise of communal politics in Bangladesh.

It has to be noted that if one look at the geopolitical location of Bangladesh, it need not establish closer links with Muslim countries because it is surrounded by a Hindu India who helped in its foundation as a country itself and thus strategically India is the most important country for the state. However, Bangladesh, especially from mid 1970s, with the coming to the power of the military, began to see alliances with the Muslim world as a strategic and economic necessity. Strategically, closer ties with Islamic countries, including Pakistan, could be a way to balance the influence of Hindu India on Bangladesh. It was feared that India would dominate Bangladesh foreign policy unless she forged relationships beyond India. Economically, it was thought that the oil rich Muslim countries can add economic value to the country and it was also thought that the rich Muslim countries could provide source of occupation for the large unemployed labour force of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's relationship with Muslim countries did not start off on a welcoming note as the country's liberation movement, as noted in previous chapters, focused on Bengali linguistic nationalism as opposed to religious nationalism which was propounded by Pakistan. Thus, many other Islamic countries saw Bangladesh's liberation struggle as a challenge to the Islamic nationalism and solidarity propounded by them (Kalam 1996: 307). They saw in Bangladesh, an attempt to divide Islamic unity and were therefore suspicious about Bangladeshi liberation struggle as they saw such struggles having the potential to divide Muslim solidarity at the international stage. As a matter of fact, during the liberation war of Bangladesh, most Muslim countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco gave their full diplomatic and political support to Pakistan while countries like Egypt, Syria and Iraq remained largely neutral (Ali 1971: 193).

After the creation of Bangladesh, this opposition and indifference was further intensified because of Bangladesh's relationship with India as well as the swift recognition offered by Israel to Bangladesh. Further, as noted before, the fact that the constitution of Bangladesh as adopted initially made no specific reference to Islam and instead

established a secular state was also viewed suspiciously by many Islamic countries. Many of them saw this as a capitulation to secular India. However, it has to be noted that not all the Islamic states had similar views regarding the independence of Bangladesh. Some Arab did express sympathy and were supportive of the liberation movement of Bangladesh in both direct and indirect ways. However, countries like Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Libya refused to establish any relation with Bangladesh during the initial stage. On the other hand, countries like Iraq, Algeria, South Yemen and Egypt were supportive of the people of Bangladesh and sought to extend support in multiple ways (Hassain 1998: 12).

Still, formal recognition of Bangladesh was not given by even the supporting Arab countries due to prevailing confusion regarding India's role and the intentions of Bangladesh's new leadership under the Awami League. Pakistan's influence on Muslim countries was also a factor for this. Bangladesh though that she was in desperate need of Middle Eastern petrodollars for its economic growth and while the Arab states wanted to support a large Muslim nation, the relationship thawed only after a mutual understanding of each other's needs began to develop. Bangladesh took sincere efforts to promote herself as a friend and ally to the Arab world. The country sent special envoys to Muslim countries and many leaders from Arab countries were invited to visit Bangladesh. For instance, on January 4, 1972, a delegation headed by Moblah Jalaluddin visited Cairo, Egypt to attend the Afro-Asian solidarity conference (Mustafa 1987: 37). Similarly, for the Algiers NAM Summit of 1973, Mujibur-Rahman went out of his way to get support from Muslim countries. These efforts made by Bangladesh soon began to bring her benefits and by end of 1973, as many as 15 Arab Muslim countries had recognized Bangladesh.

It has to be kept in mind that in her post-independence era, Bangladesh was faced with formidable political and economic challenges both internally and externally. The country had to find ways to consolidate the new found national independence, while at the same time rehabilitate and reconstruct the war ravaged economy and also simultaneously set up a good pace for economic and social development. For all of this, the country needed national cohesion, political stability and critically an undisrupted flow of external aid.

Thus, Bangladesh thought that it had to take initiatives to broaden its external support base by developing relations with all Islamic countries who were natural partners for the state due to her Muslim majority population. This concern became a high priority due to certain developments during that time.

Firstly, the unprecedented price hike of oil observed in 1973, succeeded by a worldwide recession that hit the international aid for Bangladesh. This resulted in the rise of profile of petrol-diesel affluent Arab nations as latent donors to offer aid to the least developed countries, particularly in the case of nations with similar religious orientations, like Bangladesh. Thus, it was felt by many in Bangladesh that the development of amicable relations with the Arab nations was a solution to the new nation's economic hardships and therefore Bangladesh turned its gaze towards the Muslim states as possible aid providing countries who could satiate significant part of its massive aid requirements.

Secondly, politically, Bangladesh also looked towards other large countries to enhance her international stature and position. The country also aimed to become a member of various key international organizations and bodies and this wish list included the Organization of the Islamic Conference for which strong Arab support was required.

Thirdly, Bangladesh also had a lot of unresolved problems with Pakistan which included repatriation and division of assets. So, since it was believed that the Islamic countries had considerable influence over Pakistan, Arab support in solving those matters was also sought.

There was an oil bang in near the beginning 1970s which increased economic activities in various Arab countries and as a result the region became one of the most lucrative markets for labour, both skilled and unskilled. Thus, it became a source of attraction for many Third World countries who started sending their manpower to work in the Middle East. This continues to be true of even countries like India. Bangladesh, at the time of her independence and even till today, has a huge labour force for which the Middle East as a potential, market for employment of its citizens and for earning urgently needed foreign exchange is a tempting prospect.

Lastly, there was also domestic pressure on the part of conservative Muslims of the country for developing amicable relations with Muslim countries which rose from their common affinity towards shared religious and cultural values which the government could not ignore (Mustafa 1987: 40).

As a result of all these factors, it will not be wrong to say that, very soon after the making of Bangladesh, Islamic nations evolved as a significant aspect in Bangladesh's and internal and external policy and became a main anxiety for Bangladeshi policy makers. There were however, two main phases which needs to be discussed in detail. During the first phase, the relationship between the Muslim world and Bangladesh was somewhat less intense but in the second phase, it intensified, after the coming to power of the Military regime in Bangladesh who changed the constitution as well eventually giving it a Islamic nature.

2.1 The First Phase

From the beginning of its emergence, Bangladesh invited good attention and recognition of the international community and therefore within one year of its existence, the country was able to get recognition from about one hundred countries. However, as noted before, in early period Muslim nations support was intimidating. Iraq and Yemen were the only countries among the Arab nations who had recognized Bangladesh till the end of 1972. Though, the country had managed to establish some form of communication with Algeria, South Yemen and Iraq. Without Formally recognizing Bangladesh as a nation, A barter agreement worth several crores was signed In the December of 1972 by Egypt. It has to be noted that the visit of Hassanein Heikal, Chairman, Board of Editors of AI Akram, Hassan al-Zyyat, the Egyptian Foreign Minister and Mohamed Yazid, Special Envoy of the Algerian President to Bangladesh in early 1973 was an important event in opening up new avenues for Bangladesh in the Arab world (Hussain 1998: 13).

Further, the fourth summit of NAM was held in Algiers in September 1973 and Mujib-ur-Rehman was participated in and it became the point of departure in the shaping Bangladesh relation with Islamic nations. Sheikh Mujib personally met with Col. Gaddafi of Libya, the Lebanese Prime Minister, President Sadat of Egypt, King Faisal of Saudi

Arabia, and this resulted in what might be called as thawing of relations. Egypt and Syria recognized Bangladesh after this summit. These subtle attempts achieved the removing of several earlier doubts about Bangladesh that many Islamic countries had.

The outbreak of the fourth Arab-Israeli war in October 1973 provided an opportunity for Bangladesh to express its solidarity with the Arab people in particular and Muslim world in general. Bangladesh took this opportunity and strongly condemned the Israeli aggression. Bangladesh also sent 100,000 pounds of tea to Egypt and Syria as ‘a token of love’ to “the Arab brethren”, and this was followed up by sending a medical team to Syria to aid the victims of the war (Chowdhury 2008). The strong support given by Bangladesh to Arabs during the Arab-Israel war and its efforts to aid the Arab cause was well received among the Arab nations and subsequently Jordan, Kuwait and North Yemen recognized Bangladesh. As a matter of fact, by the end of 1973, Bangladesh had earned the confidence of Arab countries and thus was able to improve her relations with the Arab world significantly. This was noted with pride by Shiek Mujibur nation on the Victory Day address to nation on 16th December of 1973.

During the recent Arab-Israeli war, Bangladesh extended a helping hand as comrades-in-arms to the Arabs, following which the people of the Arab world have accepted Bangladesh as a true friend (Rahman 1973: 14).

This development led to Bangladesh's successful induction into the International Islamic Body, the OIC (Organization of the Islamic Conference). The Second Islamic Summit Conference was held at Lahore in 1974 and Bangladesh expressed its solidarity with the Islamic world and unambiguously supported the Arab and Palestinian cause.

These developments also led to formation of Islamic Development Bank where Bangladesh became one of its founder members. This newly knitted economic relationship was strengthened and deepened by visit of economic delegations from Kuwait and UAE (United Arab Emirates). Bangladesh received many assurances of economic assistance from these countries.

In a major achievement for the newly independent state, on the eve of the Islamic Summit in Lahore, Bangladesh was recognized by Pakistan, Iran and Turkey and later on, by

Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Oman. As a matter of fact, after the Lahore Conference, Bangladesh was able to maintain wider connections with the Arab countries. The Arab countries who had not yet recognized Bangladesh had a substantial softer attitude towards it and started to develop economic relations with Bangladesh since 1974. As a sign of the emerging good will and compatriot ship between Bangladesh and the Muslim world, when floods struck Bangladesh in 1974, Saudi Arabia stepped in and donated \$10 million for disaster relief to Bangladesh, although Bangladesh had not yet been formally recognized by Saudi Arabia.

2.2 The Second Phase

The intensification of political and economic relations between Bangladesh and the Muslim world began with the abrupt end of Mujib government in August 1975. This started the beginning of the second phase of Bangladesh's relations with Muslim countries. The replacement of the Awami League's secular government which was perceived to be close to India by a military junta headed Ziaur Rahman had a major impact on Bangladesh's foreign policy towards Islamic countries.

After his assumption of power in early November 1975, Zia made sincere efforts to establish and maintain deeper relations with Muslim countries. This was especially true with respect to Saudi Arabia. Zia, having gained the ruling position through a coup, thought that recognition by Muslim countries would give him legitimacy which was necessary and essential for the military regime, for reasons of both domestic and external legitimacy. Zia wanted to establish Bangladesh as a prestigious member of the Islamic community who was accepted by other Muslim countries (Zafarullah 1996: 134).

Thus, one of the reasons, Zia chose to Islamise his government was to improve political relations with Muslim countries. As a result, under the regime of Zia-ur-Rahman, necessary legal and administrative changes were brought in the constitution, to give it an Islamic orientation. Importantly, a new clause was added to Article 25 of the 1972 Constitution which was related to external relations and this new clause expressed solidarity with fraternal Muslim countries. It read – *“The State shall endeavor to*

consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity” (Khan 1976: 11).

Further, in 1976 and July 1977, in the beginning with Saudi Arabia, President Zia visited various Muslim countries. He held a multiplicity of talks and these talks indicated that Bangladesh had an identity of approaches with the Islamic world on numerous issues bearing the economic and political interests not only of the Islamic nations but also of the international community in general. From that time on, visits at different levels became common in Bangladesh's relations with Muslim countries.

Due to such overtures, that included changing her constitution, Bangladesh received pivotal support from the Arab and Islamic world at critical times. One such instance was seen when Bangladesh contested for the United Nations Security Council seat and her candidature was supported and endorsed by the 9th Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference, 1978 held in Dakar. Saudi Arabia aided her full support to Bangladesh, and it got more consequential and significant when Saudi permanent representative to the United Nations actively participated in lobbying for Bangladesh. Further, Syria also enlisted herself and fully supported Bangladesh in winning the election to the UN Security Council in 1978.

Subsequently, Syria, one of the four candidates along with Bangladesh, Iraq and Singapore, finally quit and supported Bangladesh in quadrangular contest for the presidency of the UN General Assembly in 1981, even though ultimately Bangladesh lost the election to Iraq. During this period, Bangladesh also forged close relations with other important Muslim countries through high level visits and contacts and this included apart from Syria and Iraq, Algeria, Kuwait, UAE, Morocco, Libya, Senegal, Guinea, Gambia and Mali. Many of these countries **were munificent towards Bangladesh in assistance after the serious damage caused by the 1979 floods.**

Zia also gave a lot of priority to the strengthening of political relations with Egypt. This was important politically as it proved to be source of significant strength to Bangladesh politically because of the esteem enjoyed by Egypt in the Non-Aligned Movement as Egypt was a founder-member. Efforts were also made to ameliorate relations with

Algeria and then there, the concept of the New International Economic Order was first mooted at the Non-Aligned Summit in 1973. Algeria later chaired the Group of 77 in 1981. Bangladesh believed that an active cooperation amongst Islamic countries would amplify mutual beneficial cooperation and develop a commending impact on “South-South cooperation”.

This was the reason that Bangladesh was gravely concerned when hostilities broke out between Iran and Iraq in September 1980, breaking the unity of the Islamic world. Bangladesh had established close relations with both the countries and so it felt it can mediate a solution and thereby also increase its stature in the Muslim world. Thus, at the Third Islamic Summit in Taif in January 1981, Bangladesh proposed a set of concrete measures to bring about an immediate cessation of hostilities and an amicable and durable settlement of the dispute in accordance with the international law (Rahman 1983: 43). Further, as a member of the Islamic Peace Committee which was constituted to end the Iran-Iraq war and also in her individual capacity, Bangladesh persisted with her efforts to end the hostilities that had continued for several years.

