

**THE POLITICISATION OF THE ARMED
FORCES IN BANGLADESH (1971-75)**

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RUPAK BHATTACHARYYA

**SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES DIVISION
CENTRE FOR SOUTH, CENTRAL, SOUTHEAST
ASIAN AND SOUTHWEST PACIFIC STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110 067**

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जवाहरलाल नेहरु विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110067

CENTRE FOR SOUTH, CENTRAL, SOUTHEAST
ASIAN AND SOUTHWEST PACIFIC STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled, **THE POLITICISATION OF THE ARMED FORCES IN BANGLADESH (1971-75)**, submitted by **Rupak Bhattacharyya** in partial fulfilment of the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy (M.Phil)** of this University, is his original work and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation. This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or of any other University.

M. Dubey

PROF. MUCHKUND DUBEY

(SUPERVISOR)

Kalim Bahadur

PROF. KALIM BAHADUR

(CHAIRPERSON)

TO MY SISTER

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PREFACE

Increasing military participation in politics in the post-colonial period has been a pervasive phenomenon among the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Military's entry into the political arena has significantly altered the patterns of civil-military relations in these countries. The Western democratic model of the subordination of the armed forces to political authority has been dispensed with in many newly decolonised states.

The expansion of military's political role has been overwhelming since 1960's in the third world in general and in South Asia, in Pakistan and Bangladesh in particular. Among all the newly independent states in the developing world, Bangladesh has perhaps witnessed the most numerous and dramatic military upheavals in terms of bloody coups, radical uprisings among the soldiers and feuds among the armed service personnel. In 1975, the three and a half years old civilian rule was abruptly ended by the brutal killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the national by a group of misguided junior army officers. This was followed by a chain of coups and counter coups within the military. Subsequently, by the end of 1975, the armed forces emerged as the ruling elite in Bangladesh.

This development acquires special significance because the very emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state was the result of a strong politico-military struggle for the establishment of democracy in the military-bureaucracy ruled Pakistan.

The purpose of the study of the politicisation of the Bangladesh armed forces during the period 1971-75 is to: analyse in detail the factors responsible for the politicisation of the Bangladesh and armed forces; examine the factors which motivated the military overthrow the civilian government of Sheikh Mujib and the counter coups that followed thereafter; analyse the consequences of such politicisation on the political development of Bangladesh and the internal ramification within the military structure.

The study of the politicisation of the Bangladesh armed forces during 1971-75 will be divided into following five chapters:

First chapter traces the genesis of the phenomenon of politicisation among the Bangladesh armed forces by examining the historical background of the Bangladesh military and its leading role in the liberation movement and war.

Second chapter deals with the origin, composition, size, cohesiveness, skill, socio-economic background, representativeness and the political orientations of the Bangladesh armed forces in the immediate post independent period.

Third chapter examines the nature of civil-military relations during the Mujib period, mode of functioning and the performances of the Awami League regime, structural constraints of the civilian institutions and traces the forces operating behind the gradual weakening of the civilian control of the armed forces in Bangladesh.

Fourth chapter analyses the factors that motivated the military to remove to overthrow the civilian regime of Sheikh Mujib by adopting violent means and the fourth is responsible for the chain of coups the country witnessed since August 15, 1975. The chapter evaluates the role JSD played in the 'Soldiers' Uprising' of November 7, 1975.

It also examines the consequences of military intervention on the political development of Bangladesh and the internal ramification within the military structure of Bangladesh.

In the concluding chapter an effort will be made to arrange variables that contributed to politicisation of the armed forces in Bangladesh during 1971-75.

CHAPTER ONE

ROLE OF THE BANGLADESH ARMED FORCES IN THE LIBERATION MOVEMENT AND WAR

Bangladesh attained independence on December 16, 1971 after a protracted politico-military struggle against the military-bureaucracy dominated rule of Pakistan. After independence, Bangladesh opted for the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy and the armed forces were kept under civilian control. In 1975, Sheikh Mujib gave up the facade of parliamentary government and resorted to the device of a one-party system and totalitarian control. Civilian rule was, however, abruptly ended in August 1975 through a series of coups and counter coups. In November 1975, the military finally emerged as the ruling elite in Bangladesh and remained so during the next decade and a half.

There is something unique about the Bangladesh military; the higher echelons of the military not only assumed a political role but also claimed that such a role should be constitutionally guaranteed. All these indicate the high degree of politicisation of the armed forces in Bangladesh. This high level of politicisation was indeed a great motivating force for the armed forces to assume a political role in 1975.

The phenomenon of the politicisation of the armed forces of Bangladesh is not merely a post-independence development. The process of the politicisation of the Bangladesh armed forces is intimately linked with the growth and development of the

military organisation and the role it played in the British and Pakistan period. Finally, the Liberation War of 1971 also significantly contributed to this process.

Therefore, in order to trace the genesis of the phenomenon of the politicisation of the armed forces of Bangladesh, it is necessary to enquire into the historical background and origin of the armed forces of Bangladesh and the role they played in the liberation movement and war.

THE BRITISH PERIOD :

The British Indian Army which is the predecessor of the armed forces of the major South Asian States was in the beginning trained as the custodian of law and order. The organisation of the military was designed basically to promote and perpetuate colonial interests in India. However, after the uprising of 1857, The British Indian Army underwent some significant changes both in terms of organisational set up and recruitment policy. The colonial administration devised the notion of 'martial race' and began to recruit from only some ethnic groups, which they identified as inherently martial or more warlike than others.

What influenced the British to introduce such a military recruitment policy was the fact that the British felt very insecure because of the rebellious attitude of certain ethnic group in the army, particularly the Bengalees. The colonial administration

implicated the Bengal Army for its leading role in the mutiny. It was identified as 'disloyal, over- political and militarily incompetent' because of its active involvement in the mutiny. The British government thoroughly reorganised the Bengal Army since all of its regular regiments had mutinied¹.

As the nationalist movement became more organised by the end of nineteenth century, particularly after the establishment of the Indian National Congress, the colonial administration began to indoctrinate the Indian troops with an anti-political bias. Deliberate attempts were made to alienate the natives in the British Indian Army from the mainstream of national political activities. Both the organisational set up and the mantle of the officer corps were moulded in such a manner that the army could be deployed mainly to prevent internal disorder and control nationalist movements.²

This anti-people role of the colonial army did not provoke the same reaction in all parts of the sub-continent. In Bengal, this was highly resented by the people. Prof. Emajuddin Ahamed is of the opinion that among all the regions in the sub-continent, it was Bengal which underwent more hardships and oppression under an alien rule because of its longer acquaintance with the British. It was Bengal again which acquired much

¹ Golam Hossain, *Civil-Military Relations in Bangladesh : A Comparative Study* (Dhaka; Academic Publishers, 1991), p.27.

² Emazuddin Ahamed, *Military Rule and Myth of Democracy* (Dhaka : University Press Ltd., 1988), pp. 36-37

earlier a modern consciousness because of the introduction of English education, better transport and communication facilities and other socio-economic reforms. The Bengalees in civil and military services who had grown up in such an intellectually and politically exciting environment, could not perhaps distance themselves from the political activities which first broke out in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857.³

To defuse the discontent of the Indian members in the army and to meet the increasingly growing nationalist demands, the colonial administration decided to increase the number of Indians in the armed forces. This process of Indianisation of the army was very slow. However, the number of Indians was considerably increased to meet the logistical needs of World War II.

Inspite of the increase of natives in the colonial army, the number of Bengalees had never been high. This is because, the British generals highly resented the rebellious nature of the Bengalees in the army. As a result, their recruitment was more or less restricted to the technical services.

³ E. Ahamed, n.2, p.37.

In 1947, Bengal was partitioned. But the basic trends of Bengal politics continued to be the same in both parts of the post-colonial period.

PAKISTAN PERIOD :

In the immediate post-independent period, the representation of East Pakistan was extremely poor in all the three services of the Pakistan armed forces; because, prior to the independence, there was neither a single Bengalee regiment nor a cantonment in the eastern half of Pakistan as no troops were permanently stationed there by the British Government⁴. Besides, no regular Bengalee Muslim Units were formed in World War II, although over sixty thousand Bengalees had seen some service in pioneer (construction) Units⁵. The partition of the Indian sub-continent and the creation of Pakistan further reduced the number of Bengalees in the army as the non-Muslim Bengalee officers and *jawans* opted for India . Thus in 1947, East Pakistan represented only 1 p.c of the total armed forces in Pakistan.

But as the Bengalees constituted 56 p.c. of the population of Pakistan, the ruling elites of Pakistan decided to raise the first exclusively Bengalee Infantry Regiment. This

⁴ Hasan Askari Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan : 1947-86* (New Delhi : Konark Publishers, 1988), p.135.

⁵ S.P. Cohen, *The Pakistan Army* (New Delhi : Himalayan Books, 1984), p.43.

Bengal Regiment (EBR) were raised in Dhaka on February 15, 1948 and Lt.Colonel M.A.G Osmani was designated as its commander.

Shortly after independence, the Pakistani ruling elites had to face serious administrative and political problems. Besides, Pakistan also perceived threat to security from India which forced the ruling elites to pay greater attention to modernising and re-equipping the armed force. So, they decided to broaden the recruitment base of the armed forces so as to include the Bengalees. Thus the govt. adopted the policy of gradual induction of Bengalees in the military service.

Inspite of all these efforts, the Bengalee representation in Pakistan's armed forces had always been low. The representation of the number of officers from the two wings in the Pakistan armed forces in 1955 is mentioned below⁶:

⁶ See M. Choudhary, "Military Cops and Military Rule in Bangladesh", *Indian Journal of Politics*, vol.xvii, no.3-4, September-December 1983, p.105.

Services	East Pakistan	West Pakistan
Army	94	894
Navy	7	593
Air Force	60	640

East Pakistan's representation in the Pakistan armed forces in 1964 is also given below⁷:

Services	Percentage
1. Army	
a. Officers	5.0
b. J.C.O	7.4
c. Other Ranks	7.4

⁷ See Emajuddin Ahamed, *Bureaucratic Elites In Segmented Economic Growth : Bangladesh and Pakistan* (Dhaka : University Press Ltd, 1980), p.69.

2. Air Force	
a. Officers	16.0
b. Warrant Officers	17.0
c. Other Ranks	30.0
3. Navy	
a. Officers	10.0
b. Branch Officers	5.0
c. Chief Petty Officers	10.4
d. Petty Officers	17.3
e. Leading Seamen and Below	28.8

The number of Bengalees was slowly increased in the Pakistan military only after they performed well in the 1965 war against India. However, there was strong resistance within the Pakistan Army even to the gradual expansion of East Pakistan's representation in the military service. Besides, there was also considerable distaste for the quality of the Bengalee officers and other ranks.⁸

In 1968, East Pakistan had four regiments. Ten more Bengalee battalions were raised in 1968-69. In 1971, the Bengalees constituted only 5 p.c. of total armed forces

⁸ Cohen, n.5, p.43.

in Pakistan. Besides, East Pakistan had hardly any representation in higher echelons of the military. In 1970, there was only one Lieutenant-General from East Pakistan⁹.

However, inspite of the poor representation of the Bengalees in the Pakistan armed forces, the Bengalee Units were organisationally significant. Bengalees alone constituted the single class units in Pakistan Army. There was a strong pressure from a section of the military leadership to integrate the existing Bengalee battalions with the West Pakistani forces. But, the Pakistan Army leadership never could make up its mind as to whether they should be taken into full partnership or completely eliminated. As the army was ruling the country, the exclusion of Bengalees had broad political implications¹⁰.