As Bangladesh widened and deepened bilateral cooperation with the Arab countries and expanded bilateral cooperation with them in all fields, Bangladesh also laid special emphasis on strengthening of the collective institutions of Muslim countries and wanted to enlarge the scope of functions so as to include cooperation not only in the cultural and economic fields but also in the political arena. It was thus Bangladesh who initiated the proposal for setting up a political committee (Haq 1993: 243). Bangladesh also played an active and constructive role in building up many of the OIC institutions. For example, the establishment in Dhaka of the Islamic Centre for Vocational Training and Research was an outcome of Bangladesh’s initiative. During General Ershad period of 1982 to 1991 as well, Bangladesh continued to consolidate its political relations with the countries of the Islamic world. This continued later when the Khalid Zia led democratic government came to power in the early 1990s. It has to be noted that many changes in the constitution were made to make Bangladesh more Islamic, so as to make the country more appealing to Muslim countries -

During General Ershad period [1982-91], Bangladesh continued to consolidate its political relations with the countries of the Islamic world. 'Bismillahir- Rahmanir-Rahim' (in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the merciiu I was added under the Article 8 of Constitution. Islam was decla.red as state religion of Bangladesh. Ershad made his first visit abroad to Saudi Arabia in May 1982. Bangladesh's efforts to project its Islamic identity were reflected in the hosting of the Fourteenth Isi amic Foreign Ministers Conference in Dhaka from December 6-10, 1983. This was the first international conference of such stature held in Bangladesh. A number of state dignitaries from Muslim countries visited Bangladesh during 1986. The Khalida Zia government also accorded great importance to maintaining relations with Islamic countries particularly in the economic field. The emphasis was laid on strengthening of the relationship with the Muslim world on the basis of 'Ummah' in order to accelerate the pace of peace, progress and development

One has to thus understand that one of the reasons that Bangladesh started projecting itself a Muslim country was to gain the trust and attention of Muslim countries whose economic and political clout were important for the newly independent state.

3. Identity Formation and States

States are created as an expression of the collective identity of a group of individuals who are brought together by a set of common factors which can be ethnic similarities or religious bonds or constitutional values. Thus, collective identities are very important for the formation of modern nation states. It will not be wrong to say that without the emergence of collective identities, the kind of modern nation states that one see today could not have come into being (Gellner 1983: 34-36, 48). Some scholars have thus argued that the bonds created through collective identity formation in myriad ways is the reason societies were formed, eventually leading to the creation of nation-states as they exist today (Wendt 2003: 393). Wendt argues that this happened through processes of 'interdependence' and 'societal convergence' (Wendt 1994: 390). However, identity formation, like any other social phenomenon is a complex affair and there is no single set path in which it transverses. Interactions of multiple factors like geography, culture, technology etc., all played a part in the formation of identities, especially modern nation-state identities. This has to be kept in mind while discussing the rise of political Islam in Bangladesh.

If one carefully looks at the map of world today, it is easy to identify the role of identities in the creation of modern nation-state system. The state boundaries one finds on the map are largely based on identity factors that separate one state from another. While this identity may be ethnic or religious or historic or ideological, one seldom finds any state without having a common identity to bond together its citizens. Obvious examples have countries which have an ethnic identity at the core of their identity formation are Japan and Germany. The former sees itself as the land of the ethnic Japanese people while the latter is the land of the ethnic German people (Brubaker 2010: 61). However, ethnicity alone has not been the sole tool that has been used to construct identity based nation-states. Some states like France and even India to an extent have sought to build a civic national identity based on allegiance to certain constitutional values (Wright et al 2012: 470-471). Such an identity is especially forged by countries which have a pluralistic population living within their territories.

Identities are crucial for the survival and the flourishing of a state. It has been observed that states with strong identity bonding are usually more stable and coherent (Lind 1994: 94, 95). On the other hand, states which do not have strong identity bonding among its citizens, tend to be unstable and are prone to civil strife and disharmony at a societal level (Dahl 1971: 108). One has to note that if one looks around the world today, more conflicts are due to identity issues than due to other factors and thus identity is a critical element for any state, both internally and externally (Noll 2008: 43,44). This is so because identities play a plethora of vital roles in the modern nation-state system and possess both constructive and destructive effects.

It is in this context one has to look at the role played by external factors in shaping Bangladesh's communal politics. Bangladesh as a newly independent state in 1971 was a country in search of a stable, strong identity to root itself domestically as well as project its character internationally. As noted in the previous chapter, the Awami League which came to power after independence sought to root Bangladesh's identity along Bengali lines whereas the Military rule which followed reoriented the same along Islamic lines. The main division in Bangladeshi democratic politics today is between the Bengali identity politics of Awami League and the Islamic politics of Bangladesh Nationalist

Party. However, it was also noted that the Islamic identity that got entrenched during the Military rule has been accepted to a great extent by even the Awami League. While the reasons for this shift from a domestic perspective were discussed in previous chapter, it is only part of the story. It is important to look at global factors that were in play among Muslim countries and societies at least since the 1970s which also contributed to the communalization of Bangladeshi polity and society. Bangladesh did not exist in isolation and hence it is critical to look at external factors which shaped Muslim societies across the world which includes Bangladesh.

4. Transnational Identities

Many scholars have argued that the world today is characterised by the presence of transnational identities which transcend the boundaries of states (Vertovec 2001: 574). What is meant by this claim is that, in addition to the formal state-system, there have emerged a multitude of social identities which have been responsible for the emergence of different global social bonding. These could be based on religion or ethnicity or shared ideology, which play a very important role in their formation. The reason they are said to be separate from the state system is because of the fact that they are not restricted by state boundaries and they tend to transcend the limitations imposed by the state.

As noted earlier, it was the creation of broader identities that resulted in the creation of societies and states. Some scholars have been very optimistic about this and have even contended that it is possible in future, there will be the emergence of a global identity which result in one state with single identity for the entire population of the world (Wendt 2003: 493). Such predictions aside, the emergence of transnational identities is a source of concern for states. While, it has to be noted that many transnational identities need not cause any concern for states. For instance, due to the advent and spread of internet, people across states bond based on common interests or hobbies which also creates transnational solidarity and identity groups (Komito & Bates 2009: 238-239).

Development of such identities do not pose a challenge to states and they can for the most part ignore such developments and need not have a policy towards them.

However, states have been rightfully concerned about the emergence of transnational cultural identities within them because since they are created by transnational processes, states have very limited means or tools to exercise much control on them (Smith 2003: 467-468). Previously, states could exercise a large degree of control over identity formations within their states. This is not the case any longer and most states are not used to this shift (Modood 1998: 79). It is increasingly become true in many states that they have multicultural pockets within them inside of which live people with different identities. Their understanding of the world and 'who they are' can be very different from others in their state. Since modern communication enables people from one country to remain in touch with people in other parts of the world, it is now easier for transnational identities to develop and hence citizens of country can be affected by events that happen in any part of the world even if they are not physically present there. States cannot control the events happening outside their border and thus cannot influence that thought processes and identities of these 'Extraterritorial citizens' who have come to live within states in an unprecedented manner (Smith 2003: 467-468). This has been exponentially growing aided by advances in technology, jet travel and also as an effect of a globalised economy which is increasingly bringing countries and people together across borders. This has led to a change in the way how scholars look at state identities in relation to the larger world. One scholars writes the following in the mid-1990s itself -

While, a decade ago, disagreements about the frames for understanding ... experience were largely contained within the dominant models of bipolar landscapes and localized identities, they now focus much more widely on the relationship between these models and the alternative images of transnational social spaces and multi-local affiliations (Rouse 1995: 355)

In earlier times, i.e. before technology, cheap travel and an interlinked economy facilitated global identities, citizens of a state remained largely isolated from the rest of the world and as a result developed a state centric distinct identity and the success of states like the United States of America and others is a good example of such identities being successful (McDonald and Balgopal 1998: 14).

However, with the advent of unprecedented technological advances, citizens within states have been able to bond with people from other states whom they think as having same identity as them. This happens even if they are geographically separated, and thus they are developing transnational, global identities. Today, people can be members of a social group even from afar. This social phenomenon is sometimes called as ‘transnational belonging’ or as ‘transnationalism’ (Smith 2003: 467, Rizvi 2007: 327).

Cutting across the borders of their countries of residence, they now organise better among themselves and also work to lobby for their interests in a consolidated manner at a transnational level. It also has to be noted that several new forms of communication have emerged which have enabled translational media to emerge, enabling people from different states and even continents to form and continue their transnational bonds (Rizvi 2007: 339). One scholar writes aptly about this phenomenon -

dense networks across political borders created ... in their quest for economic advancement and social recognition. Through these networks, an increasing number of people are able to live dual lives. Participants are often bilingual, move easily between different cultures, frequently maintain homes in two countries, and pursue economic, political and cultural interests that require their presence in both (Portes 1997: 812)

This ‘multiculturalisation’ of the world is not showing signs of slowing down and is only growing because international economy is so interconnected that begets such behaviour and networks. It also has to be noted that there is increased migration between countries due to economic push and pull factors and this has been further facilitated politically in the last two decades with the end of Cold War, which resulted in states being open now.

Thus, when we talk about external factors influencing the emergence of communal politics in Bangladesh, one has to keep in mind how the emergence of a transnational Islamic identity across the Muslim world in the last few decades also impacted Bangladeshi politics. The emergence of this Islamic identity will be discussed in detail in a later part of this chapter. However, a little more theoretical clarity is important to acquire before one proceeds to discuss that. It is important to understand how transnational global collective identities are formed as this would enable a deeper understanding of how communal politics emerged in Bangladesh.

4.1 ‘Deterritorialization’

With the acceleration of globalization in the last 20 years or so, many argued that it will lead to the emergence of a dominant global identity which will be more or less uniform across the world this has been called as ‘Americanisation’ or ‘Westernisation’ of global culture. The argument is that because of the dominant status of West in the world due to its socio-economic preponderance and winning of the Cold War, Western values and identity will become dominant across the world, relegating local identities -

It refers to a global situation in which powerful culture industries and actors located almost exclusively in the West and, in particular, in the United States, dominate other local, national, and regional cultures and actors. This domination is understood as being largely the outcome of fundamental historical inequalities which have resulted in the bulk of political and economic power being concentrated in the West and, again, especially, in the United States (Demont-Heinrich 2011: 668)

Some scholars have argued that globalisation will sweep away many local identities and result in a homogenization of identities across the world. Thus, it is not wrong to say that it was expected that globalisation will result in a rapid loss of cultural diversity and will lead to a consolidation of a dominant identity. This is a huge concern for many who see it as a kind of cultural imperialism which threatens local cultures and identities (Schiller 1991: 153).

However, scholars like Tomlinson have argued that with the evidence of the last two decades, the reverse has happened. Globalisation has resulted in an intensification of cultural identities and thus resulting in increased cultural consciousness among different groups (Tomlinson 2003: 270). As one scholar puts it, because of globalisation “*the United States is no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes [emphasis added]*” (Appadurai 1996: 31).

Scholars have argued that because of globalisation and rapid technological changes in the last two decades, there has been a ‘deterritorialization’ of culture which is fuelling the formation of transnational identities that are not tied to or by any geographical location (Xue 2008: 113). What this means is that, globalisation has enabled parochial cultural

identities to persist and even thrive across the world. This is because, since culture has become deterritorialized, people who perceive themselves as belonging to the same culture even if living in different geographical places are able to maintain their cultural identities and thus preserve their identities -

the most important social implication of deterritorialisation is not the dissolution of identities, cultures, or nation states in a global environment... but the interplay between global and local processes, and the reconstitution of local social positioning within global cultural flows (Jacquemets 2005: 263)

Technological tools like social networking sites have enabled people to reinforce their identities and even create new identities, even if they were living thousands of miles away from others who are part of the same identity (Blanchard, et.al. 2008: 38). As noted before, since no single country or culture has been able to control the processes of cultural globalisation, this has resulted in an anarchical situation that is often led by non-state actors and religious entities. One scholar describes this decentralised nature of globalisation succinctly -

the deepest meaning conveyed by the idea of globalization is that of the indeterminate, unruly and self-propelled character of world affairs, the absence of a centre, of a controlling desk, of a board of directors or of a managerial office (Bauman 1998: 59)

Hence, these scholars argue that instead of cultural imperialism, a decentralised global cultural sphere has emerged -

there is not one global mass culture, but rather transnational processes produce the globalisation of culture where a multitude of cultural flows, not always consistent with dominant nation-state ideologies emerge (Banerjee and Linstead 2001: 696)

Thus, in such a decentralised cultural sphere, due to globalisation enabling 'complex connectivity', identities can be forged and developed by a variety of actors who can draw inspiration from a whole host of factors including religion among others (Tomlinson 1999: 29). As one scholar puts it, cultural notions of identity have become 'untethered' from their geographical locations of origin, thereby making them flexible (Bida 2009: 35). Thus, a Bangladeshi not necessarily feels loyalty to his state alone but can also feel allegiance to broader international transnational solidarity formations. Hence, it has been argued that instead of the culture of a particular country dominating the international

stage, recent evidences indicate that, there is a strong emphasis on retaining the culture and traits of the region and identity formation has become unpredictable and uncontrollable.

4.2 Collective Identity Formation

In the context of this research, it is religious identity as it developed in Bangladesh which is important to understand. Religious identity is also a collective identity. It is thus important to locate what factors influence a collective identity from a theoretical perspective before proceeding to seek those factors in the case of Bangladesh in the last few decades.