This dilemma of the ruling military junta continued till the break up of Pakistan in 1971; the Bengalee members were not assimilated properly with the other units in the Pakistan armed forces. This resulted in an inter-ethnic hostility in the Pakistan armed forces.

The policy measures introduced by the Punjabi-dominated ruling clique over the years only widened such differences between the Bengalee and the West Pakistanis in the armed forces. The Pakistani military elites continued with the British concept of 'martial

⁹ E. Ahamed, n.2, pp.39-40.

¹⁰ Cohen, n.5, p.34.

race' and most of the commanding ranks were held by the West Pakistanis. Bengalees were looked down upon by the West Pakistani ruling elites and were alleged to be physically unfit for military service, while the Britishers had discriminated against them by calling them over-political and non-martial.¹¹

Thus under-representation and ethnic segregation made the Bengalee military personnel conscious of regional imbalance in the Pakistan armed forces. Besides the Bengalees also felt that they were discriminated in terms of pay, promotion and other privileges. These corporate grievances made the Bengalee officers vocal against the West Pakistani ruling elites. Furthermore, while the civil-military bureaucracy complex was well entrenched into the levers of power in Pakistan, the participation of the Bengalees in the political decision-making was meagre. Under such circumstances, the Bengalees military officers not only agitated for the protection of their corporate interests, but also sympathised with East Pakistanis' struggle for greater economic and political share.

Throughout the 1960's, the Bengalees became more vocal against regional imbalances. In the absence of normal democratic functioning in Pakistan, such regional conflicts were diverted from the usual political channels of expressions and deflected into bureaucracy. As a result, the bureaucracy became the arena for covert forms of political struggle. The limitations put on the political process and the absence of a Bengalee ruling

¹¹ Hossain, n.1, p.32.

elite on the over-all Pakistan scene, left the Bengalee bureaucrats, both civil and military as the only group representing East Pakistan at the national decision-making level. As such the Bengalee bureaucrats, both civil and military, though not in high substantive positions, became by default the chief spokesmen for Bengalee interests.¹²

Thus, under the shadow of the military rule in Pakistan, the process of the politicisation of the Bengalee personnel in the Pakistan armed forces already reached a fairly advanced stage. The prominent Bangladeshis implicated in the Agartala-Conspiracy case for their alleged involvement in dismembering Pakistan with the help of India, included a number of civil servants and military officers, apart from politicians. This indicates the extent of the politicisation of the Bengalee civil and military bureaucracy and their connection with the nationalist leaders of East Pakistan.

Many Bengalees in the civil and military bureaucracy used to maintain close contact with the Awami League leadership. Sometimes they provided secret information to Sheikh Mujib which contributed greatly to the autonomy movement.

In the East Bengal Regiment, the prominent officers like Col.Mazumdar, the Commandant of 10 East Bengal Regimental Centre at Chittagong and Col.(Retd.) M.A.G. Osmani, were known for their 'association' with Sheikh Mujib. They also

¹² E. Ahamed, n.2, p.41.

enjoyed some degree of influence over the rank and file of the Bengalee members of the Pakistan armed forces. In the words of a former Pakistani military officer, Col. Mazumdar was "fired with Bengalee nationalism. He had direct contacts with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, which gave him a rare combination of pride and prejudice : pride in Bengalee nationalism, prejudice against West Pakistan."¹³

The higher echelons of the Pakistani military were not totally unaware of the possible impact of these influential persons over the Bengalee soldiers. But at the same time, they also realised that the EBR personnel who were stationed in East Pakistan could not be made totally immune from the ongoing political movements. Furthermore, in the 1970 elections, the result of the postal ballot indicated that the East Pakistan Rifles (EPR), EBR and police overwhelmingly voted for the Awami League¹⁴.

When Sheikh Mujib gave the call for 'total non-co-operation' with the Pakistani government on March 1, 1971 and finally the emancipation from the Pakistani rule in East Pakistan on March 7, 1971, the Bengalee population responded overwhelmingly. The civil administration in East Pakistan was virtually paralysed. It was also noticed that the men and officers of EBR and EPR in different cantonments were in a rebellions

¹³ Saddiq Salik, *Witness to Surrender* (Karachi : Oxford Press, 1977), p.11.

¹⁴ Hossain, n.1, p.37.

mood. Major K.M. Safiullah, who was then the second-in-command of 2 EBR, has mentioned :

"We eagerly awaited a definite direction from Sheikh Mujib through his historic speech of March 7.

.... The entire nation responded to his call for launching the non-co-operation movement. Amidst an atmosphere of uncertainty, fear and suffocation, my boys maintained a high morale and made a discreet vote to join the movement."¹⁵

Major Ziaur Rahman, who was then second-in-command of 8 East Bengal Regiment at Chittagong also pointed out, "Mujib's historic declaration of 7 March acted as green signal to us as it gave the final touch to our plan."¹⁶

By Early 1971, 6 battalions of EBR were stationed in East Pakistan and the West Pakistani military leaders feared that the Bengalee's could rebel at any time. But

¹⁵ Quoted from Maj.Gen.(Retd.) K.M. Safiullah's, *Bangladesh At War* (Dhaka : Academic Publishers, 1989), pp.19-20. Text of Mujib's historic March 7, 1971 speech is given in Appendix A, pp. 82 - 85.

¹⁶ Translated and quoted from Ziaur Rahman's "Ekti Jatir Janma" (The Birth of a Nation) in Ruhul Amin. ed., *Ziaur Rahman Smarak Grantha* (Ziaur Rahman Memorial Volume) (Dhaka : Hira Book Mart, 1991), p.27.

"everything was masked by the heavy crust of army discipline. The Awami League and its sympathizers had the whole year to erode that crust."¹⁷

All this evidence makes it clear that the EPR and EBR had always maintained a strong sub-national Bengalee identity. It was the Bengalee identity that eventually motivated the military personnel to join the liberation struggle of Bangladesh.

THE BANGLADESH ARMED FORCES'

ROLE IN THE LIBERATION WAR:

With the break-down of the Yahya-Mujib-Bhutto talks, the Pakistan Army launched its brutal attack on the night of March 25 in Dhaka. The military crackdown was aimed at exterminating among others, the EBR, EPR and the police. This was done with a definite purpose. The Bengalee members of the armed forces were the only trained cadres in East Pakistan who were supposed to offer resistance to the military regime¹⁸,

¹⁷ Salik, n.13, p.13.

¹⁸ Capt.(Retd.) S.K. Garg, *Spotlight : Fighters of Bangladesh* (New Delhi : Allied Publishers, 1984), p.116.

hence their extermination became a priority task. At that time total number of armed Bengalees serving in the Pakistan armed forces in East Pakistan was about seventy thousand composed of approximately six thousand regulars in EBR's 6 battalions, about twelve-fifteen thousand members of EPR ——— a para-military force defending the borders. The rest fifty thousand were lightly armed civilian force like the police and national guards like *Mujahids* and *Ansars*.¹⁹

After the atrocities on the fateful night of March 25, the Bengalee members of the Pakistan armed forces revolted against the military *junta* and joined the Liberation War. The political motivation of the EBR and EPR personnel had been built during the critical days of February and March 1971 which finally prompted them to take up arms against the Pakistani military. According to a leading Bangladeshi political analyst, "The most important factor that led to the intense politicisation of the Bengalee armed forces was the Liberation War of 1971. The fact that a large number of officers and *jawans* (privates), throwing aside all their professional and service norms, and breaking most

¹⁹ Maj.Gen.(Retd.) D.K. Palit, *The Lightning Campaign : The India Pakistan War 1971* (New Delhi : Thomson Press, 1972), p.52.

indignantly the canons of military discipline and chain of command, revolted against the establishment and joined the Liberation War, was itself a highly revolutionary step."²⁰

As already stated, it was the 'elitocide' campaign of the military launched to exterminate the core of the Bengalee society ——— the professionals, intellectuals and armed personnel which forced the EBR and EPR to revolt against the Pakistani military regime. Col.(Retd.) M.A.G. Osmani, the C-in-C of the Liberation Army, later admitted, "If the Pakistanis had only limited their action against selected politicians, Bengalees in the army and police might have stayed neutral. It was only when the information went around that the Pakistan army was out to kill Bengalee intellectuals and servicemen as well that we revolted to a man."²¹

Again when Maj.Khaled Mosharrif, then second-in-command of 4 EBR at Comilla, was asked about the possible reaction of the Bengalee soldiers if Pakistan Army

²⁰ E.Ahamed, n.2, p.43.

²¹ Quoted from Garg, n.18, pp.110-11.

had not gone against them but against civilians, he was candid enough to admit that they would have sided with the Pakistani Army.²²

But prior to the military crackdown, tension had already developed between the two wings of Pakistan which had its ramifications in the armed forces too. The Bengalee units were suddenly dispersed from their respective headquarters throughout the country which aroused the suspicion of the EBR and EPR men. In addition to this, while political negotiations continued between the leaders of the two wings of Pakistan, the ruling *junta* was busy preparing for a military offensive against the Bengalees. The Bengalee officers were not totally unaware of the hectic activities among the West Pakistanis in different cantonments. During those days, the military officers used to meet regularly to decide on the future course of action and were anxiously waiting for directions from the Bengalee nationalist leaders²³.

However, every effort was made to render the Bengalee personnel of the army ineffective. Key officers were sent out of their units and headquarters on purposeless missions; personnel were disarmed on flimsy pretexts; and in certain cases, collective murder plans were drawn up by the West Pakistani officers to liquidate their Bengalee

²² Brig.(Retd.) H.S. Sodhi, *Operations Windfall : Emergence of Bangladesh* (New Delhi : Allied Publishers, 1980), pp.135-36.

²³ Ziaur Rahman, n.16, pp.26-29.

colleagues as soon as the signal was given from Dhaka.²⁴ All these acted as a catalyst to the increasing antagonism which already existed between the Bengalees and West Pakistanis.²⁵

Saddiq Salik, who was then the Press Officer, at Dhaka Garrison, has claimed in his book 'Witness To Surrender' that on Mujib's instructions, Col. Osmani had established contacts with the EBR and EPR and the police to co-ordinate their action on a particular date and time. The author has also mentioned that the military team of the Awami League high command used to meet regularly. Some serving Bengalee officers also attended these meetings.²⁶

Maj.Gen.(Retd.) D.K. Palit, on the other hand, maintains that, "It became obvious soon after the Bangladesh Liberation Army rose up in arms against the Pakistani forces that whatever political mobilisation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had pre-planned for his party's programme, there had been little attempt made to co-ordinate or organise military cadre around which a resistance movement could be formed."²⁷

It is true that there existed a certain amount of resentment among the Bengalee members of the armed forces due to their under-representation and ethnic segregation vis-

²⁴ Palit, n.19, p.53.

²⁵ Garg, n.18, p.111.

²⁶ Salik, n.13, p.58.

²⁷ Palit, n.19, pp.51-52.

a-vis the tremendous weightage accorded to the West Pakistanis in all matters. But during those critical days of early 1971, no tangible contact with the Bengalee members of the armed forces by any political organisation had taken place. Even after Mujib's call for independence of East Pakistan on March 7, 1971, no attempt was made to prepare a co-ordinated resistance plan with the rank and file of EBR and EPR men.

However, at this point of time, some Bengalee military officers met Sheikh Mujib on their individual capacity. They were reported to have approached Sheikh Mujib before 1 March to inform him of some suspected foul play and impending trouble. They advised him to organise an armed resistance movement to liberate Bangladesh. But Sheikh Mujib was busy with his political commitments and spurned their overtures politely.²⁸

According to one Bangladeshi military officer, Sheikh Mujib for the first time met Col. Osmani on March 19, 1971.²⁹ After his meeting with Sheikh Mujib, Col. Osmani had sent a secret circular to the Bengalees serving in the Pakistan armed forces. But surprisingly, one of the instructions was that the Bengalee armed personnel must not become embroiled in politics.³⁰

²⁸ Garg, n.18, p.144.