Identities are not constant as they do change over time due to several factors which could be historical, political, social or economic. As a matter of fact, recent researchers have argued that not only collective identities but also extremely personal identities like gender and sexual orientation do change over time (Eliason and Schope 2007: 3-26). It is thus necessary to discuss how collective identities like religion evolve in response to factors surrounding them. As noted earlier, collectivity and collective identifications are important building blocks of society. It is true that without the emergence of collective identities, one cannot explain the formation of societies and communal living. It is also true that even the most personal identity of a person incorporates identifications such as ethnicity, religious identity etc. which are by definition collective identities.

However, although the 'individual' is easy to define and understand, conceptualizing a 'collectivity' is difficult as it exists only in abstract i.e. in a conceptual realm and is therefore difficult to tabulate. A 'collectivity' can only be observed and not seen physically like an individual which makes it difficult to define and observe. Scholars have argued that two factors go into the formation and evolution of collective identities which are of interest to the subject of this research and they need to be first discussed theoretically before being applied in the context of external factors influencing the rise of communal politics in Bangladesh.

4.3 Logic of Similarity

Logic of similarity addresses the fundamental question about collective identities, which is - what does 'collectivity' mean? Similarity among and between a group of people based on certain criteria is probably the simplest definition of the collective that can be put forward (Jenkins 2008: 103) -

A social group is a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category. Through a social comparison process, persons who are similar to the self are categorized with the self and are labelled the in-group... the consequence of self-categorization is an accentuation of the perceived similarities between the self and other in-group members... this accentuation occurs for all the attitudes, beliefs and values, affective reactions, behavioral norms, styles of speech and other properties that are believed to be correlated with the relevant intergroup categorization (Stets and Burke 2000: 225)

Thus, collective identification can be understood as emerging as a result of a group of people who are in some respect apparently similar to each other and are aware of their similarities. Thus, a group of people should have something inter-subjectively significant in common, no matter how vague, unimportant or apparently imagined, before they can form or constitute a 'collectivity'. Yet, that alone is not enough, they must also be 'aware' of their commonalities, which tends to happen over time, mostly due to efforts on part of a group of educated elites for without awareness there cannot be a collective consciousness (Smith 2002: 16). For example, the European Union as often described by scholars as an educated elite driven project to create collective European consciousness and thereby a common European identity (Matiuta 2013: 3).

In the case of religious identities, mythological foundations serve as the core of collective identification (Oppong 2013: 11). One sociological scholar defines religion as '*an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings* [emphasis added]' (Spiro 1966: 66). Being central to any religion, mythological foundations continue to shape the respective religious collective identities of its followers. However, similarities alone are not enough to fully comprehend collective identities.

4.4 Logic of Difference

While similarities are important, differences are also important while understanding collective identities. Inclusion also possesses exclusion within it by logic. Logic of similarity in effect means that there is a parallel logic of difference (Gilroy 1997: 301–302). To define the criteria for membership into a community does at the same time necessarily develop a boundary, i.e. implication that everything that lay beyond it does not belong to it.

Thus, as a matter of fact, the thing that an individual has in common with a particular group of people is influenced as much by his similarities with them as by the difference from others. So, scholars point out that often it is in the differences one has with others, the similarity shared with the same group comes into sharper focus. Thus, it can be argued that the cultural evolution of identity in mankind is a result of the constant interaction between the logics of similarity and difference (Simmel 1950: 30). What this means is that, defining ‘us’ without fail leads to defining a range of ‘thems’ also. As one scholar puts it -

“Similarity and difference reflect each other across a shared boundary. At the boundary, we discover what we are in what we are not, and vice versa (Jenkins 2008: 103).”

With respect to religious collective identities which is the topic of concern for this research, logic of difference creates the boundaries of religions.

5. Hindu India as the ‘other’ for Bangladesh

Thus, because identities are formed because of a contradictory relationship between logics of similarity and difference, the external other is also as important to the process of the formation of collective identities as the shared similarities (Persson 2010: 43-44). It thus stands to reason that collective identities do change or evolve when there is a change in the perception of who the external ‘other’ is. The presence of an external ‘other’ often aggregates or strengthens an identity -

The “grouping” instinct will emerge in conditions that politically and economically discriminate against and marginalize religious communities; promote conflict along ideological lines, when the threat perception is high and when competition for scarce resources is intense (Yamin 2008: 9)

Thus, the emergence of a threatening 'other' can have a radicalising effect on collective identities leading to 'grouping'.

In the case of Bangladesh, the first external factor that needs to be discussed is the perceived threat of India as the Hindu 'other' which slowly emerged after the war of independence especially after the military came to power. As noted in the previous chapter, since Bengali Hindus were also part of the larger Bengali identity, Bangladesh needed to give itself a separate identity which substantially differentiated it from Hindu India and therefore it embraced communal politics by emphasising on Islamic identity.

Independent Bangladesh adopted, in early stage, the policies of secularism under the headship of Sheikh Muzibur Rahman. Although, there was a twist of events completely after he was assassinated in 1975. Thus Islam was led to germinate in the military regimes one after another. This again led to a feeling of insecurity in the minds of Hindu minority residing in the country.

Apart from the attacks on Minorities, Enemy and Vested Property Acts, provided fuel for the extermination of Hindu Minorities from their motherland. The Enemy Property Act which was promulgated in 1965 by the Pakistan government regarded India as an enemy country. According to the law any Pakistani citizen living in India was to be deprived of his/her land, buildings, firms and companies in Pakistan, which would to be taken over by the custodian of Enemy Property for Control and Management. After the independence of Bangladesh the enemy status of India ceased to exist, and this act should have been repealed. But it now exists by the name- The Vested Property Act. This act is a very powerful instrument that becomes the cause of migration (Kumar 2009: 69).

Thus, India began to be seen as an 'enemy' or at the least the 'other' which meant Bangladesh had to define its identity based on Islam as opposed to a larger Hindu India.

The disappearance of the 'second colonial rulers', that had attempted to weld the disparate communities of Pakistan into a nation, presented the importance of primordial cultural-linguistic identities. Mujib went on to mould the new nation on the basis of his 'four pillars' - democracy, socialism, secularism and Bengali nationalism - the basic principles of the Bangladesh freedom struggle. By contrast, the shrank policy perspectives of the anti-Mujib leaders such as Maulana Bhasani and General Ziaur

Rahman (who seized power in a coup in 1975) emphasized a different kind of nationalism that had as Islam its core. Bhasani's policies were based on ideas of 'Islamic socialism', and in one of his meetings he declared that he would 'trample the Constitution underfoot, if it is not based on the Quran and the practices of the Prophet'. Contrary to Mujib's policies of secularism, he advocated a narrower form of communalism, based on an anti-Hindu ethos that was closer to that found in the idea of Pakistan. He criticized Mujib for making Bangladesh into a satellite of Hindu India (Bhardwaj 2010: 18).

As a matter of fact, because of the large size and undue influence of India in South Asia, most countries in the region see India as a threat to their existence and have defined their identities in opposition to India. It is no wonder this became true of Bangladesh as well.

While Bangladesh during her pre-independence days saw Pakistan as the 'other' and thereby defined her identity as 'Bengali' as opposed to Islamic, post-independence with the threat of Pakistan subsiding and the perceived threat of a Hindu India rising, began to see India as the 'other', thereby defining herself as an Islamic country under successive military dictatorships. This has alienated her domestic Hindu population who were also seen as 'other' as not nationalism was based on religion.

Some scholars go on to argue that, the discriminatory policies of the Bangladesh government towards minority communities and their indifferent attitude towards communal forces is causing a threat to India's demography. The communal forces that rose in Bangladesh in an unprecedented manner both in the government as well as externally are pushing the minorities by using various tactics to flee them to neighbouring countries particularly India. It was very clear around the close of the liberation war that the secular identity of Bangladesh is not going to last long.

15 years of military rule served a firm base in the process of Islamization in Bangladesh. Islam has re-emerged as one of the main structural components of Bangladesh Nationalism. This has made the non-Muslims of Bangladesh secondary citizens in their own country. The government has also backed the anti minority activities in the country to drive out minorities or to marginalise them. The government backed terrorist slogan was 'leave this country and flee to India'. The activities of minority harassment are not considered serious and are being seen as mere stray incidents by authorities. The grass root level workers of BNP-JIB alliance that won with a large majority in 2001 elections used to think that the minority Hindus should be suppressed since they vote for the rival Awami League (Kumar 2009: 72).

This process was aided by a global surge of political Islam since the 1970s which needs to be understood.

6. Re-emergence of Political Islam across the World in the last few Decades

Islam is one among the three major monotheistic religions of the world, with the other two being Judaism and Christianity. The geographical expansion of Islam into many parts of the world gave rise to a rich complexity in Islamic identity. Muslims of different ethnic backgrounds though united by their Islamic faith at one level, do have significant differences between them due to their different ethnicities. Language, culture, geography and traditions separate them, thus creating a mosaic of Islamic identities that at times have warred with each other when elements of other identity held by them overpowered the unifying power of their religious identity.

For example, the Ottoman Empire was the predominant Muslim empire from the 16th century onwards till the end of the First World War and exercised control over much of Muslim lands including Arab lands. Ottoman Empire though Muslim in nature was dominated by Turks and the Arabs were not happy about which led to the Arab revolt of 1916 – 1918 that challenged the Ottoman Turk rule in Arab lands (Murphy 2008: 20-23). This shows that despite being part of the larger Muslim identity, the Arabs chose to revolt against fellow Muslim leaders because of ethnic differences. Thus, it is a mistake to see Muslims of different ethnic origins as one since their histories, languages, local customs are vastly different. However, in the last few decades a global resurgence of political Islam has forged a common Muslim identity across the world.

The global re-emergence of Political Islam in the last 45 years has had a huge impact on the Muslim world and thereby its impact on Bangladesh should also not be underestimated. Several parallel events have affected the reemergence of Political Islam in the international stage and the most important among them will be discussed.

6.1 Islamic Revival of 1970s

1970s witnessed a period of Islamic resurgence across the world. With the failure of Arab nationalism after the humiliating defeat of Arab nations in the 1967 War with Israel,

scholars have argued that Islam began to rise in importance in the Middle East as well as across the world (Lapidus 1997: 445-446). Thus, by many accounts, modern Islamic revival began in the 1970s, coinciding with the decline of Arab nationalism (Berger 1999: 7). This was inevitable because Arabs constitute a significant and influential percentage of global Muslims and their refocus on Islam during this period rather than their ethnicity after the failure of Arab nationalism, inevitably spread to Muslims of other parts of the world as well. Thus, one scholar notes that this Islamic revival was “*vast in geographical scope, affecting every single Muslim country from North Africa to South-east Asia [emphasis added]*” (Berger 1999: 7). It is thus impossible for Bangladesh which became an independent state in the same period to be not affected by the effects of the broader Islamic revival that was happening in much of the Muslim world.

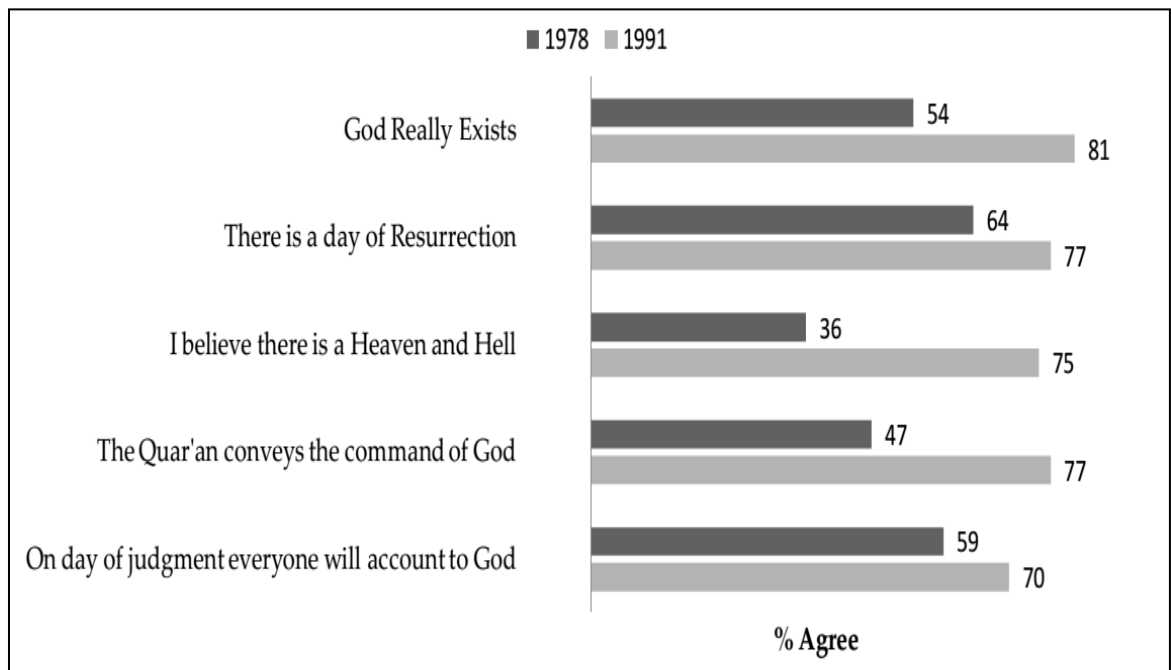
As a matter of fact, Bangladesh’s history somewhat runs in parallel with rest of the Muslim world. For example, before the revival, from the 1920s to the Arab defeat in the 1967 War with Israel, it was the secularizing forces that were on the top in the Muslim world. These were primarily authoritarian governments in Muslim countries such as Egypt, Turkey, Iran and Syria who had secularising reform agendas and even among the general population, most Muslims were fast abandoning the day to day guidelines of Islam as prayers and fastings were less frequently observed and alcohol consumption was on the rise among Muslims (Hourani 2005: 345,346).