²⁹ Maj.(Retd.) Rafiqul Islam, *Ekti Fulke Bachabo Bole* (Only To Save a Flower) (Dhaka : University Press, 1988), pp.67-68.

³⁰ Palit, n.19, p.52.

Thus, there are contradictory opinions as to whether or not there existed any tangible contact between the Bengalee nationalist leaders and the military personnel prior to the military crackdown. But once the EBR and EPR personnel became the target of Pakistani military offensives on the night of March 25, 1971, their reaction to the ruling military regime was one of immediate revolt. The regular forces from EBR and EPR in fact provided the initial resistance to the Pakistan Army.

Major Rafiq was the first Bengalee officer who revolted against the Pakistanis at Chittagong. Major Rafiq with his EPR battalion, even before the military crackdown, disarmed the West Pakistani troops. He then established his contact with Major Ziaur Rahman of 8 EBR stationed at Chittagong. Major Ziaur Rahman was the first to declare the independence of Bangladesh over the radio on March 27, 1971 and urged all the Bengalees serving in the armed forces to join the Liberation War.³¹

On March 25, 1971, only 3 out of 6 battalions of Bengal Regiment could manage to escape the wrath of the Pakistani military attack. Among those who survived were - Major Zia with 8 EBR, Major Shaukat Ali with the rest of the EBR and some EPR members in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Major Khaled Mosharraf with 4 EBR in Comilla, Major K.M. Safiullah with 2 EBR in Jaydevpur and Major C.R. Dutta with a mixed group of EBR and police in Shylet. 3 EBR was massacred while asleep in Rangpur-Dinajpur

³¹ Text of Maj. Ziaur Rahman's Declaration of the Independence of Bangladesh is given in Appendix B, p. 186.

area and the few who managed to escape, later joined the Liberation War. 1 EBR stationed at Jessore was also brutally attacked but a few of its members escaped under Capt. Zafiuddin.³²

Besides them, about twenty five Bengalee officers and a good number of *jawans* stranded in West Pakistan at that time also deserted and came all the way to join the Liberation War.³³

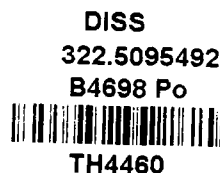
Initially, the resistance war was jointly organised by the EBR, EPR and the Police in small groups scattered all over Bangladesh. But there was little co-ordination among the junior officers who led the armed resistance at this stage. As a result, by the first week of April 1971, hurriedly organised Bengalee resistance had suffered heavy casualties.

The Bengalee military officers fighting for the liberation of Bangladesh in different sectors strongly felt the need for co-ordination among themselves. On April 4, 1971, some of them met in a conference and formally organised the *Mukti Bahini*.

³² See D.R. Mankekar, *Pakistan Cut To Size* (New Delhi : Indian Book Co., 1972), pp.135-36.

³³ The most prominent among them were ——— Maj.Gen. Manzoor, Col. Taher, Col. Ziauddin, Col. Patwari, Col. Pasha, Lt.Col. Delowar, Maj. Shahriyar, Maj. Salauddin Mumtaj, Capts. Mahiuddin, Jahangir etc. See Islam, n.29, p.98.

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Col.(Retd.) M.A.G. Osmani was unanimously appointed as Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) of the *Mukti Bahini* (Liberation Forces).

The leadership in the army also felt the need for political back up for their resistance movement. Maj.Gen.(Retd.) K.M. Safiullah is of the opinion that, "obedience to a legal and constitutional authority is the basis for the healthy functioning of any military force. The vacuum created by the absence of a formally constituted government of Bangladesh was keenly felt by the rank and file of the liberation army."³⁴

There were compulsions of a political nature also to create an institutional machinery for ensuring effective co-ordination during the Liberation War. There was need to issue consistent directives and to give a formal shape to the break from Pakistan. These factors led to the creation on April 17, 1971 of a provisional govt of Bangladesh. The provisional government of Bangladesh was formed at Mujibnagar and Tajuddin Ahmed was appointed as the Prime Minister. The provisional government also accepted *Mukti Bahini's* appointment of Col.Osmani as the C-in-C and formally approved it³⁵. The sole objective of the government was to liberate Bangladesh from the Pakistani occupation and it immediately devoted itself to organising the *Mukti Bahini*. At the initial

³⁴ Cited in Safiullah, n. 15, p.101.

³⁵ For further discussion on the formation of the Provisional Government. of Bangladesh, see Talukdar Maniruzzaman's *Bangladesh Revolution And Its Aftermath* (Dhaka : Bangladesh Books International, 1980), pp.108-11.

stage the *Mukti Bahini* was raised from the regular forces of EBR and EPR. In order to co-ordinate the military operations, a regular military headquarter was set up at No.8 Theatre Road, Calcutta and Col. Osmani was posted there.

To carry out the military operations, Bangladesh was divided into 4 sectors with the following officers in command³⁶.

1. Major Ziaur Rahman - Chittagong Sector.
2. Major Khaled Mosharraf - Comilla Sector.
3. Major K.M. Safiullah - Sylhet Sector.
4. Major Osman Choudhury - Kushtia Sector.

In order to ensure more effective resistance to the occupation army and to mobilise political support for it, both the sector commanders and political leaders decided to bring the regular and civilian forces fighting for the liberation of Bangladesh, under a unified military command strategy. With these objectives, the sector commanders and Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed met in a Conference from July, 11-17, 1971 to work out a strategy for the Liberation War. This military strategy is popularly known as 'Teliapara Strategy'.

³⁶ Hossain, n.1, p.41.

Teliapara Strategy involved three important fighting tactics.³⁷ Firstly, the military officers decided to rely on guerrilla methods like 'hit and run' operations, elimination of collaborators, destroying enemy's communication links etc.. Secondly, the sector commanders agreed that the regular forces would be dispersed to different sectors to give cover to the guerilla operations. Finally, it was decided that, with the completion of guerilla operations, a full scale military offensive would be undertaken with the help of the best materials available among the regular units and guerilla forces.

In order to implement the Teliapara Strategy, Bangladesh was divided into 11 operational sectors and for convenience, each sector was further sub-divided into various sub-sectors.³⁸

The military decided to raise three independent brigades consisting of the regular forces from EBR, EPR and Police. Those three brigades were under commands of Major Zia (Z Force), Major Safiullah (S Force) and Major Khaled Mosharraf(K Force). Their strength was approximately twenty five thousand.

³⁷ See Maniruzzaman, n.35, pp.111-15.

³⁸ For a detail analysis on the role of various sectors and sub-sectors see Islam, n.29, pp.120-60.

Officially, the *Mukti Bahini* was divided into three groups.³⁹ These are as follows :

1. *Niomita Bahini* or Regular Forces :

It mainly composed of the regular soldiers from the EBR and EPR, and it was re-organised into three independent brigades of S, K and Z Forces.

2. *Mukti Fouj* or Sector Troops :

The forces fighting in eleven sectors from July 1971 onwards were known as Sector Troops. The EPR, Police, *Ansar*, *Mujahids* etc. constituted the Sectors Troops.





3. *Aniomita Bahini* or Freedom Fighters :

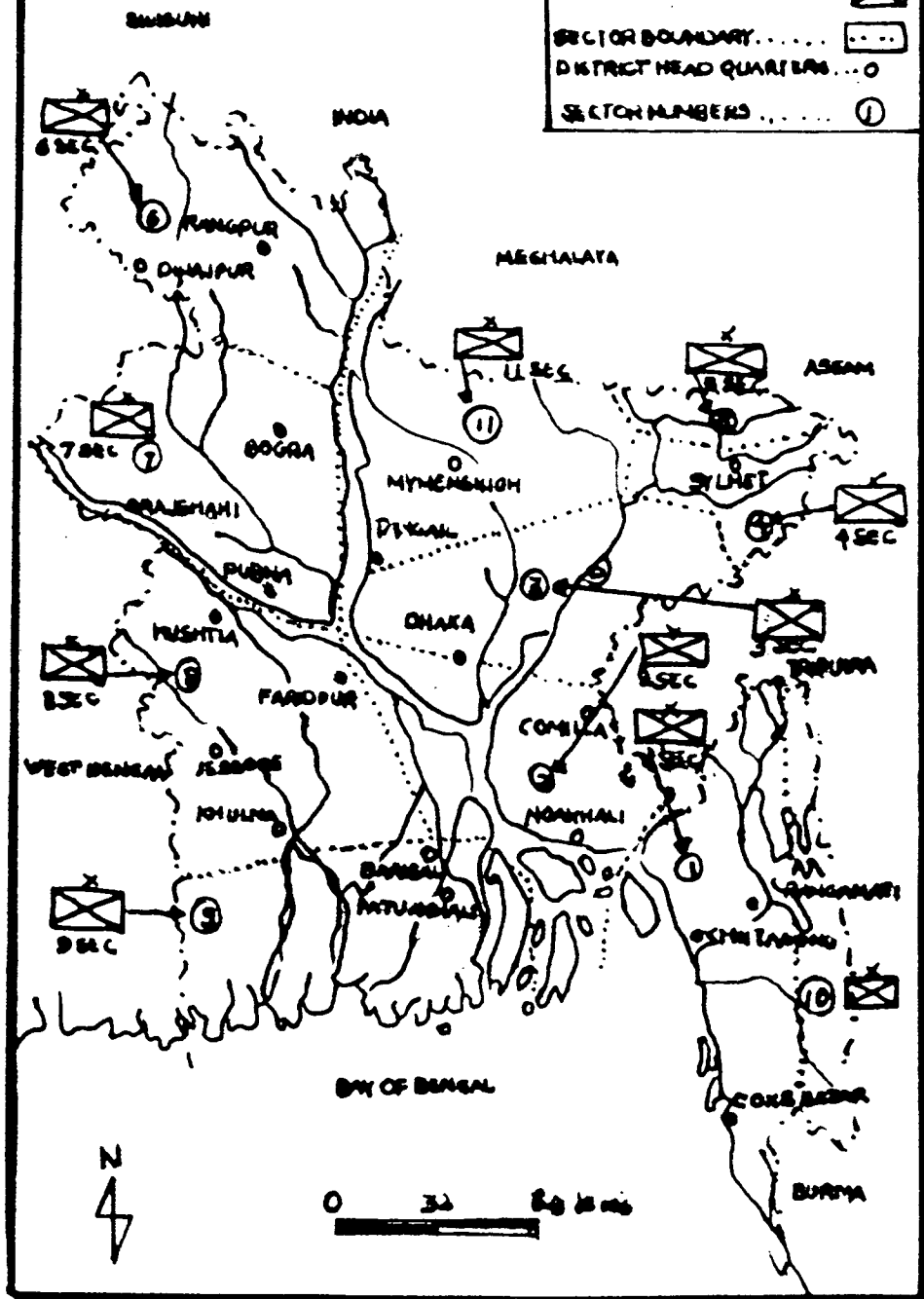
It was purely a guerilla group raised from the students, professionals, peasants, labourers etc.. Its strength was about seventy-eighty thousand.

³⁹ For a detailed analysis on the role of various sectors and sub-sectors, see Islam, n.29, p.100.

OPERATIONAL SECTORS OF BANGLADESH FORCES

LEGEND

- SECTOR HEAD QUARTERS ... 
- SECTOR BOUNDARY ... 
- DISTRICT HEAD QUARTERS ... 
- SECTOR NUMBERS ... 