Even though Islamic organisations who would later come to dominate the discourse like the Muslim Brotherhood and others were established well before 1970s and had started propagating their ideas throughout the world, it was only after Arab defeat in the 1967 war and the subsequent economic crisis that there emerged widespread support for the principles espoused by such organisations (Ayubi 1991: 59). This transformation was unexpected and as in 1967, Nasser led Egypt fought the war against Israel in the name of Arab nationalism but within the span of a decade, his successor, El Sadat had to fight the 1973 war with Israel in the name of Islam (Esposito 1999: 15).

Studies also show that religious participation and identification also rose among Muslims across the world. For instance, studies have shown that the veil was almost completely

absent among a majority of the women of Cairo in 1969, whereas by 2000, almost 80 percent of women wore some type of veil (Bayat 2007: 147). To give another example, the following table illustrates the same point with respect to the change in religious beliefs among Turkish students in Ankara University from 1978 to 1991. It has to be kept in mind that Turkey of this time was a modern, secularised country which was being seen as a success story in the Islamic world. Yet, even in a country like that, Islamic revival was strongly advancing -

Figure 1



Source: Mutlu 1996: 355

Thus, even in a moderate and secular country like Turkey, the impact of the global Islamic revival was very evident. Another scholar sums up this revival aptly -

The indices of Islamic reawakening in personal life are many: increased attention to religious observances (mosque attendance, prayer, fasting), proliferation of religious programming and publications, more emphasis on Islamic dress and values, the revitalization of Sufism (mysticism). This broader-based renewal has also been accompanied by Islam's reassertion in public life: an increase in Islamically oriented governments, organizations, laws, banks, social welfare services, and educational institutions (Esposito 1999: 10)

Thus, this Islamic revival paved the way for re-emergence of political Islam in the global stage and Bangladesh could not have escaped this phenomenon. Writing in 1999, a scholar notes how previously secular spheres in Muslim countries had now become dominated by political Islam -

Islamic activists have become an accustomed part of the political process, participating in national and local elections, scoring an impressive victory in Algeria's municipal elections, emerging as the chief opposition parties or groups in Egypt, Tunisia, and Jordan, and serving in cabinet positions in the Sudan, Jordan, Pakistan, Iran and Malaysia (Esposito 1999: 21)

As noted earlier, this revival affected Muslims across the world in different ways and thus naturally affected Bangladeshi Muslims as well and can be argued that it strengthened their Muslim identities. It is also interesting to note that, Bangladesh was also proceeding along secular lines till Mid 1970s and its Islamic turn coincides with the global Islamic turn. However, Bangladesh did not become an Islamic country from a constitutional perspective till the 1980s. One can see how other global events of this period influenced this move by Bangladesh.

6.2 Islamic Revolution in Iran

Another major event of this period of Islamic revival was the Islamic Iranian Revolution of 1979 which established an Islamic Republic in Iran. This revolution in Iran started in 1977 as a series of demonstrations against the ruling Shah of Iran of that time, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi who was backed by the West (Demirci 2013: 38,39, Wise 2011: 2,3). It became extremely intensive by 1978 and turned into a mass campaign of civil uprising with large scale strikes and protests bringing the country to halt. The Shah regime collapsed and on January 16, 1979, the Shah left Iran and the revolution's spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini assumed power within two weeks in Tehran. A national referendum that was held in the April of that year transformed Iran into an Islamic Republic. This enshrined the principles of the Islamic revolution into the constitution (Wise 2011: 5-7).

The Islamic revolution in Iran send strong signals to Muslims across the world. Here was an example of a country, Iran with Islam as the central principle had thrown out a West

backed secular ruler. This stood in sharp contrast to the earlier noted failure of Arab ethnic nationalism to dislodge Israel from Palestinian lands (Robinson 1997: 135). It has been well documented by scholars that the success of an Islamic revolution in Iran had a profound impact in the Muslim world as Islamist insurgents tried to follow the same route in Saudi Arabia in 1979, Egypt in 1981, Syria in 1982 and Lebanon in 1983 (Matthee 1986: 263, Faksh 1994: 184-185). The Lebanese movement was somewhat successful with the emergence of Hezbollah as a political force in Lebanese politics that continues to date.

However, the most important impact of the Islamic revolution of Iran was that it was perceived as a success story of the modern Islamic revival and inspired the bringing of Islamic identity to the fore as an important marker for Muslims rather than their respective nationalist or ethnic identities. Consequently, Islam came to be seen as an effective political organising principle for a country rather than secular principles. Iran's revolution was also in stark opposition to the path taken by Turkey after the end of the First World War wherein it chose secularisation and was constantly projected by the West as a model for Muslim countries (Secor 2011: 157-158). In effect, Islamic Iran became an alternative Islamic political model to secular Turkey and the other Western backed dictatorial regimes in countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, thus establishing political Islam as a viable option in the minds of many Muslims, especially for newly independent countries like Bangladesh -

The renewed political influence of Islamic principles and organizations is probably the most well-known indicator of an Islamic Revival. The reversal in political fortunes is exemplified by the Islamic revolution in Iran which overthrew the secular government of Muhammad Reza Shah in 1978-9 (Carvalho 2009: 6)

Hence, it is fair to conclude that the Islamic resurgence triggered by the failure of Arab nationalism became consolidated into a political principle rather than just revival Islamic faith with the successful Islamic revolution in Iran -

The third and longest period of Islamic resurgence began in the aftermath of the Arab defeat in the war of 1967 and continued throughout the 1970s amidst severe economic dislocations, class disparities, and authoritarian state structures. It became a formidable force after the Islamic revolution of 1978-9 in Iran, sweeping across the Muslim

heartland from North Africa to the Persian Gulf. This is Islam as a political force, or political Islam, challenging established regimes, shaking Arab political life to its foundations, and calling for a revival of the early Islamic ethos of governance (Faksh 1994: 184)

Thus, Bangladesh having into come into being as an independent country during this period of Islamic revival was inevitably inspired by the principles of political Islam. Thus, as noted in the previous chapter, the 1980s saw Bangladesh further seeing more communal politics with Islam becoming an official religion of the state in this decade.

6.3 Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan

The turn to Islam as an organising political principle in Bangladesh was further strengthened during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan which lasted from 1979 to 1989. This invasion is credited by many to be the starting point for the rise of the Islamist Mujahid Movement in Afghanistan which later spread worldwide, including in Bangladesh (Naby 1986: 124). Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan happened during the Cold War, the Western powers started supporting the Mujahideen fighters with money and weapons. This struggle against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan due to careful propaganda and the already existing Islamic spirit as noted before across the world, became a struggle for Islam and fighters from far off Muslim countries came to Afghanistan to fight the atheistic communists, including from Bangladesh.

This was a tactical necessity for the West at that time as Islam was what united them all and hence turning it into a religious war helped the insurrection and thus states like Saudi Arabia funded or subsidised these transnational ‘warriors’ for Islam from many countries including Bangladesh (Huband 1999: 3). It has to be noted that before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, religion only played a marginal role in Afghan political governance as Islam was the religion of the majority and was not in any way threatened by any other force and hence it was the inter-tribal rivalries that dominated the Afghan political scene (Naby 1986: 127,128). That being the case, the Soviet invasion pushed Islamic leaders to the forefront -

The Soviet invasion of 1979 catapulted these (Islamic preachers) persons into greater prominence still and made popular the chief revolutionary Islamic criterion for resolution

of the Afghan situation. The Afghan problem for them is rooted in the decay of Afghan-Islamic values, the introduction of secularism, and the subversive influence of Soviet Marxism (Naby 1986: 150)

Thus, Afghanistan also became more Islamic as a result of the Soviet invasion which also accelerated the Islamic revival that started from the 1970s and gave it an armed or radical flavour for Arabs, Pakistani Muslims, Persian Muslims and even Turkish Muslims fought together against the Soviet Union for the sake of Afghan Muslims united only by their Islamic faith. Their ranks included a significant number of Bangladeshi Muslims as well -

HUJI began as a Pakistan-based organisation in 1980 to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The Bangladesh branch was formed in 1992 and was officially launched on 30 April 1992. It majorly comprised Bangladeshi veterans of the Afghan jihad. Among the HUJI operatives Abdur Rahman worked with Mufti Abdul Hye (the amir); Mufti Shafique, Shaikh Farid, Abdullah and Faruk Hossain Khan, who later joined JMB and changed his name to Khaled Saifullah (Asia Report 2010: 3).

As Muslims from Bangladesh and other countries went and fought in Afghanistan, their ethnic identities were relegated to the background and their Islamic identities took centre stage. During this period, centres supporting the Afghan resistance effort opened in many countries across the world including in Bangladesh wherein many Muslims contributed money and other resources for the common cause (Hegghammer 2010: 78-79). A worldwide solidarity of Muslims began to emerge on this issue. What was essentially a nationalist movement in Afghanistan began to have transnational religious dimensions. Bangladeshi Muslims who fought in Afghanistan later returned home began to espouse very conservative Islamic principles.

6.4 First Gulf War

After the soviet retreat from Afghanistan in 1989, almost immediately came another crisis in the Muslim world in the form of the First Gulf War. The invasion of Kuwait by the forces of Iraq began in August, 1990 (Faksh, 1994: 183-185, Schwab 2009: 1,2). It was condemned even by most Arab nations and the United Nations Security Council imposed economic sanctions on Iraq. A United Nations authorized international coalition led by the United States intervened in support of Kuwait which resulted in the retreat of Iraq from Kuwait (Faksh, 1994: 183-185).

While the leaders of the Mujahid Movement across the world were mostly opposed to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the deployment of United States forces in Saudi Arabia as part of the war effort, who continued to stay there until they were withdrawn in 2003 was seen as an affront to Islam (Blanchard 2010: 7). Many Mujahid elements saw the presence of foreign soldiers in the holiest land of Islam as an affront to Islam and were angered by it. This immediately was used as a propaganda tool by Mujahid elements to garner support (Hess 2001: 170,171, Schwab 2009: 47).

Thus, the first Gulf War became confrontational issue between the West and many Muslims who saw it as an affront to Islam. This sentiment was used for propaganda by the Iraqi regime of that time as well which called for a Jihad against the “*the assemblies of infidelity and polytheism ... the forces of injustice, evil and world Judaism* [emphasis added]” (Batley 2003: 9).

As a result of such Iraqi propaganda and efforts by the Mujahid elements to politicise the issue of American troops being stationed in Saudi Arabia during the First Gulf War, anti-Americanism and anti-western attitudes grew among a section of Muslims across the world and groups expressing such ideologies became “*increasingly more seductive and influential in the post-Gulf War period* [emphasis added]” (Faksh 1994: 186, 187). Thus, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan along with the First Gulf War played an important role in further consolidating the emerging political Islamic identity and this also radicalised elements of it by giving rise to groups like the Al-Qaeda. As one scholar notes

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In the aftermath of the Gulf War, Osama bin Laden began to organise his Jihad against the West and the Saudi monarchy. He had cut his teeth in the Afghan War, learning the elements of insurgent warfare with the help of the Pakistani Intelligence Service (ISI) and its sponsor the CIA... Bin Laden declared war on the West during the Clinton administration issuing a fatwa against the Jews, the United States and the crusaders of Western Europe, all enemies of the Islamic world. In the eyes of bin Laden and his movement of Islamic fundamentalists, these groups individually and collectively were responsible for the corruption and degeneracy visited upon Islam...The destruction of Iraq during the First Gulf War and the introduction of Western forces into Gulf on a permanent basis continued the assault on Islam and Muslim ulama (Schwab 2009: 71,72)

This naturally had impact on Bangladeshi Muslims as well and much of the terrorism that rose in Bangladesh in the 2000s and late 1990s can be traced back to the general increase in radicalisation in Muslim societies across the world.

6.5 End of Cold War

The end of the Cold War was also another contributing factor to the re-emergence of political Islam. As several scholars have noted, during the Cold War years, the world was divided into two camps that were divided by the opposing ideologies of Communism and Capitalism. This ideological division backed by two opposing super powers in the form of the United States and the Soviet Union with incredible might had restrained to the most part all other ideological conflicts from exploding. Thus, when the Cold War ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, some predicted a rise of nationalism and religious fundamentalism across the world (Yamin 2008: 2).

It was argued that the forces of nationalism and religious extremism that were frozen by the Cold War divide would explode in areas of potential conflict across the world. Samuel Huntington, quite energetically and even controversially, went to the extent of predicting the possibility of a 'Clash of Civilizations' that would occur along the global fault lines of culture and religion (Huntington 1993: 22-49). He argued that the future conflicts of the world would occur along the cultural and religious fault lines of the world instead of ideological ones as was the case during the Cold War and he went on to indicate several such fault lines and pointed out that Islam and West might be one of the more prominent fault line. While that might be an exaggerating statement, it is evident from the aforementioned analysis that political Islam had been pulling ululating from the 1970s itself. The end of the Cold War, freed it from the shackles of super power rivalry and it became an even bigger force.

Another threat to peace in the post-Cold War period was the rising religious militancy in some countries. To some extent it can be said that the religiously driven conflict could pose a bigger threat than the ideologically driven one, on an international perspective. Some analysts even contended that "it is now cultural rather than the "iron" curtains" that dissect the world, and that religion fuels the conflict in an indifferent way by pumping

intolerant and irreconcilable image of identity and commitment among competing civilizations. In its backing, one can point to governments in countries like Iran, Sudan, and to the Islamic movements throughout the Middle East and elsewhere, which readily resort to the language of cultural confrontation” (Yilmaz 2008: 50)

Hence, the end of Cold War provided the space required for political Islam to break out in the international stage and in many countries. Bangladesh of course was not immune from the effects of political Islam being a Muslim majority country. Thus, all the above discussed factors led to the re-emergence of political Islam on a global scale. A timeline of these events is helpful and is given below -

Table 6.1
Timeline of the re-emergence of Political Islam

Islamic Revival	Started in the aftermath of the 1967 Arab defeat to Israel
Islamic Revolution in Iran	1979
Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan	1979 – 1989
First Gulf War	1990
Islamisation of the Arab-Israeli Conflict	1987 (Formation of Hamas)
End of Cold War	1990-1991
Rise of Islamic AKP in Turkey	2002

One has to note that there were also several other indicators of this global Islamic revival like the Islamisation of the India - Pakistan dispute over Kashmir after 1990, rise of Islamic parties in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region etc. which this analysis does not cover. All of them together shaped the global Muslim identity across the world including in Bangladesh resulting in increased communalisation of its politics. This was further intensified by the US launched War on Terror.

6.6 War on Terror

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, the phrase ‘Global War on Terror’ has been used by many including the US government to denote various operations waged on various parts of the world against terrorism (Zalman and Clarke 2009: 101). Despite differences in operating terrain and region, one common thread that unites almost all of such operations that come under the umbrella of the - War on Terror - is that they are focused on Islamist Extremist terror groups.

The War on Terror started with the military operation in Afghanistan against the Taliban forces that were sheltering Osama Bin Laden in response to Al-Qaeda led terror attacks on the United States in September of 2001 that killed more than 3000 people. Later on, the War on Terror campaign expanded to Iraq in 2003. While these were the most overt operations of War on Terror, there were also operations in various Muslim World countries like Yemen and North Western Pakistan (Zalman and Clarke 2009: 103-104). All these operations were directly and indirectly led by the United States and supported by its allies like the United Kingdom. While some European countries like France and Germany disassociated themselves from the US led attack on Iraq, all the NATO countries supported the US led war on Afghanistan (Furtig 2007: 318,319).

This global War on Terror has resulted in the death of many in Muslim countries and most of them are civilians killed in collateral damage. The extremists have also struck back with acts like the Madrid bombings of 2004, London bombings of 2005 and various other plots which were foiled. However, the damage to civilians has been disproportionately high by any yardstick. This was compounded by the failure of the US led coalition to provide a stable, swift alternative to the regimes they dislodged in Iraq and Afghanistan. This led to years of instability and sectarian violence which resulted in even more civilian casualties and political stability is slow to return. Bangladesh also saw a spike in terrorism which has been linked with 9/11's aftermath -

In 2001, two simultaneous events in the South Asian region — the establishment of Begum Khaleda Zia's government (2001 to 2006) in Bangladesh and the US' led "War on Terror" that led to the invasion of Afghanistan — redefined India's regional security scenario. And the security threat, which until then had come existed primarily from India's western border, extended to its eastern border. Fundamentalist and jihadi elements were the notable allies of Begum Zia's national and international policy to weaken the opposition Awami League and its allies and to keep India destabilised respectively. In fact, leaders like Motiur Nizami Rahman, who fought during the freedom struggle of Bangladesh in 1971 and took over the Jamaat-e-Islami in late 2000, were made ministers during her regime. Aziz-ul Huq, the chairman of the Islami Olkyo Jote (IOJ) a radical Islamist party and a member of the advisory council of the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B), Bangladesh's main terrorist group, formed part of Begum Zia's coalition government. Their presence in the political power structure encouraged the extremist elements to act without any fear as they enjoyed the patronage of the authorities (Mehrotra 2009: 231).

The impact of the global War on Terror has been immense in the minds of Muslims across the world. Even the use of the phrase 'Global War on Terror' has resulted in a narrative of a war fought. It has also helped radical extremists to construct it as a global assault on Islam. As the figure below indicates, significant number of Muslims in the Middle East started viewing America as well as American allies unfavorably because of the War on Terror.

Thus, it helped the radical extremist elements to mobilize people across the world and played an important part in the construction of a West vs Islam narrative that was being pedaled by many extremist Islamist elements and also by many right wing elements in the West.

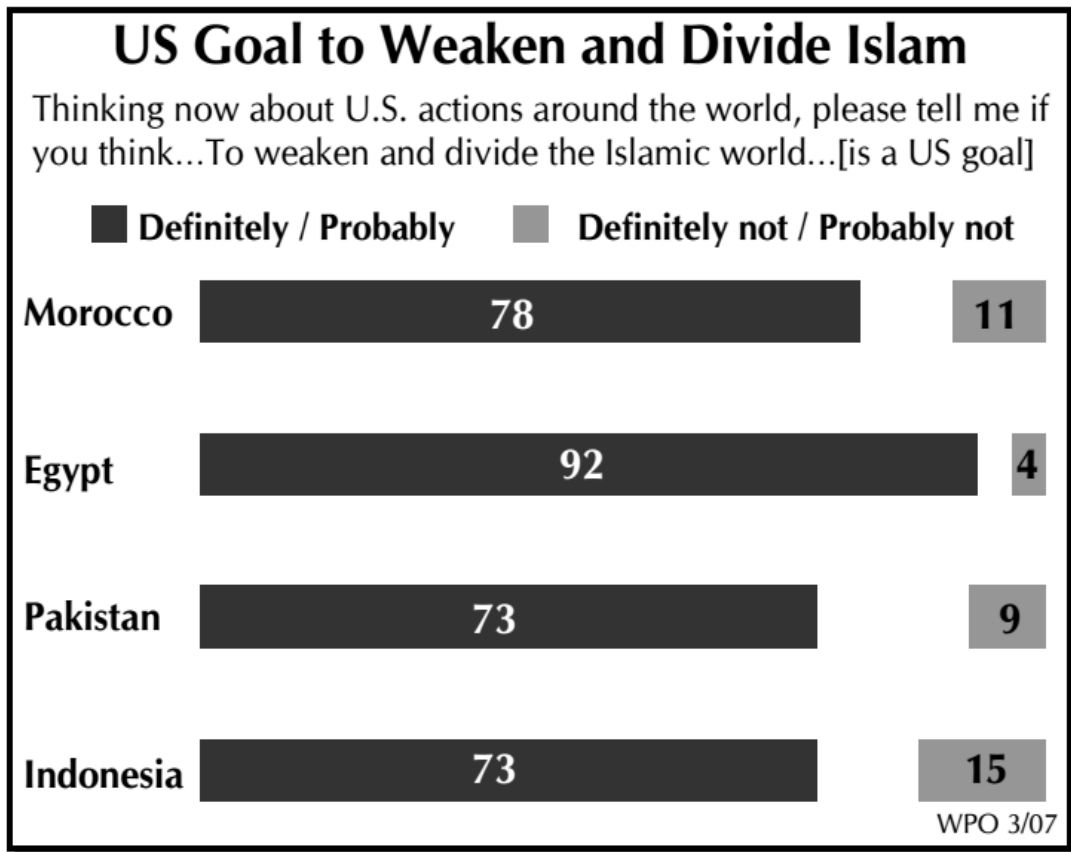
Figure 2: Anti-American Views in Muslim World

Anti-American Views in Muslim World...			
<i>Rating of the United States</i>			
	<u>Fav- orable</u>	<u>Somewhat Unfav.</u>	<u>Very Unfav.</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Turkey			
March 2004	30	18	45
May 2003	15	15	68
March 2003	12	17	67
Summer 2002	30	13	42
Pakistan			
March 2004	21	11	50
May 2003	13	10	71
Summer 2002	10	11	58
Jordan			
March 2004	5	26	67
May 2003	1	16	83
Summer 2002	25	18	57
Morocco			
March 2004	27	22	46
May 2003	27	13	53

Source: Pew Study 2004: 6

As the figure below indicates, many Muslims across the world saw the War on Terror as a West led conspiracy to weaken Islam -

Figure 3: Formation of the West as the ‘Other’



Source: World Public Opinion Study 2007: 6

7. Concurrent rise of Political Islam and Terrorism in Bangladesh

As noted before, the rise of political Islam in Bangladesh coincided with the rise of political Islam in the international stage. Thus, there were many linkages between the two with Bangladeshi actors of political Islam receiving support and drawing inspiration from global actors of political Islam. Even with respect to the rise of terrorism in the Islamic

world in the last two decades, one can see a concurrent rise of terrorism in Bangladesh during the same period, which is certainly influenced by the global rise in terrorism. As one report noted in 2011, that there was a surge in the terror activities in Bangladesh taking into account **the first half of the decade of 2010. Several attacks were attempted, particularly in the year 2004 and 2005. The most notable incident of these attacks was the 21st August, 2004 grenade attack on an Awami League public meeting, which specially targeted the Awami League leadership, including Sheikh Hasina, the then Leader of the Opposition.**

around 500 'home-made' bombs and ammunitions were exploded, in 63 out of 64 districts On the 17th August, 2005. that was when the Bangladesh's terrorism gained worldwide attention. The savage nature and the quantum of these incidents has convinced the stakeholders not only in the government, but also in civil society and general public that if Bangladesh remains susceptible to terrorist activities, there will be harsh consequences for the stability, security and economic development of the country (Sobhan 2011: 3).

Not only within Bangladesh, Muslims of Bangladeshi origin, have been involved in terror plots across Europe and North America. Thus, one can see clear connection between international rise of terrorism and rise of terrorism within Bangladesh. Numerous scholars concerned with the global consecration have acknowledged and witnessed the shackle prevailing between occupant militant groups of Bangladesh and those habitants in abroad in terms of economic, technological and organizational beneficiaries.

It was revealed by a religious leader from Barguna stated, 'Terrorist organizations in Bangladesh receive funds from international terrorist groups'. In addition to financial benefits, terrorist groups in Bangladesh are keen to adapt training techniques and the same ideology, as stated by respondents in Thakurgaon and Rangpur. Moreover, the terrorist groups are highly quite proficient and quite conservant with the use of upgraded technologies, such as the internet, mobile phones, some special signals and other strong networking systems. Based on a survey conducted, from the statements given by some KII respondents, an aggregate of 4,000 to 5,000 militant activists have been found to be

operating in this country and a striking population of just 200 activists have been arrested so far by law enforcement agencies. However, no fact regarding foreign militants having connection with the home-grown terrorist groups have been learned till date (Sobhan 2011: 25).

Thus, it is clear that external factors influencing the rise of political Islam which also has led to radicalization of some sections of Muslims have also contributed to communalization of politics in Bangladesh by helping and inspiring the rise of political Islam in Bangladesh and also in the last decade facilitating the rise of terrorism in Bangladesh.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The thesis at the initial chapter throws light on the manner in which colonial rulers were trying to exploit the communal cleavages present in the South Asian subcontinent. The chapter discusses many theories associated with the rise and entrenchment of

communalism in South Asian subcontinent. Many theoretical vantage points are discussed in the chapter. Rakesh Batabayal has brilliantly categorised the theories of communalism into three schools. The New Cambridge School represented by Anil Seal and Christopher Bayly postulates that communalism was a phenomenon prior to Colonialism. It absolves colonialism of any guilt in communalising people. The writings of Bidyut Chakravarty show that communalism was present in pre British India as well and none of the rulers took any serious steps to control divisive tendencies. Moreover, during the nationalist movement the politics of Indian National Congress of forging understanding with Muslim League proved counterproductive as it alienated Muslim masses away from Congress while Muslim elites were anyway supporting League itself. Even worse, it delegitimized the credentials of nationalist Muslims like Asaf Ali and Maulana Azad. These fallacies of Congress in forging a strong Hindu Muslim alliance became a major hurdle for secular politics in coming years.

Marxist School of thought is represented by Bipin Chandra, AR Desai, Asgar Ali Engineer and Moin Shakir. They see Communalism as a product of modernity, either begotten by colonialism or a result of perversions of capitalist society.

Prabha Dixit represents another viewpoint by highlighting the tradition-modernity approach to explain the insecurities that had made a niche in the hearts of Muslim elites. Being traditional they feared that the modern means of acquiring wealth had been monopolised by caste Hindus and they had been left behind in this race. Dixit also argues that the modernisation championed by Sayyed Ahmad Khan was also chimerical as it was only modernisation of Muslim elites and it did not aim at socio-cultural revolution of Muslim masses. Dixit also puts the blame of communalism on muslim elites because it was they who communalised first and Hindu communalism was only a response to it.

Subaltern School represented by Partha Chatterjee and Gyananendra Pandey argue that communalism was a child of enlightenment era and was imported in India via the British rule.

After discussing the theoretical framework the chapter then goes on to explain how communalism rose in India. It goes into the history tracing the rise of communalism in pre independence era from 1857 to nationalist struggle for independence. The chapter

throws light on how parties like Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha were formed, giving insight into the general trend of communalisation in South Asian Subcontinent. The Chapter then graduates to minutely study the rise of Communalism in Bengal.

The second part of the introductory chapter does a thorough examination of available literature on the subject, to understand the nuances associated with the rise of communalism in South Asia in general and Bangladesh in particular. The review of literature is based on four themes: the rise and growth of Islamic consciousness in the Bengal delta, second, the impact of British colonialism, third, the role of socio-religious reforms movements and political organizations and, fourth, the implications of communalism for the political development in Bangladesh. On the topic of rise of communalism in Bengal delta, work of Eaton becomes very relevant. Along with it works of Farooq, Bharadwaj and Chaudhary have also given various theories to explain the rise of communalism in east Bengal. The impact of British Colonialism on Communalism is understood through the works of Bipin Chandra, Partha Chatterjee, Hasan, Engineer, Dutta and Morris de Morris.