Although the regulars constituted only a quarter of the total strength⁴⁰ of the *Mukti Bahini*, they in fact formed the core of the armed resistance to the occupation army. The EBR and EPR thus played a pivotal role as the Liberation War progressed. They took the responsibility for recruiting, organising, training and equipping the local guerrillas.

During the later part of the Liberation War, the regular personnel of EBR and EPR were grouped into regular units or sub-units in order to enable them to operate alongside the Indian Army should the need arise. Besides, the leaders of the *Mukti Bahini* must have realised that when Bangladesh was eventually liberated, the administration would feel the need for a cadre of regular troops for maintaining internal security to begin with and, subsequently, to form the nucleus of a Bangladesh Army.⁴¹

Apart from the EBR and EPR personnel, there were also good number of Bengalees serving in the Pakistan Air Force and Navy. The personnel in these branches of armed forces who were in East Pakistan prior to the military crackdown of March 25, 1971, immediately joined the Liberation War. Others, stationed in West Pakistan also

⁴⁰ *Mukti Bahini's* total strength was reported to be approximately one lakh.

⁴¹ Palit, 19, p.58.

defected and succeeded in slipping across the border and from there to Bangladesh. All those patriotic air force and navy personnel also played a heroic role in the liberation struggle of Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh Air Force was raised at Dimapur in India on Sept 28, 1971 with a few armed helicopters and light aircraft. Group Captain A.K. Khondoker was appointed as its chief⁴². In December 1971 when the full scale war broke out Bangladesh Air Force had succeeded in destroying the enemy bases in Chittagong, Narayanganj and Sylhet areas.

The Bangladesh Navy was raised in November 1971. The navy included four hundred trained frogmen and carried out some of the most daring commando operations and crippled Pakistan Navy's free mobility in Chittagong, Khulna and Chalna port areas and at several other places in the country.

⁴² Some of the air force personnel who deserve special attention in the context of the Bangladesh liberation struggle were - Sq. leader Sultan Mahmud, Ft. Lieutenants Shamsul Alam, Badrul Alam, Captains Khaleq, Sattar, Mukit, Akram, Sarfuddin and others. The newly raised air wings consisted of seventeen airmen. See Islam, n.29, p.106-17.

The Bangladesh Liberation War was a politico-military struggle fought against the Pakistani military for a period of nine months. In course of the Liberation War, both civilians and Bengalee armed forces worked together to liberate their country from the occupation forces. While the regular forces took the responsibility of leading most of the military operations, the political leaders and the volunteers tried to motivate the people to lend support and participate in the Liberation War. The *Mukti Bahini* and the Awami League worked in close collaboration and they led the military and political struggle respectively. The local guerillas besides aiding the regular forces in the operation, were also entrusted with the task of carrying out the political propaganda in support of the Liberation struggle. The provisional Government of Bangladesh had attached a political wing to each army command to co-ordinate the activities of the regular army, the guerillas and the civilians.⁴³ All these resulted in the evolution of a unique pattern of civil-military relationship during the Liberation War.

In the process of their active participation in the Liberation War, the Bangladesh armed forces were exposed to various political groups and ideas. The war of liberation

⁴³ Some of the members of the National and Provisional Assemblies (MNAs and MPAs), elected in the 1970 General Election, mostly belonging to the Awami League were attached to all the eleven operational sectors as 'Civilian Affairs Advisers'. See the composition of Bangladesh Operational Sectors given in Appendix D, pp. 191-92.

was fought without any strict control and direction of a Central command. The regular forces fought with the different political groups in fragments under the command of different officers and came in contact with the leaders of various political parties and factions. The result was that many military personnel became affiliated to different political groups and became thoroughly politicised. Moreover, as the strategy of guerilla warfare radicalised a large section of the army, the virus of politicisation spread to an uncontrollable extent.⁴⁴

The strategy of guerrilla warfare devised in the Teliapara Conference held from July 11-17, 1971 broke the distance between the civilians and the armed forces. The guerrilla method of fighting provided armed personnel ample opportunities to observe closely the high degree of motivation of the people and their nationalistic fervour on one hand and the endless sufferings and abysmal poverty of the people on the other. The Liberation War also provided opportunities to Bengalee military officers to see how some of the political leaders and other elite groups traded on the misery of the people.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Golam Hossain's "Political Consequences of Military Rule in Bangladesh" in M.Salimullah Khan, ed., *Politics and Stability in Bangladesh* (Dhaka : Jahangirnagar University, 1985), pp. 41-42.

⁴⁵ Some of the Bengalee political elites who took refuge at Calcutta after the Pakistani military cracked down in East Pakistan, used to maintain a lavish lifestyle out of the money raised for the liberation struggle of Bangladesh. See Zillur Rahman Khan, *Leadership in the Least Developed Nation : Bangladesh* (Syracuse : Syracuse University Press, 1983), pp.35-36.

Moreover, the sector commanders and other military officers got enough opportunities at various meetings and conferences which were held during the Liberation War period, to discuss and analyze national issues and their probable solutions and many of them expressed serious dissatisfaction over the existing state of affairs.⁴⁶ The outcome of the operation of all these factors was that the Bangladesh armed forces, which actively participated in the Liberation War, were politicised to the core.

To sum up, the Bangladesh military, which is the successor to both the British Indian Army and the Pakistan Armed Forces, was converted during the Liberation War into a nationalist army, a revolutionary army and a freedom fighters army. Moreover, as the War of Liberation radicalised a large section of the armed forces; a colonial army transformed itself into a political army.⁴⁷

Moreover, the Liberation War of 1971 put an end to the so-called isolation between the military and the civilians that had existed during the British and Pakistan period. The military officers while working in close co-operation with the civilians during the Liberation War, became aware of the prevailing state of the weak political leadership and fragile political institutions. All these made them very conscious of

⁴⁶ E. Ahamed, n.2, pp.43-44.

⁴⁷ Hossain, n.1, P.47.

political power. It was, therefore no wonder that after the Liberation War a highly politicised armed force emerged in Bangladesh. This phenomenon significantly influenced the course of political events in the post-independent Bangladesh.

CHAPTER TWO

ORGANISATION, SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF THE BANGLADESH ARMED FORCES

The political role of the military in any society is determined to a large extent by the nature of its internal organisation and socio-economic and political background of the military personnel. While analysing the increasing political role of the military in newly independent states, experts in civil-military relations have emphasized the sociological factors related to the military establishment. Morris Janowitz's proposition about the linkages between social structure and military organisation rests on two basic assumptions.¹ Firstly, he views the military as an agent of rapid modernisation, and of social and political changes in the traditional societies of new states. Secondly, he argues that the internal social organisation of the military conditions much of its political capacities. By 'internal social organisation' of the military, he means its organisational format, skill structure and career lines, social recruitment and education, professional and political ideology, and social cohesion.²

¹ Morris Janowitz, *Military Institutions And Corecion In The Developing Nations* (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1977) p.100

² Janowitz, n.1, pp.102-105.

Janowitz further states that the political role of the military in post-colonial states is also governed by the conditions of liberation and the military's role in it.³

According to Amos Perlmutter, the military may be politicised as a result of⁴:

- a. infiltration of their ranks by politically and ideologically committed officers or civilians who seek collaborators for a 'civilianistic coup'; or
- b. a new *weltanschauung*⁵, such as fascism, socialism or communism; or
- c. events ——— the anti-colonial struggle, the coming of independence, economic disaster.⁶

The above-mentioned theoretical propositions underly much of the analysis in this chapter, of the political behaviour of the Bangladesh armed forces which gained prominence in the national decision-making shortly after the independence of the country.

³ Janowitz, n.1, p.89.

⁴ Amos Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times : On Professionals, Praetorians and Revolutionary Soldier* (New York : Yale University Press, 1978), P.101.

⁵ *Weltanschauung* means world view.

⁶ Perlmutter, n.4, p.101.

**THE ORIGIN AND COMPOSITION OF
THE BANGLADESH ARMED FORCES:**

The Bangladesh Army, like those of Burma, Indonesia, Algeria, Vietnam etc. can be placed under Morris Janowitz's typology of a 'army of national liberation'⁷ which played a heroic role in the Liberation War. However, at the time of independence, the Bangladesh armed forces were in a state of disarray because the compulsions of their active participation in the nine month's armed struggle against the Pakistani forces.

During the Liberation War, apart from the regular members of the erstwhile EBR and EPR, Mukti Bahini also drew heavily from the students and other volunteers. In the post liberation period, the most serious and immediate problem facing the new regime was how to co opt the one lakh *Mukti Bahini* guerillas in the various branches of the armed forces, para-militia and the police.⁸

⁷ Morris Janowitz, *The Military In the Political Development of New Nations : An Eassy In Comparative Analysis* (Chicago : The University of Press, 1964), p.13.

⁸ Rounaq Jahan, *Bangladesh Politics : Problems and Issues* (Dhaka : University Press Ltd., 1987), p.61.

The Bangladesh Government-in-exile within a week of its return to Dhaka⁹ announced its scheme for forming a 'National Militia' comprising all freedom fighters.¹⁰ The scheme was designed to re-organise all the members of *Mukti Bahini* so that the unprecedented zeal and enthusiasm displayed by the youth during the Bangladesh liberation struggle could be re-channeled into the national re-construction programme.

However, as Mujib returned to Dhaka¹¹ on January 10, 1972 and assumed the leadership of the country, Tajuddin's idea of an 'integrated National Militia' began to receive less attention. Although Mujib did not reject the idea of a National Militia but he emphasised more on disarming the *Mukti Bahini* guerrillas. But his call for the surrender of arms did not evoke much response from the freedom fighters.

In the immediate past liberation period, it was also reported that the former sector commanders of the *Mukti Bahini* possessing vast quantities of arms were running almost

⁹ The Bangladesh Government-in-exile headed by Tajuddin Ahmed returned to Dhaka on December 22, 1971 after the Pakistan Army had surrendered to the Allied Forces on December 16, 1971.

¹⁰ Mueyedul Hassan, *Muldhara : Ekattar* (Mainstream : 1971) (Dhaka : University Press, 1986), p.256.

¹¹ Sheikh Mujib was kept in a West Pakistan prison during the Liberation War period and was released only after Bangladesh attained independence.

parallel administrations in different parts of the country.¹² They also went on exerting political influence in every sphere of administration. This was perceived by Sheikh Mujib as a direct threat to his govt. Having failed to control the freedom fighters, the government in a desperate move banned the *Mukti Bahini* on February 24, 1972 and all other guerrilla *Bahinis* on February 27, 1972.¹³

Finally, the proposed scheme of an 'integrated National Militia' could not be worked out because the regular forces who participated in Liberation War, refused to join it. Therefore, the Government of Bangladesh decided to raise a separate regular army, navy and air force; a para-military force for guarding the border; and a national police force for ensuring law and order in the country.

The government also announced that selection boards would be formed for the purpose of recruiting commissioned and non-commissioned officers. Besides, it was

¹² The Bangladesh Government-in-exile was informed in advance that the country might face this problem in the immediate post-liberation period. In the Position Paper, prepared by the Research Cell, External Publicity Division of Bangladesh Government-in-exile, it was stated : "There will be a tendency to hold areas by the respective guerilla leaders once independence is closed to be achieved, and those who are in some way or the other connected to any radical ideology other than AL programmes will not surrender their arms and will continue their war efforts till the goal is achieved". See Appendix E, pp. 193 - 96 .

¹³ Moudud Ahmed, *Bangladesh : Era of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman* (Dhaka : University Press, 1983), p.41.

also announced that a defence academy would be set up to train new officers for the nation's defence forces.

The new Bangladesh armed forces were raised from the former Bengali members of the Pakistan Army, Navy and Air Force, and the EPR personnel who defected to the liberation struggle in 1971. To these were added some new recruits from among the irregulars of the *Mukti Bahini*. All these forces constituted the nucleus of the Bangladesh armed forces for the first one and half years.

The total strength of the Bangladesh armed forces from 1973-1975 is given below

.14

¹⁴ *The Military Balance*, 1973-74 (London : IISS, 1973), pp.49-50.
The Military Balance, 1974-75 (London : IISS, 1974), pp.52-53.
The Military Balance, 1975-76 (London : IISS, 1975), pp.52-53.

	Military Forces	Para-Military Forces	Total Strength				
Year	Army	Navy	Air Force	Bangladesh Rifles	<i>Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini</i>	Military Forces	Para- Military Forces
1973	17,000	500	400		13,000	17,900	13,000
1974	25,000	500	1000	13,000	16,000	26,500	29,000
1975	30,000	500	5,500	20,000	16,000	36,000	36,000

This table is prepared on the basis of the information obtained from *Military Balance* between 1973-75.

Bangladesh armed forces can be broadly divided into two categories ———
military and para-military forces.

1. MILITARY FORCES

a) **Bangladesh Army** : Among the three services of the Bangladesh military, the army constitutes the strongest and most important wing. But the strength of the army was

very small in the immediate post-independence period. By early 1971, five battalions of EBR with about six thousand soldiers and two hundred officers were stationed in the East Pakistan. After the initial resistance against the Pakistan military crackdown, about four thousand-four and five hundred were believed to have survived.¹⁵ In 1973 the army's strength was only seventeen thousand.¹⁶ However, in April 1973, twenty eight thousand Bengalee military personnel were repatriated from Pakistan. These repatriates had been stationed in West Pakistan since 1969 and could not participate in the liberation struggle of Bangladesh. Most of the repatriates were gradually inducted into the Bangladesh military service. Thus the strength of the Bangladesh army rose to thirty thousand in 1975. The numbers of military officers in 1975 was about one thousand . But the number of senior officers above the ranks of major and captain was not more than two hundred and fifty.¹⁷

Gen. M.A.G. Osmani, the C-in-C of the combined of the Liberation Forces resigned immediately after the independence. With his resignation the post was abolished in 1972. The posts of three service chief were created instead. The three most Prominent

¹⁵ Golam Hossain, "BD Armed Forces : Social Origin and Political Role", *Regional Studies*, vol. XI, no.1. Winter 1992-93, p.101.

¹⁶ *The Military Balance*, 1973-74, pp.49-50.

¹⁷ See Emajuddin Ahamed's "Dominant Bureaucratic Elites in Bangladesh" in Mohamimad Mohabbat Khan and Habib Mohammad Zafarullah, eds, *Politics and Bureaucracy in a New Nation : Bangladesh* (Dhaka : Centre for Administrative Studies, 1980), p.150.

freedom fighters ——— Col. K.M. Safiullah, Col. Khaled Mosharraf and Col. Ziaur Rahman were appointed Chief of Army Staff, Chief of General Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff respectively.¹⁸ They continued to hold those ranks till August 15, 1975.

During 1972-75, the Bangladesh army had five divisions with divisional headquarters at Savar, Chittagong, Comilla, Jessore and Bogra. Besides, there were several small cantonments in different parts of the country. The army headquarter was set up at Dhaka.

(b) **Bangladesh Navy:** The Bangladesh Navy was raised in November 1971. It was composed of four hundred naval commandos raised mainly from naval officers and seamen who had defected from the Pakistan Navy and joined the Liberation War. The navy had played a very dynamic role during the Liberation War in the port areas of Chittagong, Khulna, Dhaka and several other places in the country through Commando attacks.

The navy, however, remained very weak in the post-liberation period. It was not only weak in terms of man power but also poorly equipped. In 1973, the strength on the navy was the meagre five hundred.¹⁹

¹⁸ P.B. Sinha, "Armed Forces of Bangladesh", *Occasional Paper* , no.1 (New Delhi : IDSA, 1979), P.53.

¹⁹ *The Military Balance*, 1973-74, pp.49-50.

Commander Nurul Huq was made the first Chief of the Navy Staff in 1972. In 1973, a repatriated officer Capt. Mosharraf Hossain Khan was promoted to Commodore and appointed as the Chief of Navy. Commodore Khan was further promoted to Rear-Admiral and he survived all the crises of 1975.²⁰ Bangladesh has three important naval establishments ——— Chittagong, Khulna and Dhaka. The navy headquarter was set up at Dhaka after Bangladesh attained independence in 1971.

(c) Bangladesh Air Force : The Bangladesh Air Force was formally raised in September 1971 at Dimapur in India with a few armed helicopters and light air-crafts. The Bengalee air force personnel who had defected from the Pakistan Air Force contributed significantly to the liberation struggle. In the words of former Bangladesh Air Force Chief, Air Vice-Marshall M.K. Bashar, "Bangladesh Air Force was born in the hearts of all the Bengalee airmen in that night of March 25, 1971 when the occupation army of the then Pakistan struck the dustardly and mortal blow to the sleeping Bengalee nation."²¹

Because of the problem of logistics, the Bengalee officers and airmen fought on land in co-operation with other members of *Mukti Bahini*. According to M.Alamgir, a former Wing Commander of the Bangladesh Air Force, "The mission for all was to

²⁰ Sinha, n.18, p.5.

²¹ Air Vice-Marshall M.K.Bashar, "The Birth of Bangladesh Air Force", an article originally written in 1973 and reproduced in *Bangladesh Times*, December 16, 1976.

defeat the enemy with the limitations of time and efforts. To that end all elements of the Bangladesh forces had to co-ordinate their efforts. Bangladesh Air Force, then Air Arm of the Joint Military Forces was formed as the core of the nascent B.A.F. of today.²² It was only in December 1971, when a full scale war broke out, that B.A.F. launched its first aerial attack on Pakistani positions.

After liberation, Bangladesh faced enormous difficulties in re-organising the air force. Bangladesh Air Force inherited from the enemy nothing but shambles, destroyed aircraft, damaged run way, looted stores, neutralised maintenance facilities ——— in short a disorganised mess.²³ In 1973, the strength of B.A.F. was only four hundred.²⁴ In 1975, it increased to five thousand and five hundred²⁵, due to the induction of repatriated air force personnel after 1973.

In spite of the sudden increase in its manpower, B.A.F. was poorly equipped in those years. All that B.A.F. had at its disposal were a few Soviet supplied MIGs, helicopters and operational bases only in Dhaka, Chittagong and Jessore. Its headquarter

²² Wing Commander M. Alamgir, "Bangladesh Air Force Day", *Bangladesh Times*, September 28, 1978.

²³ See Bashir, n.21.

²⁴ *The Military Balance*, 1973-74, pp.49-50.

²⁵ *The Military Balance*, 1975-76, pp.52-53.

was located at Dhaka. In 1992, A.K. Khondoker was promoted from Group Captain to Air Commodore and appointed as Chief of Air Staff.

2. PARA-MILITARY FORCES

(a) **Bangladesh Rifles** : Prior to the liberation of Bangladesh, East Pakistan Rifles (EPR) was a para-military force entrusted with the task of manning and patrolling the borders. By early 1971, its strength was about fifteen thousand. After the military crackdown, the EPR personnel had also revolted against the Pakistani forces and played a heroic role in the liberation struggle of Bangladesh.

After the liberation of Bangladesh, the surviving nine thousand EPR personnel were reorganised and renamed as Bangladesh Rifles (BDR). However, the Bangladesh Rifles were not equipped sufficiently to guard Bangladesh's borders. In 1975, the total strength of BDR was about twenty thousand.²⁶ Brig. Khalillur Rahman, a repatriated officer was made the first Director of BDR.

(b) **Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini** : The *Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini* (National Security Force) was a special internal security force raised by the government soon after the liberation. The idea of raising a well-trained and well-equipped national militia first cropped up

²⁶ *The Military Balance*, 1975-76, p.52-53.

during the Liberation War period. The idea of forming a 'people's police force' was conceived originally by the Bangladesh Government-in-exile at Calcutta. It naturally occurred to the Bangladesh leadership that the country would face a serious peace-keeping problem following independence.²⁷ The Awami League leadership thought that an effective law enforcing agency would do the job of police on the one hand and that of the army on the other and yet remain under the complete control of the political authority.²⁸

The Government of Bangladesh formally constituted the *Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini* (JRB) on March 7, 1972 by promulgating the *Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini* order. The recruits to the JRB came mainly from the members of *Mujib Bahini*²⁹, *Quader Bahini*³⁰, *Mukti*

²⁷ It was stated in the Position Paper' prepared by the Research cell, External Publicity Division of the Bangladesh Government-in-exile in June 1971 that in independent Bangladesh, "Our army would neither be sufficiently disciplined nor adequate to protect our land even if the whole of *Mukti Bahini* come to the fold of the new Government". See Appendix. E, pp. 193 - 96.

²⁸ M. Ahmed, n.13, p.54.

²⁹ *Mujib Bahini* was a politically oriented militant guerrilla organisation raised during the Liberation War with the patronage of the Indian Army to represent the leadership of Sheikh Mujib. This *Bahini* was led by four of Mujib's closest associates, namely, Sheikh Fazlul Haq Moni, Serajul Alam Khan, Abdur Razzak and Tofael Ahmed. The fresh recruits to the *Mujib Bahini* had to undergo fourty five days of rigorous training in guerrilla warfare and a political course on 'Mujibism' reflected in the ideas of nationalism, socialism, secularism, and democracy. For details see, Hassan, n.10, pp.77-80.

³⁰ *Quader Bahini* was named after Abdul Quader Siddique, a great charismatic guerrilla leader of Tangail. *Quader Bahini* was locally organised with seventeen thousand effective force inflamed with revolutionary fervour. Its leader, Quader Siddique, was personally loyal to Sheikh Mujib. *Quader Bahini* played a heroic role in the Liberation War. See Quader Siddique's *Swadhinta : Ekattar* (The

Bahini and organisations affiliated with the Awami League, on special recommendation by the top ranking Awami League leaders.³¹ In 1973, JRB's total strength was thirteen thousand³², that increased to twenty thousand in 1975.³³ Its headquarter was set up at Savar, located at the outskirts of the capital city of Dhaka.

Officially, the role of the JRB was specified as : to assist the civil authority in the maintenance of internal security when requested by a prescribed authority. It was also to assist the armed forces when called upon by the government to do so and to perform the JRB would perform such other functions as the government would direct.³⁴

But in practice, the JRB was armed with sophisticated weapons to provide support to the ruling Awami League regime in meeting serious situations. The opposition groups in Bangladesh called the JRB as the 'personal security force' for Sheikh Mujib. In January 1974, the government enacted the *Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini* (Amendment) Act which empowered the JRB to arrest any person or search anybody's house without showing any cause and did not permit any appeal to the courts against the actions of the JRB officers.

liberation : 1971), vol.I&II (Calcutta : Dey's Publishing House, 1985).

³¹ Talukdar Maniruzzaman, *Group Interests and Political Changes : Studies of Pakistan and Bangladesh* (New Delhi : South Asian Pub., 1982), p.132.

³² *The Military Balance*, 1973-74, pp.49-50.

³³ *The Military Balance*, 1975-76, pp.52-53.

³⁴ These are provisions of the Art.18 of the *Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini* Order, 1972 mentioned in M.Ahmed, n.13, p.54.

The JRB was mainly used by the government for: (i) recovering unauthorised arms, (ii) checking smuggling at the borders, hoarding, black marketing, and (iii) eliminating political dissidents. It acted like storm trooper, a crack force for a lightning strike.³⁵ The methods used by the JRB against the suspected subversives were often brutal——torture and sometimes summary execution. Because of the excesses JRB committed, it gradually lost its credibility as a law enforcing agency.