The introductory chapter gives a detailed account of their understanding on the topic. To make the understanding richer works of Bangladeshi scholars like Farooq and Muhith have also been incorporated in the review of literature. It is no secret that Socio Religious reform movements which had the motive of ameliorating the conditions of downtrodden in the society also inadvertently led to communal polarisation. This phenomenon is studied through the works of Chatterjee, Vanaik, Ahmad, Sarkar, Dixit and Desai. These scholars differ in their vantage points but arrive at same conclusion that socio religious reform movement did play a part in creating dissensions within the society. Most significant part of the literature review deals with the impact of communalism on the political developments that took place in post independence Bangladesh. Linter, Karlekar, Millam, Riyaz, Ghosh and Mohsin have done seminal work in the field of communalisation of politics in modern Bangladesh. The literature review deals separately with work of these eminent scholars.

The introductory chapter also gives the definition, rationale and scope of the study. The main aim of the study is to understand the roots of communalism in Indian subcontinent.

The rationale of the study lies behind the explanation and the analytical reasoning of the factors associated with the divisions that took place in South Asian subcontinent on the basis of religion. The study, therefore, helps to explore reasons for spiralling rise in communal violence from the context of historical background as provided by the study. This study attempts to understand the roots of communalism in Bengal so that the basic factors behind its rise and the growth can be traced. In doing so, it will help understand the current scenario of communal politics in Bangladesh. Finally, the scope of the study, as given in the chapter, lies in providing a detailed explanation such contexts and in understanding the present communal based issues in Bangladesh.

Chapter two of the study is titled “Growth of Islamic Consciousness in Bengal and The British Colonial Policy.” This Chapter juxtaposes the British administrative, economic and educational policies with the communal consolidation in Bengal and tries to understand the relationship between them. Starting from the ancient Indian Civilisation growth in Bengal to the rise of Muslim rulers followed by British, this chapter succinctly gives us a historical panorama of growth of syncretic culture of Bengal delta. Drawing from works of Eaton, the chapter gives four basic arguments on the consolidation of Islamic consciousness in Bengal: Immigration Theory; ‘Religion of the Sword’; ‘Religion of Patronage’; ‘Religion of Social Liberation’. Eaton however argues that all these four explanations fall short of explaining the real cause of Islamisation of Bengal, for instance they do not take into consideration the role played by Sufism in consolidation of Islam in Bengal.

Joya Chatterji addressed this issue when she asserts that although Islam emerged in Bengal in the 12th century, it could expand to the masses only in the 17th and 18th century with the arrival of the saints during the Mughal period. The egalitarian nature of Islam and its liberalizing influence on an inequitable social system, coupled with the aura of association with the ruling class, secured large number of converts from all strata of Bengali society. The Muslim missionaries and leaders had to compete against the strong Hindu revivalist forces and movements like Vaishnavism. An adaptation to, and adoption of, local customs and practices, in other words the Bengalisation of Islam, was the only way to overcome the problem. Hence, Muslim preachers and missionaries started emphasizing on a new form of Islam, with the Bengali language and culture at its core.

This linguistic emphasis and consciousness remained among Muslims of Bengal and a distinct Bengali Islamic nationalism was emphasized by them.

Apart from the positive influence of Sufism on Bengali society, the chapter also elucidates the negative influences like Wahhabism and other revivalist Islamic groups had on social cohesion. In short the chapter tries to convey that Islam succeeded in consolidating itself in the region due to its flexibility and ability to convey its message in popular idioms, using the local language and often utilising imageries which were familiar to the local population. The upside of this was that Islam was never seen as a foreign religion. And the spread of Islam was evolutionary and peaceful rather than revolutionary. Islamic consciousness in Bengal spread owing to various factors- traders, Sufis, new agriculture techniques, the oppressive Hindu Caste system, Muslim rulers, etc. By the time the British established their colonial authority over Bengal, Islam had become an integral part of the society and could claim a majority status in the eastern parts of the region.

The coming of British led to deep socio economic and political churning in Bengal. The pre eminent position that Muslims enjoyed prior to British was lost. The entire administrative system was overhauled by the British, leading to loss of administrative pre-eminence of the Muslims *amils* and *fauzdars*. The Muslims lost their judicial powers, and the number of Muslim lawyers gradually declined, reduced to just one-fourth of all referees and arbitrators appointed under the Cornwallis system. The sentiments of deltaic Muslims worsened against Hindus because they were getting lucrative positions in the administrative set up. This lack of trust was exploited by the British.

The chapter while understanding the ramifications of colonial policies on Bengali society lays down how the Permanent Settlement, introduced by Lord Cornwallis widened the gulf among various sections of the Bengali society. The newly emerged zamindar class was mostly Hindus, even in eastern Bengal, while the majority of the population was Muslim, thus fuelling communal division of Bengali society. In the beginning of the 19th century, vast areas of east Bengal were affected by the faraizi and wahhabi movements, which spread a kind of Islamic consolidation in Bengal. Western English education was introduced by the British which led to the exclusion of Bengali Muslims. The new

educational system was designed to produce an 'educated' local class which could help the colonial administrators in governing. The Muslims could not easily accept Western education for fear of losing contact with their religion. At the same time they also suffered from the loss of opportunities when the Persian language and administrative practices were replaced by English. Thereafter the chapter gives a detailed chronological account of events that transpired in Colonial India that led to rise of communal polarization in Bengal

Chapter third of the thesis is titled: Ethno-Linguistic Nationalism: 1947 to 1975. The Chapter discusses the War of Independence that Bangladesh fought to free itself from clutches of Pakistan. Indian subcontinent has been ravages by two partitions leading to immense death and destruction. While formation of Pakistan was based on religious nationalism, Bangladesh positioned its identity on language. The formation of Bangladesh also debunked the two nation theory on which Pakistan was formed. In this light the role of Britishers in flaring up communal passions cannot be ignored. They deliberately tried to divide Indian people by recognizing Muslim League as chief representative of Indian Muslims. Muslim league had support in Central provinces and it ignored the Bengali identity which was more coherent than pan-Indian Muslim identity. After partition East Pakistan was dominated by the West Pakistan's economic and political elite. They even tried to impose Urdu on a majority Bengali speaking population. This led to the formation of Bengali identity which culminated in War for independence in Bangladesh. The genocidal rampage went on till the Mukti Bahini, with assistance from the Indian Army succeeded in defeating Pakistani army to declare the formation of Bangladesh.

The formation of Bangladesh decisively showed the futility of the theory that nations are religions and that religion can be the basis of nationalism. One can even argue that the Two Nation theory which stated that Hindus and Muslims are two separate nations met its end in the formation of Bangladesh.

Chapter fourth of the thesis is titled "Role of Religion in the Political Developments in Bangladesh during the Military Regime". The chapter shows the gradual Islamisation of

Bangladesh's polity during the rule of successive military dictators. The people of Bangladesh during the phase of 1947 to 1971 were feeling stifled under the religious nationalism imposed by western Pakistan on them, because they felt that it was a threat to their linguistic identity. However the chapter highlights that the undercurrent of religious consciousness still remained palpable in the Bangladeshi society. This is because despite having cultural affinity with the Hindu dominated West Bengal, there were hardly any demand for joining the two Bengals together. The Awami League in Bangladesh gained strength during the Bengali nationalism phase and therefore aimed to keep Bangladesh a secular country. Nevertheless Islamic consciousness was always present in Bangladesh and importance of Islam grew as Awami league fell out of power and military rule took over.

Military dictators started using religion as a counter weight to League's largely secular and socialist policies. They even started maligning Awami League that they were a party that did not believe in tenets of Islam. Further Awami league itself feel out of favour owing to its failure in delivering good governance and social justice. All this worked in favour of military rulers. Yet, the military rulers used religion as a tool to gain legitimacy because they were not democratically elected. Since they were not socialist religious nationalism provided a platform to shape the country the way they wanted. Some scholars also argue that secularism was not properly understood in Bangladesh, before secularism to be adopted as a state policy secularization of society is also essential. Since secularization of society did not happen, secularism was not successful in Bangladesh.

When Zia came to power in Bangladesh he did away with the term secularism from the constitution and established Bangladesh Nationalist Party as an Islam oriented party that recited verses from Quran as a regular practice in their meetings. It quickly became the second largest party in the country after the Awami League. Zia took several other steps in various fields to bring Islam back to the national mainstream. The longevity of the changes he brought out to the national character of Bangladesh became clear after his assassination in 1981. His removal from power did not weaken the Islamic forces in the country and in many ways the opposite happened. Ershad put Islam even more in the centre of Bangladeshi polity and eventually ended up making Islam the state religion of Bangladesh in 1988. He even brought back the Jamaat-I-Islami, an organisation which

had supported Pakistan against the Bengali nationalists during the liberation war. Most of its leaders had fled to West Pakistan after 1971 but they were rehabilitated under Ershad and Islam became a political factor that cannot be discounted. After the fall of Ershad regime the polity of Bangladesh had become completely communalized as all the parties in elections were competing with each other to show that they were pro Islam. The Communist Party was said to have held religious gatherings in its office. Such was the impact of the Islamisation of Bangladeshi society from 1975 to 1990 that its effect has become widespread and deeply ingrained in the Bangladeshi polity.

The Fifth Chapter of the thesis titled “Role of Religion in the Political Development in Bangladesh during democratic era” looks at the role of political parties in mixing religion with politics in Bangladesh. The Chapter begins with highlighting the three distinct phases of party politics in Bangladesh, starting with the evolution of Awami League and its preponderance over politics in Bangladesh. The First phase can be seen as the dominance of Awami League in Bangladesh. From 1972 to 1975, Awami League enjoyed predominant role in politics of Bangladesh. The formation of BAKSAL, one party system, had permitted only Awami League to spread across the country. Many reasons can be attributed to its success but the reason that it was the party that led to independence of Bangladesh remained prime most. The opposition was weak, friable and worse seen as conspirators and traitors to cause of Independence. This was initial phase, slowly and gradually, sentiments started emerging that Awami League was a party antithetical to Islamic cause. Coupled with that, the poor governance and economic mismanagement further tainted Awami League’s credentials. To deal with the opposition in 1975, the Awami League high command brought fourth amendment, which further put many radical changes and made de facto one party system into a de jure one party system.

The second phase which lasted from 1975 to 1990 saw two military rules and a veritable butchery of democratic institutions. Major General Ziaur Rehman and Mohammad Ershad ruled from 1975 to 1981 and 1982 to 1990 respectively. Their regimes were dominated by the presence of military personnel, both retired or serving in government

posts. While, elections were held to secure political legitimacy of the military rulers; but they were mostly farcical in nature.

The Third Phase from 1991 to present is marked by bitter rivalry between Awami League and BNP . This section deals with this rivalry and gives a detailed account of the same. The chapter then moves forward to appraise about the role of religion in Democratic Era in Bangladesh. Democracy is a game of numbers and for sake of pragmatism parties adopt measures that may not be beneficial in the long run. To secure power Awami league formed alliances with Jamaat and conceded to its ideology even if partially. Soon, liberals like NGO's, university professors, and minorities came under attack of organizations like Ahle-Hadith. This trend of Islamisation was checked to a small degree by coming of power of Awami League in 1996. The passing of the fifteenth Amendment marks a historic step in Bangladeshi politics. It is the first time since 1977 the constitution became more secularized instead of vice versa.

Having discussed the role of religion in Bangladesh, the chapter then moves on to discuss the ideologies of four major political parties of Bangladesh. The four main political parties in Bangladesh during the democratic era have been the Awami League, the BNP, the Jatiya and the Jamaat. The Awami League led the struggle for independence from West Pakistan and describes itself as a 'pro-liberation force' in Bangladesh politics. It claims itself to be based on founding principles of nationalism, democracy, secularism and socialism. Awami League has shown a strong commitment to these principles while maintaining a pragmatic approach. Alliance with jamaat in 1996 and passing of fifteenth amendment, as argued earlier are case in point. The Awami League also maintained a close relationship with India despite the fact that India is seen by some conservative sections of Bangladeshi society as a Hindu country.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party identifies Bangladeshi Nationalism, democracy, free market economy and teaching of Islam as the core principles of the party. The party pitted Bangladeshi Nationalism which was a territorial claim with more Islamic complexion than Bengali complexion. Ironically, even though BNP was formed by a military ruler

who filled his government with army officer during his rule, since the mid-1980s the party has been active proponent of democracy and was the first political party to come to power in 1991 through free and fair elections. The party has been opposing secularism consistently and it was indeed its founder President Zia who removed secularism from the constitution of Bangladesh in 1977. It was he who also allowed the rehabilitation of religion centric political parties in Bangladesh. This tacit alliance with Islamic forces in the country became formal with the coming to existence of the Four Party Alliance in 2001 in which BNP was in alliance with the Jamaat.

As noted earlier, this enabled extremist forces in the country to operate with impunity and a series of terror attacks across the country jolted the consciousness of the country. While the BNP led government eventually did take some actions to curb extremists, it was perceived to be too little, too late.

The Jatiya party was created by Ershad after he secured power through savvy political maneuvering after the assassination of Zia in a military coup in 1981 and its key ideological principles include Bangladeshi nationalism, Islamic ideology and economic emancipation. In many ways, the Jatiya Party is not dissimilar to BNP in its ideology. In fact, it was the Jatiya party led government which made Islam as the state religion by passing the eighth amendment to the constitution in 1988 and its leader, Ershad was publicly very enthusiastic about making Bangladesh an Islamic state.

The Jamaat-i-Islami was founded in 1941 with an express objective to establish an Islamic state and Islamic society. It explicitly rejects secularism, socialism and nationalism as it sees all of them as contradictory to its objective of establishing an Islamic state. Since these three principles were fundamental elements of the 1972 constitution, the Jamaat was directly opposed to the core aspects of the first constitution of the independent state and thus it was no wonder that it got banned by the Mujibur Rahman government. As noted earlier, it got eventually rehabilitated under the military rule and its commitment to Islamic principles remain intact. Thus, the chapter concludes with a detailed perusal of ideologies of political parties present in Bangladesh.

The sixth Chapter is titled “Role of External Factors in the Growth of Communal Politics in Bangladesh”. The chapter begins by exploring Bangladesh’s relations with Muslim

world. Bangladesh was formed in trying circumstances. Contingencies of the moment dictated Bangladesh to have amicable relations with the Muslim world. However, since Bangladesh was formed on the basis of linguistic nationalism as opposed to religious nationalism, many West Asian countries did not recognize Bangladesh after its formation. Even during the liberation war many West Asian countries either remained neutral or sided with Pakistan. Moreover, Since Bangladesh was formed with the support of a secular India and the initial constitution of Bangladesh was secular in nature, many West Asian Muslim countries saw Bangladesh with suspicion. Nevertheless, Bangladesh was in dire need to maintain good relations with these countries for many reasons, Firstly, favourable perspective of these countries would have meant the free flow of petro dollars to Bangladesh which was in critical need of capital for its nascent economy.

Further, the massive hike in oil prices during first gulf war meant that the nation had to be dependent on these countries for cheaper oil import. To make situation worse, aid from western countries was also slackening due to global recession. Thus, it was extremely important for Bangladesh to forge strong ties with the nations of West Asia. Secondly, Bangladesh also felt that good relations with Islamic countries would help it to solve many irritants between Bangladesh and Pakistan as these Islamic countries held a good influence on Pakistani politics. Thirdly good relations with these nations would mean that Bangladesh would get better acknowledgement in world affairs, and it would no more remain a pariah in Islamic world. It would also ensure that the Bangladesh would get membership in Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Fourthly, these countries could also become an employment arena for Bangladesh population and help Bangladesh earn remittances. Lastly, domestic pressure from the conservatives in Bangladesh's society cannot be ruled out in influencing Bangladesh's proclivity to West Asian countries.

The Chapter then goes on to study the gradual Islamisation of Bangladeshi society in two broad phases. The first phase was not so intense but the second phase coincided with the rise of Islamic consciousness worldwide and therefore it was more impactful. After coming to power of military regime in Bangladesh the constitution was changed and

given Islamic colour. Zia Ur Rahman specifically wanted to institutionalize political Islam in Bangladesh.

After his assumption of power in early November 1975, Zia made sincere efforts to establish and maintain deeper relations with Muslim countries. This was especially true with respect to Saudi Arabia. Zia, having gained the ruling position through a coup, thought that recognition by Muslim countries would give him legitimacy which was necessary and essential for the military regime, for reasons of both domestic and external legitimacy. Zia wanted to establish Bangladesh as a prestigious member of the Islamic community who was accepted by other Muslim countries

Thus, one of the reasons, Zia chose to Islamise his government was to improve political relations with Muslim countries. As a result, under the regime of Zia-ur-Rahman, necessary legal and administrative changes were brought in the constitution.

The chapter then goes on to highlight the various theories that scholars have given on the issue of rise of communalism in Bangladesh. It is an interesting perusal of various authors like on nationalism and rise of Political Islam in Bangladesh. Interactions of multiple factors like geography, culture, technology etc., all played a part in the formation of identities, especially modern nation-state identities. This has to be kept in mind while discussing the rise of political Islam in Bangladesh. The chapter looks at the rise of identity politics in Bangladesh from various vantage points. The chapter conveys that identities are crucial for survival of the state and strong identity bonds are stable and coherent. States that do not have strong identity bonding tend to be unstable and prone to civil strife.

The chapter then goes on to elucidate how transnational identities transcend boundaries of states. Increased migration between countries due to economic push and pull factors have led to the states becoming open. Further, Globalisation has led to general erosion of small territorial cultures. Thus, it is not wrong to say that it was expected that globalisation will result in a rapid loss of cultural diversity and will lead to a consolidation of a dominant identity. This is a huge concern for many who see it as a kind of cultural imperialism which threatens local cultures and identities. Scholars have argued that because of globalisation and rapid technological changes in the last two decades,

there has been a ‘de-territorialisation’ of culture which is fuelling the formation of transnational identities that are not tied to or by any geographical location. What this means is that, globalisation has enabled parochial cultural identities to persist and even thrive across the world. This is because, since culture has become deterritorialized, people who perceive themselves as belonging to the same culture even if living in different geographical places are able to maintain their cultural identities and thus preserve their identities.

The chapter also highlights the rise of consciousness of “othering” in case of India and Bangladesh. Thus, the emergence of a threatening ‘other’ can have a radicalising effect on collective identities leading to ‘grouping’. Thus, India began to be seen as an ‘enemy’ or at the least the ‘other’ which meant Bangladesh had to define its identity based on Islam as opposed to a larger Hindu India. While Bangladesh during her pre-independence days saw Pakistan as the ‘other’ and thereby defined her identity as ‘Bengali’ as opposed to Islamic, post-independence with the threat of Pakistan subsiding and the perceived threat of a Hindu India rising, began to see India as the ‘other’, thereby defining herself as an Islamic country under successive military dictatorships. This has alienated her domestic Hindu population who were also seen as ‘other’ as their nationalism was based on religion.

The decade of 1970’s witnessed a period of Islamic resurgence across the world. With the failure of Arab nationalism after the humiliating defeat of Arab nations in the 1967 War with Israel, scholars have argued that Islam began to rise in importance in the Middle East as well as across the world. Thus, by many accounts, modern Islamic revival began in the 1970s, coinciding with the decline of Arab nationalism. This was inevitable because Arabs constitute a significant and influential percentage of global Muslims and their refocus on Islam during this period rather than their ethnicity after the failure of Arab nationalism, inevitably spread to Muslims of other parts of the world as well. This revival affected Muslims across the world in different ways and thus naturally affected Bangladeshi Muslims as well and can be argued that it strengthened their Muslim identities. Many other instances like the Islamic revolution in Iran, First Gulf War, Cold War politics and end of ideological war, beginning of war on terror and “Islamophobia” all worked together in concretisation of religious consciousness in Bangladesh.

Thus when we look at the evolution of communal politics in Bangladesh we can discern two major currents; first is the syncretic and inclusive current and second is the communal and exclusivist current. The split of Indian subcontinent in 1947 culminated from the spiralling of exclusivist communal trends in politics, however the second split in 1971 was a manifestation of deep desire among the masses for restoring pride in their ethno cultural linguistic identity and it was purely secular and heterogeneous. It was a desire long unfulfilled of a large section Bangladeshi people to cherish their collective cultural consciousness which had a long historical trajectory and yet was being stifled by West Pakistan.

Thus, it led to the inevitable struggle for liberation in Bangladesh and after a long protracted war which resulted in millions of death and unfathomable destruction finally the putatively weak community came out of draconian socio cultural and economic subjugation of West Pakistan. The year 1971 marks a threshold in world history when a combined might of people stood up against dictatorial regime to prove that religion alone cannot be a pivot around which a nation has to be formed, respect for diversity is essential for a nation's survival. Unfortunately, the recalcitrant monster of communalism reared its ugly head again after the military takeover. It is notable that although Awami league represents secular and syncretic culture of Bangladesh which is rooted in the pride of Bengali culture; Bangladesh Nationalist Party and other such parties based on exclusivist politics, for their electoral benefits are determined to tear apart the secular fabric of Bangladesh and give encouragement to radical elements in the society. The roots of radicalism in Bangladesh are not new but can be traced from colonial period which reached its zenith during 1905 to 1947. Onus also lies on divisive politics unleashed by British colonialists and other socio political and economic circumstances in Bengal that gave rise to communalism in the delta.

Unfortunately, communal forces are still working in Bangladesh and unless Bangladesh government and society does not work symbiotically to fight it the future might be bleak. The recent killings of bloggers, riots against minorities and radicalisation of educated and well to do youth are pointing towards a gloomy future. This is a war of mindset and ideas and it can be countered only with support of another set of ideas. In this light, history becomes an important tool to understand present politics as much of the present

communalisation is related to the events that transpired in pre independence colonial Bengal. Understanding of history is very crucial because it is said by the wise that ‘those who forget their history are condemned to repeat it’.

In the end, it can be hoped Rabindranth Tagore’s beautiful lines “Amar Sonar Bangla” should win over the divisive politics that is threatening Bangladesh’s peace and prosperity and for that the government and society have to take pledge to root out communalism from Bangladesh.

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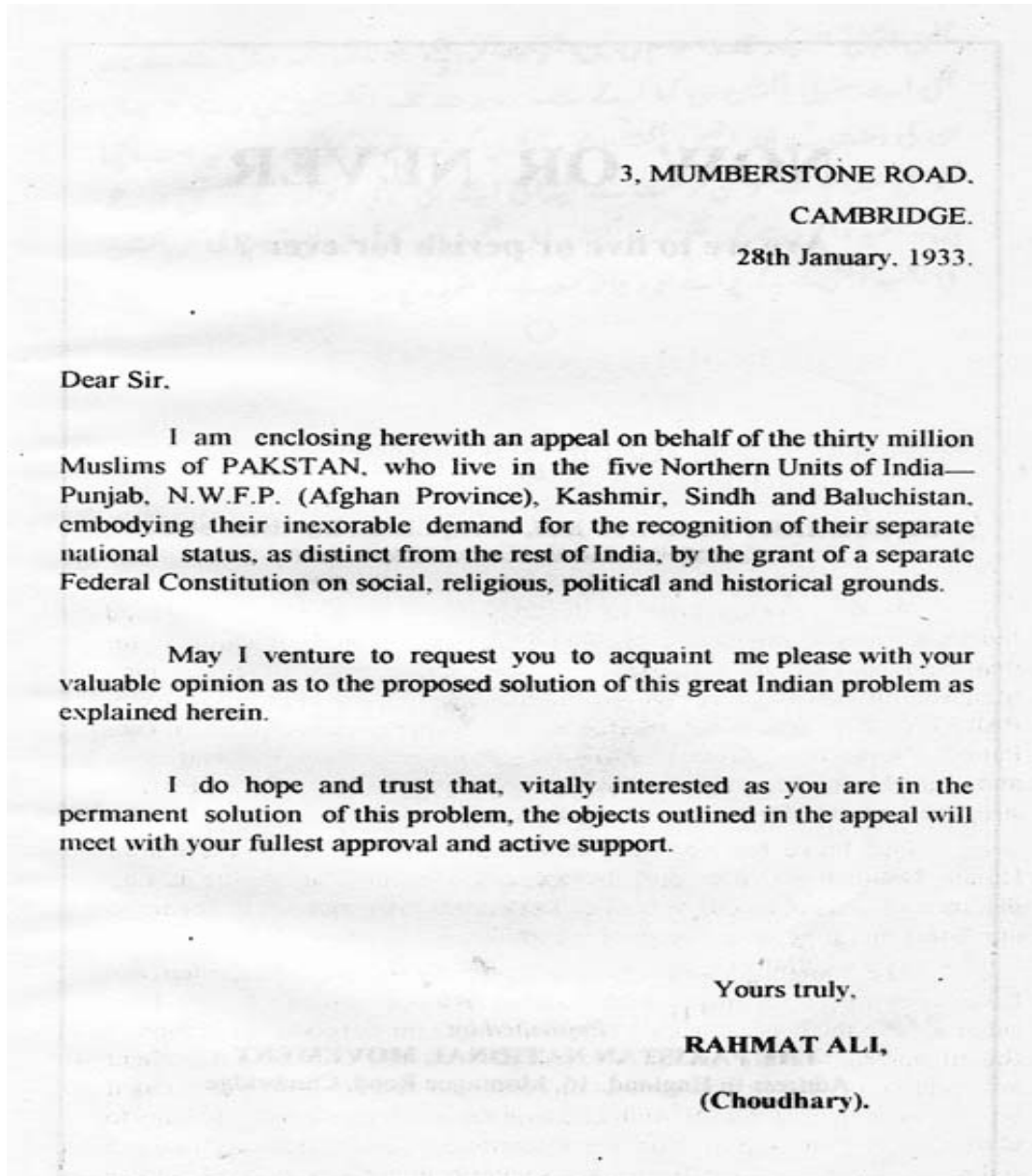
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Appendix

Appendix 1: Choudhary Rahmat's Ali Pamphlet "Now or Never"



Source: <http://www.chaudhryrahmatiali.com/now%20or%20never/index.htm>

Appendix 3: Leader of rebels in East Pakistan reported seized, New York Times, 27 March 1971.

New York Times LATE CITY EDITION
Weather: Mostly sunny, cold today; clear tonight. Fair, mild tomorrow. Temp. range: today 32-43; Friday 30-36. Full U.S. report on Page 36.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MARCH 27, 1971 15 CENTS

LEADER OF REBELS IN EAST PAKISTAN REPORTED SEIZED

Sheik Mujib Arrested After a Broadcast Proclaiming Region's Independence

DACCA CURFEW EASED

Troops Said to Be Gaining in Fighting in Cities — Heavy Losses Seen

By The Associated Press

NEW DELHI, Saturday, March 27—The Pakistan radio announced today that Sheik Mujibur Rahman, the nationalist leader of East Pakistan, had been arrested only hours after he had proclaimed his region independent and after open rebellion was reported in several cities in the East.