It seems that one of the purposes, if not the principal purpose, behind raising it was to make it a countervailing force to the Bangladesh Army. A huge para-military force like the JRB, owing allegiance to a single leader i.e. Sheikh Mujib is bound to serve this purpose also.

Moreover, Mujib's rationale that the maintenance of a big standing army in Bangladesh would be a misappropriation of country's scarce resources does not carry much conviction when seen in the light of his effort parallelly to raise different *Bahinis* of fairly large sizes personally loyal to him. In the post liberation period, Mujib went on strengthening a special security force like the JRB while the military services had remained poorly equipped. The lion's share of the defence budget was spent on buying

³⁵ M.Ahmed, n.13, p.35.

arms and ammunitions for the JRB, and on constructing special barracks for the JRB personnel.³⁶

On the otherhand, at the time of independence, the military services were in a bad shape. The training institutes were destroyed in the Liberation War and in some cases, the cantonments were razed to the ground. The military officers resented the fact that the Awami League regime did not take any speedy and effective measures for the reconstruction of these institutes.³⁷

According to a Bangladeshi political analyst, Sheikh Mujib never showed any interest in building a strong army for two reasons. First, he did not perceive any serious threat from outside.³⁸ Second, he never trusted the military.³⁹

³⁶ *Guardian*, August 16, 1975.

³⁷ See E.Ahamed, n.17, p.153.

³⁸ India would have been the only threat to Bangladesh's security as the latter is surrounded by India from three sides. But after signing the "Treaty of Freindship, Co-operation and Peace" in March 19, 1972 with India which consolidated the bilateral friendship, Sheikh Mujib did not perceive any threat from India.

³⁹ See M.Rashiduzzaman's "Changing Political Patterns in Bangladesh : Internal Constraints and External Fears" in Khan and Zaffarullah, n.17, p.186.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING PROCEDURES OF THE BANGLADESH ARMED FORCES:

In the post-liberation period, there was no significant change in the organisational format of the Bangladesh armed forces. The new Bangladesh armed forces' organisational structure and standard operating procedures as well as training were derived almost in entirety from the Pakistan armed forces.⁴⁰

In 1974, the Bangladesh Military Academy was set up at the Comilla cantonment. The Academy, however, retained the curriculum of the Quetta Staff College.

The Military is an autonomous organisation in Bangladesh. It decides its own policy of recruitment, education, training, pay, promotion, responsibility, transfer, retirement and other benefits and punishments.⁴¹ The selection procedure of the Bangladesh armed forces is highly competitive in nature. However, the recruitment to the Bangladesh armed forces in the immediate post-liberation period was not totally free from political pressure and influence.

⁴⁰ Mushahid Hussain, "Army, the Most Organised Political Unit in Bangladesh" *Telegraph*, May 30, 1988.

⁴¹ Hossain, n.15, p.104.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE BANGLADESH ARMED FORCES:

In the pre-independence period, a few Bengalee officers recruited into the military service belonged to the upper middle class strata of the Bengalee Muslim Community. The *Mukti Bahini* members who provided most of the recruits to the different wings of the armed forces of independent Bangladesh consisted of students drawn largely from peasant, lower middle class and middle class families. A section of the freedom fighters also came from the labouring class. Besides, there were also small businessmen and cultivators among the guerrillas.⁴²

The Bangladesh liberation struggle attracted the upcoming businessmen, industrialist, bureaucrats and different professionals. But after independence, military service did not appeal much to the upper strata of the society. Thus the representation of the upper class in the new Bangladesh armed forces was considerably low.⁴³

Since Bangladesh is predominantly rural, the officers and other ranks are mostly recruited from the countryside. Only a small section of officer corps come from the urban areas. The officers coming from the rural areas belong to affluent agricultural

⁴² Talukdar Maniruzzaman, *Radical Politics and the Emergence of Bangladesh* (Dhaka : Bangladesh Books International, 1975), p.49.

⁴³ Hossain, n.15, p.107.

communities. The *jawans* on the other hand, come from the remote rural areas and are mostly landless, and poor or marginal farmers.

Like the military officers, the political elites in Bangladesh more or less come from a similar socio-economic background—the middle class, composed of urban bureaucrats, business groups, professionals and affluent farmers.⁴⁴ Many military officers have family ties with these groups. This situation often results in the convergence of political and economic interests between the military and the other dominant socio-economic forces in the country.⁴⁵

Therefore, it can be said that the predominantly middle class background of the military has conditioned much of its political role in Bangladesh.

POLITICAL ORIENTATIONS AND INTERNAL CLEAVAGES IN THE BANGLADESH ARMED FORCES:

The Bangladesh armed forces in spite of their small size, homogeneous ethnic origin and almost similar socio-economic background, could not emerge as a cohesive and

⁴⁴ For instance, the leaders of the military coup in August 1975 were the sons of government officials, ex-army officers, affluent farmers and other professionals of mid-income group. See Golam Hossain's *Civil-Military Relations in Bangladesh: A Comparative Study* (Dhaka: Academic Publishers, 1991), p.35; See Anthony Mascarenhas, *Bangladesh : A Legacy of Blood* (London : Hadder And Stoughton, 1986), pp.39-42.

⁴⁵ Hossain, n.44, pp.63-64.

disciplined force in the post-independence period. Since the beginning, Bangladesh armed forces had been plagued by factionalism and internal cleavages. The origin of the internal schisms in the Bangladesh armed forces could be traced to the liberation struggle. The Bangladesh military fighting for the liberation of the country was divided on various ideological and personal grounds.

Furthermore, differences had existed within the Bangladesh military over the issue of the military strategy to be adopted and developed for the Liberation War. The military debate centred around the three principal forms of armed resistance to the Pakistani forces.⁴⁶

The first form of armed resistance can be referred to as the 'conventional military strategy'. Both the military leadership and the Bangladesh Government-in-exile had agreed to raise conventional forces with the support of India in order to have access to base, training and equipment. The regular members of the erstwhile EBR and EPR were re-organised into three brigade forces⁴⁷ under the over-all command of Col.(Retd.) M.A.G.Osmani.

⁴⁶ Lawrence Lifschultz, *Bangladesh : The Unfinished Revolution* (London : Zed Press, 1979), p.32.

⁴⁷ The three independent brigades raised were ——'Z' Force, 'K' Force and 'S' Force commanded by Majors Ziur Rahman, Khaled Mosharraf and K.M. Safiullah respectively.

The conventional military strategy, however, could not be implemented in toto. In the early stages of the Liberation War, the EBR and EPR personnel suffered heavy casualties when they decided to confront the Pakistanis in an open conventional warfare. The Bengalee armed personnel were defeated by the Pakistanis in many battles due to the latter's superior training, experience and superior fire power. Only in May, when the operational strategy was changed from regular to guerrilla warfare, did the Bengalee freedom fighters succeed in undermining the morale of the occupation forces. Sector commanders such as Majors Ziaur Rahman, Taher, Ziauddin and Khaled Mosharraf went for an all-out guerrilla war with the provision that the core of the guerrilla army would comprise professional army personnel with battle experience and special training in commando operations and guerrilla warfare. This strategy was formally approved in the Teliapara Conference held from July 11-17, 1971. Despite occasional disagreements and misunderstandings among the army commanders, they used this new strategy to their advantage.⁴⁸

Another military strategy was also put forward by sector commanders like Col. Abu Taher and Col. Ziauddin.⁴⁹ They argued that instead of forming regular

⁴⁸ See Zillur Rahman Khan, *Leadership in the Least Developed Nation : Bangladesh* (Syracuse : Syracuse University, 1983), p.143; See also 'OPS Plan' prepared by Col.(Retd.) Osmani, the C-in-C of the *Mukti Bahini* by the end of September 1971 given in Appendix C, pp .

⁴⁹ Both Cols. Taher and Ziauddin had escaped from West Pakistan where they were posted in 1971 and joined the Liberation War of Bangladesh. Col. Taher and Col. Ziauddin commanded the *Mukti Bahini* in Mymensingh and Sylhet sectors

batallions, all the experienced military personnel should be dispersed in different parts of the country to raise and train a 'people's militia' drawn from the peasantry. For logistics, emphasis was laid on capturing enemy equipments, rather than relying on foreign assistance.

They also insisted that the military headquarter and sectors headquarters should be shifted inside the Bangladesh territory. It was argued that the occupation forces could only be defeated through a form of people's war based on mass mobilisation and overwhelming support of the Bengalee population.⁵⁰ This military strategy could not be worked out finally because of the opposition from a section of the Bangladesh military command.⁵¹

Armed resistance to the Pakistani forces also took another form. Besides the regular armed forces, many civilians on their own initiative organised guerrilla resistance in different parts of Bangladesh. Most of those guerrilla groups grew up spontaneously

respectively.

⁵⁰ In his testimony, Col. Taher has elaborately discussed the military strategy that he wanted to be implemented by the Bangladesh military command of the Liberation War in 1971. See Col. Taher's testimony published in Lifschultz, n.46, pp.79-88.

⁵¹ Col. Taher was opposed by Col.(Retd.) Osmani, C-in-C of the *Mukti Bahini*, Major Safiullah and Major Khaled Mosharraf when he put forward his military strategy in a Sector Commanders' Conference held at Calcutta in October 1971. The only two military officers who supported Col. Taher were —— Major Ziaur Rahman and Col. Ziauddin. See Maj. Rafiqul Islam, *Ekti Fulke Bachabo Bole*, (Only To Save a Flower) (Dhaka: University Press, 1988), pp.105-106.

without any formal organisation or co-ordination by any centre.⁵² Such guerrilla groups were affiliated to various political parties or leaders, e.g. *Quader Bahini*, *Mujib Bahini*, National Awami Party(NAP) guerrillas , Chatra Union guerrillas, *Commander Guerrilla Bahini* (Aziz Group), *Afsar Bahini*, *Hasan Banini*, Pro-Moscow Communist Party guerrillas etc.⁵³ In addition to these, there were also different factions of Pro-Chinese Communist guerrillas actively engaged in armed resistance to the occupation forces.⁵⁴

All these guerrilla groups were based locally and on most occasions they acted in isolation and with little co-ordination. But at times, some of them conducted their military operations in collaboration with the *Mukti Bahini*. Different forces fighting for the liberation of Bangladesh had different perceptions about the situation in the country and varying outlooks about the future course of action.⁵⁵

⁵² In his testimony, Col. Taher has referred to this form of armed resistance as "the natural development of the forces struggling in our Liberation War". See Col. Taher's testimony in Lifschultz, n.46, p.81.

⁵³ See Sinha, n.18, p.2; Islam, n.51, pp.103-104.

⁵⁴ The various factions of the pro-Chinese Communist guerrillas active in different parts of Bangladesh were ——— Abdul Matin - Alauddin Group in Pabna, 'Red Gurrillas' of Toaha Group in Noakhali, Ohidul Group in Rajshahi, East Bengal Workers Movement (EBWM) guerrillas in Barisal, Dhaka, Munshiganj etc. See Maniruzzaman,n.42, pp.49-55.

⁵⁵ During the liberation struggle serious internal dissensions developed among the Bengalee leaders on questions like ——— secession and independence, foreign assistance for the Bangladesh cause and ideology. For further analysis see Zillur Rahman Khan's "From Mujib to Zia : Elite Politics in Bangladesh" in Rafiuddin Ahmed, ed. *Religion, Nationalism and Politics in Bangladesh* (New Delhi : South Asian Publishers, 1991), p.53; M. Ahmed, n.13, p.10.

Differing approaches and strategies, in fact, reflect various political trends struggling for hegemony in the Liberation War. Rivalry and conflict between the opposing guerrilla units sometimes took the form of armed confrontation. However, all these fighting forces were kept together through the co-ordinating role of the Government of India.⁵⁶

The differences existing within the Bangladesh military during the Liberation War reappeared in the post-independence period. The new Bangladesh armed forces were organised mainly from the regular forces which participated in the Liberation War. Moreover, the inclusion of repatriates in 1973 added a new dimension to the internal schisms in the Bangladesh armed forces. It brought about a rigid caste like differentiation between those who fought in the Liberation War, and those who, for one reason or another, did not. Among the freedom fighters, there developed a further division along ideological lines (pro-Moscow versus pro-Washington).⁵⁷

On the whole, the Bangladesh armed forces were divided on various ideological factions. P.B. Sinha has categorised them under three broad groups.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ See Nikhil Chakraborty's "Bangladesh" in U.S. Bajpai, ed., *India and its Neighbours* (New Delhi : Lancer International, 1986). p.280.

⁵⁷ Zillur Rahman Khan, *Martial Law To Martial Law : Leadership Crisis in Bangladesh* (Dhaka : University Press, 1984), p.86.

⁵⁸ Sinha, n.18, p.29.

The first group consisted of rightists, reactionaries, and Communalists. Though by circumstances, they formed part of armed forces of an independent, secular state, the members of this group were not prepared to accept the changes. Air Vice-Marshall M.G. Tawab and other like-minded military personnel can be placed under this category. The second group can be identified as 'Mujibists'. They believed in four state principles of nationalism, secularism, socialism and democracy and owed personnel loyalty to Sheikh Mujib. JRB exclusively and many other military personnel could be said to belong to this group.⁵⁹ The left-oriented members of the armed forces, owing allegiance to various extremist socialist parties and leaders could be placed in the third group. From the point of view of degree of influence exercised and following among the members of the armed forces, the *Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal*(JSD) occupied the most important place among the Leftist parties.⁶⁰

Apart from JSD, Siraj Sikdar's *Purba Bangla Sarbahara Party* had also some following within the Bangladesh armed forces. Both the parties had in their ranks quite a large number of army personnel either active or retired. A popular army officer, Major

⁵⁹ Some of the prominent armed forces personnel loyal to Sheikh Mujib were ——— JRB Chief, Brig.M. Nuruzzaman; BDR Chief Brig. Khalillur Rahman; JRB Deputy Chief Col. Sabehuddin Ahmed; Army Chief, Maj.Gen. K.M. Safiullah; Chief of General Staff, Brig. Khaled Mosharraf; Commander of the Dhaka Brigade, Col. Shafat Jamil etc.

⁶⁰ Sinha, n.18, pp.29-30.

M.A.Jalil, became the President of JSD in 1972 after he was released from the active service⁶¹. Another hero of the Liberation War, Col. Abu Taher joined JSD and organised its military wing, *Biplobi Gono Bahini* (Revolutionary People's Army).⁶² *Biplobi Gono Bahini* concentrated its efforts on infiltrating the lower echelons of the army. Because of its socialist slogans and having in its ranks popular war heroes like Col. Taher and Major Jalil, the task of influencing a politicised and youthful army was not too difficult. Another war hero and a close friend of Col. Taher, Ziauddin joined *Purba Bangla Sarbahara Party* in 1974 and organised its armed wing.⁶³

The differences which had previously existed over the questions of war strategy for the Liberation War took a new form in the post-independence period. The freedom fighters held two distinct views with regard to the future institutional framework of the

⁶¹ Major M. A. Jalil commanded the *Mukti Bahini* in the Khulna Sector during the Liberation War. However, in January 1972, he was arrested for 'insubordination'. He was released subsequently following a trial which exonerated him, and reinstated in July the same year. But, for his involvement in political activities he was forcibly retired from the army. After his dismissal from service, he joined active politics.

⁶² In 1972, Col. Taher was appointed Adjutant General of the Bangladesh Army and posted as the Commander of the 44 Brigade at Comilla. But soon he was transferred and appointed Director of General Military purchase. The political leadership was not pleased with Taher because of his leftist leanings and was forcibly retired from military service. In 1973, he finally joined active politics.

⁶³ Col. Ziauddin took the charge of important Dhaka Brigade after independence. He, however, had become deeply disillusioned over the political direction of the country. In August 1972, Col. Ziauddin bitterly criticised Sheikh Mujib's policies in a signed article published in the opposition weekly, *Holiday*, and was subsequently dismissed from the Army service. In 1974, he joined the underground communist movement. See "The Agony of Independence", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 16, 1974, pp.14-15.

armed forces in Bangladesh. One group favoured the retention of the conventional army on the pattern of the British India or Pakistan armed forces. The other group advocated that the Bangladesh armed forces should be transformed into a kind of 'productive army' on the model of the Chinese People's Army. The two best known advocates of the concept of 'productive army' were Col. Abu Taher and Col. Ziauddin.⁶⁴ They argued that all the soldiers were at the same time to be either workers or farmers.⁶⁵ They held that in a poor and underdeveloped country like Bangladesh, a 'conventional army' would inevitably mean a major financial burden on an already impoverished peasant economy.

The vast majority of Bangladesh military elite trained in the British military traditions, however, felt that the idea of 'productive army' would not work in a country like Bangladesh. They argued that in order to have a Chinese type of 'people's army', social regimentation was needed. Without the total regimentation of a society like China or other socialist states, the raising of 'people's army' would lead to war lordism and

⁶⁴ For a detailed analysis of the concept of 'productive army' see Col. Taher's testimony in Lifschultz, n.46, pp.85-88.

⁶⁵ As the Commander of the Comilla Brigade, Col. Taher continued to implement his theory of a 'productive army'. In Comilla, all officers and soldiers were required to do physical labour everyday. The men of the Comilla brigade were referred to as 'plough soldiers'. In his testimony, Taher stated, "The experience of the war of Independence, and the experience at Dacca and Comilla cantonments, inspired me to organise a Revolutionary People's Army, as opposed to an anti-production oriented standing Army". See Lifschultz, n.46, p.85.

internecine conflicts within the country, adversely affecting all developmental and institution building activities.⁶⁶

The prevalence of such opposing views regarding the role of the armed forces in a newly independent state and the inculcation of revolutionary ideas like Marxism among a section of the armed forces created an explosive situation within the Bangladesh armed forces.

The discord between ideologically committed military personnel to a 'people's army' and a Marxist state, and the status quoists eventually took the form of open confrontation between the soldiers and officers. The radical soldiers' revolutionary theory that the class struggle should first begin within the armed forces pitched them directly against the officers corps. The military leadership on the other hand came down heavily on radical soldiers. As the oppressions from the top increased, the conflict spread to different cantonments killing a large number of military personnel from both sides.⁶⁷

The ideological differences within the Bangladesh armed forces had another dimension too. Compared to the freedom fighters, who were highly politicised, exuberant

⁶⁶ See Khan, n.48, p.142.

⁶⁷ P.K.S. Namboodiri, "Defence : Defending What?" *World Focus*, vol.III, no.7, July 1982, p.16.

and full of ideological fervour, the repatriates retained much of the conservative outlook that characterised the armed forces in Pakistan.

Besides, there were also differences in the attitudes and behaviour of the freedom fighters and repatriates. The repatriates regarded most of the freedom fighters as basically secularists, socialists and pro-Indian while the freedom fighters stereotyped the repatriates as obscurantists, oppurtunists and pro-Pakistanis. The repatriates held that the Liberation war was fought with Indian resources and the victory was served by Indians on a silver platter; to the freedom fighters, the repatriates were safe in the Pakistani cantonments while the whole Bengalee nation was engaged in a life and death struggle. The repatriates always minimised the role of the Bengalee officers and soldiers who were actively engaged in armed resistance to the Pakistani forces. They also suggested that the main cause of political instability in Bangladesh was the rebellious attitude of the freedom fighters who very casually defied the formal authority structure of the Pakistani military. The freedom fighters on the other hand, complained that the repatriates were interested in enjoying the fruits of independence without having suffered for, and contributed to it.⁶⁸ Such differentiation between the freedom fighters and repatriates further politicised the Bangladesh armed forces and riddled them with factionalism and indiscipline.

⁶⁸ Khan, n.57, pp. 225-26.

Apart from ideological divisions, the armed forces of Bangladesh were also plagued by professional rivalries, jealousies, mutual antagonisms and groupism either between the different wings of the forces or between factions within one wing itself.⁶⁹

From the very beginning, the regular army was rivalled by large and well-equipped para-military force like the J JRB. JRB was basically designed to act as a countervailing force to the Bangladesh Army. JRB's creation, however, only exacerbated the internal schisms and generated serious conflicts between the command structures of the two parallel forces resulting in a deterioration of the morale of the military officers.

Another form of inter-wing schism was between the Bangladesh Rifles (former East Pakistan Rifles) and Bangladesh Army (former East Bengal Regiment). The genesis of such conflict could be traced to the pre-independence days when both of these forces were jointly fighting for the liberation of Bangladesh. The Bengalee army officers who deserted the Pakistan Army and joined the Liberation War were very critical of the ex-EPR personnel. The army officers felt that they were trained in the premier military academy and had been carrying the fine tradition of the Pakistan armed forces. Hence they were meant for leadership of a liberation force like *Mukti Bahini*. The ex-EPR personnel, according to them, were not up to the mark and deserved to be led by the officers belonging to superior military service having inimitable background. The former

⁶⁹ Sinha, n.18, p.32.

EPR personnel, on the other hand, were not prepared to submit to such ego and occasionally countered the army officers' conceit by sullen resentments. Such rivalries continued in the post-liberation period. In 1972, the conflict between these two forces reached such a state that Sheikh Mujib had to intervene personally to mediate in it.⁷⁰

Besides the former members of EBR and the repatriates, many irregular members of the *Mukti Bahini* were also recruited to the Bangladesh military in the post-liberation period. But, from the very beginning they were disliked by the professional soldiers.⁷¹

Furthermore, conflicts had existed even among the freedom fighters . In the Bangladesh Army, there were rivalries among the former sector commanders of the liberation forces. Being popular in their own commands, most of them enjoyed the backing of a considerable number of troops. This type of personalised relationship in an institution like the army had adversely affected the hierarchical command structure.

Intense rivalries also existed within the higher echelons of the Bangladesh Army. The rivalry between Ziaur Rahman and Khaled Mosharraf was well known. There was not much difference in their seniority in terms of service among these officers and

⁷⁰ See B.P. Saha, *Liberation Struggle and After* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1985), pp.66-70; Veena Kukreja, *Civil-Military Relations in South Asia; Pakistan, Bangladesh and India* (New Delhi : Sage Publication, 1991), pp.132-33.

⁷¹ See M. Rashiduzzaman, n.39, p.188.

Safiullah, the then Chief of the Army.⁷² But promotion or assignment to some important position of one officer without lift to others intensified the rivalry and created further tensions.⁷³

Moreover, the Bangladesh armed forces had seriously lacked social cohesion because of the differences in training, indoctrination and operational experience among the armed forces personnel. The repatriated Bengalee armed personnel were trained in the Pakistan Military Academy in an anti-Indian orientation and indoctrinated into Islamic ideology. They retained much of the conservative outlook since they did not undergo the experience of the Liberation War.

The freedom fighters, on the other hand, were highly nationalistic because of their active participation in the liberation struggle and a section of them were indoctrinated with radical ideas.