In a broadcast monitored here, the radio, quoting what it described as an official statement made in Dacca, said that Sheik Mujib was arrested early this morning at his home in Dacca.

The 51-year-old leader of the Awami League, the dominant party in the East, was arrested as the West Pakistan-dominated army sought to reassert control in the East.

Reports reaching neighboring India indicated the army was gaining the upper hand in the battle that erupted yesterday between the army and East Pakistani citizens and militiamen.

Curfew Reported Lifted

The Pakistan radio reported that a 24-hour curfew imposed in Dacca yesterday was lifted for an nine-hour period this morning, indicating that the army was in control of the city.

United News of India said in a dispatch from the Indian border town of Agartala that the army had occupied the headquarters of the East Pakistani Rifles, the provincial militia, in Comilla district, after a prolonged fight.

The army was also reported to have occupied police stations in East Pakistan's Comilla and Noakhali districts. The agency said there were heavy casualties on both sides.



Associated Press
BEFORE OUTBURST: Sheik Mujibur Rahman on March 7 in Dacca. Flag is that of rebellious group he leads.

The New York Times
PAKISTAN'S PRESIDENT, Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, at a news session in his Islamabad home some time ago.

Appendix 4: Starvation threat to East Pakistan, Sunday Telegraph, 4 April 1971.



Source: http://www.docstrangelove.com/uploads/1971/foreign/19710404_st_starvation_threat_to_e_pakistan.pdf

Appendix 5: The Grim Fight For 'Bangladesh, The New York Times, 14 October 1971.

The World

East Pakistan:

The Grim Fight for 'Bangla Desh'

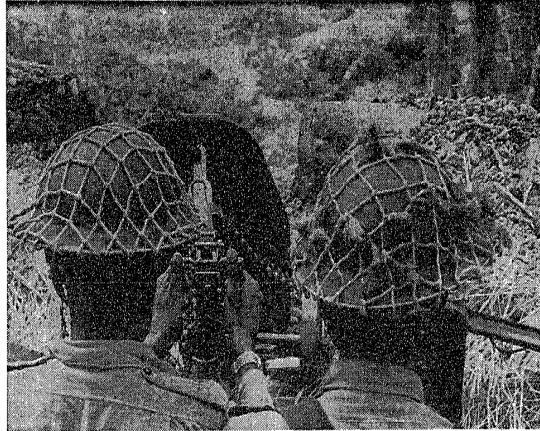
NEW DELHI—"If the Vietcong had been doing this well after six months, they would have considered it a remarkably good start." The foreign diplomat was talking about the Mukti Bahini (Liberation Forces), the Bengali insurgents who are fighting for the independence of East Pakistan, which they have named Bangla Desh (Bengal nation).

From a disorganized, confused band of freedom fighters that moved into action when the Pakistani Army struck in late March to try to crush the Bengali autonomy movement, the Mukti Bahini has become, if not a well-oiled fighting machine, at least a reasonably coordinated and more than reasonably effective guerrilla force.

India has helped with arms, training and sanctuary—and, clearly, without the Indian aid, the level of insurgent activity could never have reached its present pitch. But the men and the motivation are East Pakistani, and, even if they were on their own, it is doubtful whether the Bengali resistance could be totally crushed by the troops from West Pakistan.

An estimated 80,000 West Pakistani troops have been moved into East Pakistan, plus several thousand West Pakistani police. They have hastily trained about 10,000 non-Bengali home guards known as Razakars.

Estimates of the number of Mukti Bahini pitted against this force range from 50,000 to 100,000; foreign observers think the lower number is probably the more realistic. The hard core of professional soldiers, and some of these are not high-



Monument Anti-Force Police Officer
Guerrilla fighters of the Mukti Bahini (Liberation Forces) of East Pakistan lie in ambush in their war against the Pakistan Army.

ly trained, consists of no more than 15,000—Bengalis who defected to the Bangla Desh movement from the East Pakistan Rifles, a paramilitary border patrol force, and the East Bengal Regiment, a better-trained regular army unit. In addition, an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 new recruits—mostly between the ages of 18 to 25 and mostly college students but including many village boys—have been trained.

Many Bangla Desh training camps and base areas are on the Indian side of the border, but a growing number of the Bengali troops have been operating from "liberated areas" just inside East Pakistan. These areas, though not large, have been expanding.

Some of the new recruits are being trained as regular troops and others as guerrillas. The latter adopt village dress and mix with the local population. There are many more volunteers, however, than the Mukti Bahini can absorb, primarily because of a shortage of weap-

ons, and a large number of boys simply mark time after getting their rudimentary basic training—which is hardly more than physical exercises and elementary driving.

The Mukti Bahini's weapons are a motley lot. There are some Sten guns, light machine guns and other automatic weapons, and many ancient single-shot rifles. The heaviest weapons in the arsenal are light and medium mortars—and not too many of them. These arms are of varying makes and age, some captured from the Pakistani troops and some—though far from enough, the Bengalis complain—provided by the Indians.

Yet with all these problems, the Mukti Bahini has effectively harassed the Pakistani troops and some—though far from enough, the Bengalis complain—provided by the Indians. Yet with all these problems, the Mukti Bahini has effectively harassed the Pakistani Army, pinned it down in some areas and stretched its lines thin all over East Pakistan. Reliable reports indicate that Pakistani casualties are increasing. The guerrillas also continue to assassinate members of the local "peace committees," made up of non-Bengalis and

other collaborators assigned to carry out administration of areas under army occupation. No figures are available on guerrilla casualties, but they are believed to be low. However, with every guerrilla raid, the army burns hamlets and kills villagers in reprisal.

The guerrillas' greatest success has been their ability to reduce the army's mobility by keeping East Pakistan's communications system in chaos—blowing up bridges, roads and rail lines. Guerrilla frogmen have also damaged or sunk at least a dozen seagoing ships—including several foreign ones—at anchor in harbors. Seven British shipping lines have suspended all traffic to East Pakistan.

Although the Mukti Bahini is much better coordinated than it was six months ago, it is not a monolithic fighting force. Splinter groups have started operations on their own, including some pro-Peking Communists. One group, led by non-Communist militant students from Dacca, is said to

stan, where the Bangla Desh Government, now based in Calcutta, could be established. The Indians have so far balked, because they feel this would immediately provoke a general war with Pakistan. The Bangla Desh leaders argue that for all the effectiveness of guerrilla warfare, its all-out nature will eventually tap the independence movement of popular support because of the Pakistani reprisals against the civilian population.

"We will lose the sympathy of many villagers," said one high Bengali officer. "They tell us, 'if you want our support, you must come in full force and stay and protect us.'"

—SYDNEY H. SCHANBERG

The New York Times

Published: October 17, 1971
Copyright © The New York Times

Source:

http://www.docstrangelove.com/uploads/1971/foreign/19711017_nyt_the_grim_fight_for_bangla_desh.pdf

Appendix-6: The Contributors in The Bangla Language Movement, 26 February 1952

Dr Mohd Shahidullah (10 July 1885-13 July 1969). Professor	Maulana Bhasani (1885-1976). Politics
Dhirendra Nath Datta (1897- 1971). Lawyer and politician	Dr Quazi Motahar Hossain (1897-1981). Professor
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Father of Bangladesh)	Maulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish (1900-85).Politics
Abul Hashim (1905-74). Politics	Ataur Rahman Khan (1905). Law and politics
Abdus Salam (1910-77). Journalism	Abul Kalam Samsuddin (1897-1978) Journalism
Tofajjal Hossain Manik Miah (1911-69). Journalism	Osman Ali (1900-71) Daudkandi, Comilla) Business & Politics
Shaokat Osman (1917-) Huglee, India). Novelist	Sikandar Abu Jafor (1919-75, Tetulia, Khulna): Journalist & poet
Mohd Abdul Hai (1919-69, Murshidabad, India). Teaching	Samsul Huq (1920-64, Tangail): Politics
Mohd Abul Kashem (1920- Debendi, Chittagong)	Golam Maola (1921-67, Naria, Shariatpur). Medicine and Politics
Abdus Samad Azad (1922, Bhuakhali, Sunamganj). Politics	Kalim Sharafi (1924-): Singer
Mohd Toaha(1922-87) Kushakhali, Laksmipur: Politics	Kamruddin Hossain Shahud (1925- Janglibari, Kishoreganj). Teaching
Munier Chaudhury (1925-71, Dhaka). Professor, Playwright.	Tajuddin Ahmed (1925-75), Kapasia, Dhaka): The leader of the liberation war.
Sardar Fazlul Karim (1925- Barisal). Professor	Shahidullah Kaiser (1926-71, Noakhali). Journalist and Novelist
Mofazzal Haider Chowdhury (1926-71). Professor	Mohd Sultan (1926-83, Boda, Panchagar): Politics & Business
SA Bari AT (1927-87, Munshipara, Dinajpur). Politics and law.	Mustafa Nurul Islam (1927, Nisindara, Bogra). Teaching
Kazi Golam Mahbub (1927, Barisal): Politics & law	Rafiq Uddin Bhuiyan (1928, Merenga, Mymensing).Politics
Badrul Alam (1927-80, Sherpur). Medicine	Mosharaf Hossain Chowdhury (1927, Tangail). Business
Meer Hossain Ahmed (1927, Dhaka). Professional	Mahbub Alam Chowdhury (1927, Chittagong): Industrialist
Ataur Rahman (1927, Bogra): Teaching	Abdul Momen (1928, Mohanganj, Netrokona). Politics & law
Abdul Matin (1928, Shailjana, Pabna).	Fakir Shahabuddin (1927-89, Kapasia,

Annexure

Politics	Dhaka). Politics & law
Fazle Lohani (1928-85, Kolkata, India). Journalist & TV Presenter	Gaziul Huq (1928). Lawyer
MA Ajmal Hossain Bulbul (1928, Sirajganj). Medicine	KG Mustafa: (1928, Kuripara, Sirajganj). Journalism
Zillur Rahman (1929, Kishoreganj) Politics & law	Abdul Gafur(1929-). Journalism
Ahmed Rafiq (1929, Comilla). Medicine	Ali Ahad (1929, Comilla). Politics
Shamsur Rahman (1929, Mahuttuli, Dhaka). Poet	Usha Bepari (1929, Rajbari). Nursing
Abdullah al Muti (1930, Pabna). Scientist	Zulmat Ali Khan (1930,Mymensing). Politics & law
Mohd Ali Asgar (1930) Comilla. Medicine	Habibur Rahman Shelly (1930) Murshidabad, India). Judge
Abdul Latif (1930,Raipasha, Barisal). Singer and musician	Ishtiaq Ahmed (1930, Kolkata, India)
MR Akhtar Mukul (1930) Bogra. Journalism	Anwarul Huq Khan (1930,Basirhat, India). Public service
Bahauddin Chowdhury (1930, Armanitola, Dhaka):Journalism	Altaf Mahmud (1930,Muladi, Barisal) Singer and musician
Sufia Karim (1930, Pabna). Teacher	Momtaz Begum (1930,Narayanganj). Teacher
Hasan Hafizur Rahman (1931, Jamalpur). Journalist and poet	Safia Khatun (1931, Kolkata, India). Teaching
Nizamul Huq (1931, Chhagalnaiya, Feni). Dance teacher	Aminul Islam (1931,Totia, Dhaka) Teacher, Arts College
Sadek Khan (1931,Munsiganj). Journalism	Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury (1932, Ulania, Barisal). Journalism
Murtaza Bashir (1932, Ramna, Dhaka). Teacher, Arts College	MN Nurul Alam (1932, Rajshahi). Lawyer
Sufia Ahammad (1932, Dhaka). Teacher	Sayeed Atikullah (1933, Tangail).Journalism
Halima Khatun (1933, Bagerhat). Lecturer	Abu Zafar Obaidullah (1934,Barisal). professional and poet
Zahir Ryhan (1935, Noakhali): Film director	Syed Samsul Huq (1935,Rangpur). Novelist, poet
Golam Murtaza (1936, Dhaka). Business	Mohd Mokammel (1937, Bhola). Bureaucrat
Anisuz Zaman (1937, Kolkata, India). Professor	
Dinajpur	
Dabirul Islam	Abdur rahman Chowdhury
Nurul Huda	Kader Bakhs

Annexure

Yusuf Ali

Mohd Farhad

Bogra

Syed Nawab Ali
Mojaharul Islam Abu
Fazlur Rahman
Mujibur Rahman Akkelpuri

Abdul Matin
Jalal Uddin Akbar
Saleha (Rani)

Chittagong

Kabial Ramesh Sheel
Principal Rafiq
Sucharit Chowdhury

Ahsab Uddin Ahmed
Pulin Dey

Pabna

M Mansur Ali
Mahbubur Rahman
Prorsad Ray

Amzad Hossain
Aminul Islam
Kamal Lohani

Dhaka

Prof Mozaffar Ahmed Chowdhury
Khairat Hossain
Ranesh Dasgupta
Wadud Patwari
Abdul Aalim
Imadullah Lala
ATM Shamsul Huq
Borhan Uddin Khan Jahangir
MA Muhit
Farman Ullah
Sirajul Islam
Rafiqul Islam

Prof Ajit Guha
Ahmmad Ali
Satyen Sen
Amulya Kanchan Ray
Alauddin al Azad
Momin Talukdar
Rowshan Ara Bacchu
Abdul Gani Hajari
Ibrahim Taha
Anis Chowdhury
MA Mukit
Prof AT Latif

Source:

http://mukto-mona.net/new_site/mukto-mona/bengali_heritage/bangla_language_movement.htm