In the post-liberation period, the ruling Awami League regime could not evolve a common ideological framework for the Bangladesh armed forces. The institution-building process in the armed forces was ignored by the political leadership of Bangladesh. Instead, the Awami League government encouraged the internal cleavages

⁷² Zia and Safiullah were commissioned in the Pakistan Army in the same year ——— 1955. See Safiullah's war memoir, *Bangladesh At War* (Dhaka: Academic Publishers 1989); Ruhul Amin, ed., *Ziaur Rahman : Smarak Grantha* (Ziaur Rahman: Memorial Volume) (Dhaka : Hira Book Mart, 1991). Khaled Mosharraf, on the other hand, was junior to both Safiullah and Zia. See Khan, n.48, p.113.

⁷³ Sinha, n.18, p.33.

Bangladesh. Instead, the Awami League government encouraged the internal cleavages in the armed forces by political patronage and setting one faction against the other which finally resulted in sharpening the internal cleavages and further politicising the armed forces of Bangladesh.

Despite personal and ideological rivalries, the armed forces personnel had one thing in common—they were not satisfied with the mode of functioning of the civilian regime of Sheikh Mujib, particularly its handling of the defence establishment.

In the Bangladesh armed forces, there was a feeling among the freedom fighters that they had spearheaded and sustained the actual liberation struggle and that therefore, they should be given a share in the national decision making process. Apart from the freedom fighters, the senior repatriate officers, and officers commissioned after 1971 also believed in a supportive role for the military in politics.

Sheikh Mujib was not totally unaware of such feelings of the senior military officers. What bothered Mujib most about the military, was the combination of internal conflict and its growing disenchantment with the Awami League. This combination became too explosive for the civilian government to handle, particularly when the contending factions within the military started drawing active support from different

groups⁷⁴ which had once taken up arms against the Pakistanis⁷⁵. All these factors made the civil-military relationship very uneasy in post-independent Bangladesh.

⁷⁴ Various underground revolutionary parties like JSD, Siraj Sikdar's *Purba Bangla Sarbahara Party*, Mohammad Toaha's *Sammobadi Dal* etc. were constantly trying to take political mileage out of the prevailing anti-Mujib feelings among the armed personnel through their sympathisers in the Bangladesh armed forces.

⁷⁵ Khan, n.57, pp.102-103.

CHAPTER THREE

PATTERNS OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS (1971-1975)

Bangladesh emerged as an independent state through a strong politico-military struggle for the establishment of democracy in the military-bureaucracy ruled Pakistan. The Bengalee members of the Pakistan armed forces and various civil-political forces fought the Liberation War and won. Independent Bangladesh adopted parliamentary democracy and following the Western liberal model, the military was put under civilian control. The armed forces in Bangladesh were organised as a professional body and expected to be politically neutral. The Bangladesh armed forces also wanted a civilian democratic government. In fact, the military as an institution did not insist on positions of influence in the new state. It was content with the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation, and in the first two years of independence, gave him loyalty and support.¹

However, this conventional pattern of civil-military relations did not last long; for, soon there was a decay of civilian authority. The civil-military relations also suffered due to a number of contradictory and inept decisions of the government, both during the liberation war and in the post-liberation period.

¹ Anthony Mascarenhas, *Bangladesh: A Legacy of Blood* (London: Hadder and Stoughton, 1986), p.36.

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS DURING THE LIBERATION WAR:

During the Liberation War, the Awami League (AL) leadership not only established its firm control over the armed forces, but also tried to control and direct decision-making within the regular armed forces. In order to preserve their dominance over the decision-making structure within the Liberation Forces organised under the command of Col. (Retd.) M.A.G. Osmani, the Awami League legislators² did two things³ during the Liberation War. First, a politically oriented militant guerrilla force-called *Mujib Bahini* was raised to counter-balance not only the independent actions of the regular forces but also the *Mukti Bahini* and other freedom fighters belonging to different ideological groups, particularly the radicals.⁴

² It refers to the elected members of the National Assembly (MNAs) and Provincial Assembly (MPAs) in 1970 general elections.

³ See Zillur Rahman Khan, *Martial Law To Martial Law: Leadership Crisis in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: University Press, 1984), p.104.

⁴ Muyeedul Hassan, however, holds a different view. According to him *Mujib Bahini* was raised under the direct patronage of RAW (India's Foreign Intelligence Unit) on the prior request of Sheikh Mujib to the government of India and this was infact highly resented by the top AL leaders. A special political force like the *Mujib Bahini* in addition to acting as a countervailing force to the radicals, was also supposed to represent the leadership of Sheikh Mujib in his absence. See Muyeedul Hassan, *Muldhara : Ekkatar*, pp.7-8 and 77-80.

The formation of a well-equipped fighting force like the *Mujib Bahini*, outside the command of the *Mukti Bahini* often resulted in misunderstanding and strained the smooth working relationship between the political leadership of the government-in-exile and the regular army personnel, and other freedom fighters.

The political leaders comprising the government were not armed fighters who took active part in the war. Almost all the political leader lacked any training or experience in war strategies. Although they provided support and logistics in collaboration with India, they did so from a distance residing in the city of Calcutta. This eventually created a feeling among the military officers that their contribution and sacrifice for the Liberation War was much greater.⁵

What alienated the military officers most was the decision of the political leadership to bestow the rank of major general and brigadier to all 177 MNAs and 270 MPAs belonging to the AL. By making the AL legislators senior in rank to all the sector commanders⁶, the provisional government leadership tried to consolidate its

⁵ See Moudud Ahmed, *Bangladesh : Era of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman* (Dhaka: University Press, 1983), p.39.

⁶ Almost all the sector commanders of the *Mukti Bahini* were in the rank of major. See the set-up of 'Bangladesh Operational Sectors' in Appendix D, pp. 191-92.

political control over the military leadership. This only exacerbated the worsening civil-military relations during the later part of the Liberation War.⁷

The military officers were seriously dissatisfied with these decisions of the AL leaders. But they could not express their resentment due to some compulsions on their part. The EBR and EPR personnel, who formed the core of the armed resistance to the Pakistani forces, also wanted a civilian leadership for legitimacy. They were aware of the fact that the government of India was committed to support Sheikh Mujib and his AL which had gained legitimacy in the 1970 general elections and formed the provisional government of Bangladesh in Calcutta. Hence they decided to serve the government faithfully despite their grievances. Moreover, as *Mukti Bahini* was provided with logistics and training facilities by the Government of India, they had to remain loyal to the AL leadership.

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN THE IMMEDIATE POST-LIBERATION PERIOD :

Soon after the liberation when the political elites were required to play new roles and to cope with a new situation, they failed miserably. Such failure on the part of the AL leadership can to a great extent be attributed to the lack of previous experience of

⁷ See Z.R. Khan, n.3, p.104.

governing a state. Due to its inability to adjust to the new situation the political leadership of Bangladesh found itself incapable of maintaining a smooth working relationship with the two other vital institutions of the state --- military and bureaucracy. This at times resulted in misunderstanding and distrust between the ruling elites and the civil - military bureaucracy in Bangladesh.⁸ The ruling AL regime, seemed to be more preoccupied with consolidating its position rather than defining the relationship between the government and other institutions, such as the military and bureaucracy.

After the liberation, the political elites occupied a more influential position vis-a-vis the civil-military bureaucracy. The AL leadership concentrated its efforts on ensuring civilian supremacy so that the military could not seize power as in Pakistan.

The AL leaders emerged as the key-policy makers in independent Bangladesh and the party channel became the main channel of control and direction. The AL also penetrated deeply into the different spheres of administration. Most of the state corporations were headed either by the AL leaders or by its sympathisers⁹. In short, the

⁸ See Golam Hossain, *Civil-Military Relations in Bangladesh: A Comparative Study* (Dhaka: Academic Publishers, 1991), pp.68-69.

⁹ See Emajuddin Ahamed, *Military Rule and Myth of Democracy* (Dhaka: University Press, 1988), pp.50-51.

AL equated the state with the ruling party and used the state power for self-aggrandisement.¹⁰

Thus, the civil-military bureaucracy was confronted with a socio-political environment in independent Bangladesh which was not conducive to its acquiring a dominant political power and position. The military leadership accepted the principle of civilian supremacy shedding its previous decision-making role because of the then existing consensus on the parliamentary system among the majority of political parties¹¹ and the massive popular support Sheikh Mujib and his party --- AL enjoyed in the post-liberation period.¹² Besides, the faction-ridden and fragile military establishment,

¹⁰ See Jayanta Kumar Ray's "Political and Social Tension in Bangladesh" in Kalim Bahadur and others, eds., *South Asia In Transition : Conflict and Tensions* (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1986), p.159.

¹¹ See Rounaq Jahan, *Bangladesh Politics : Problems and Issues* (Dhaka : University Press, 1988), pp.135-36.

¹² The popularity of the AL in the post-liberation period was at its zenith because of the party's successive landslide victory in the general elections of 1970 and 1973. Besides, the leadership qualities of the great charismatic figure - Sheikh Mujib, was also a great asset for AL. In addition, the AL organised a number of interest oriented groups like the *Chattra League* (The students' Front), *Jatiyo Sramik League* (National Labour League), *Jatiyo Krishak League* (National Peasants' League) etc. These interest groups mobilised support for the party and provided inputs for policy and programmes. See E. Ahamed, n.9, pp.50-51 and 67.

alienated from the common people because of its past elitist attitude, was not in a position to challenge AL's dominant role.¹³

Sheikh Mujib's preference for his own party vis-a-vis the civil-military bureaucracy was largely a result of his own past political experience. In his struggle against Pakistan, he came to distrust the old power-bastion --- the civil-military complex and relied on the advice and support of his party members.¹⁴ As his old suspicion of the military establishment lingered on, he acted more as a party chief than Head of the government.¹⁵

BANGLADESH MILITARY'S CORPORATE GRIEVANCES:

Like any other institution or organisation operating within a state, the military is seriously concerned with the preservation and promotion of its interests. Military's corporate interests relate to issues like adequate budgetary support, autonomy in

¹³ See Al Masud Hasanuzzaman's "Over Developed Bureaucracy and Political Development in Bangladesh", in M. Salimullah Khan, ed., *Politics and Stability in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Jahangirnagar University, 1985) pp.49-52.

¹⁴ Some of the most prominent political advisers of Mujib were Tajuddin Ahmed, Syed Nazrul Islam, Kamal Hossain, Tofael Ahmed, Sheikh Fazlul Huq Moni, Gazi Golam Mostafa etc.

¹⁵ See Jahan, n.11, pp.134-36.

managing its internal affairs, protecting its interests in the face of the existence of rival institutions, continuity of the institution and further strengthening it and to ensure that there is justice in promotions and respect for seniority.¹⁶

Finer argues that the military is very 'jealous' of its corporate status and privileges.¹⁷ Any encroachment on or negligence of military's professional integrity and corporate exclusivity could turn the military against the civilian regime.

In independent Bangladesh, the AL leadership from the very beginning underestimated the role of the defence forces. The military establishment was reduced to a largely ceremonial role.¹⁸ But since the armed forces played a heroic role in the liberation struggle of Bangladesh, they expected that they would have an opportunity of active participation in nation building and state building activities. The political

¹⁶ See Amos Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics In Modern Times : On Professionals, Praetorians and Revolutionary Soldiers*. (New York : Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 181-88; E. Ahamed, n.q, p.8.

¹⁷ S.E. Finer, *Man on Horseback : The Role of the Military In Politics* (London : Penguin Books, 1975), p.41.

¹⁸ Mujib's negligence towards building a large and effective Defence Forces was highly resented by the top military echelons. In an interview on December 11, 1975, Maj Gen. Ziaur Rahman said, "We were really not an army and did not exist on paper. There was no legal basis for the army. There was no T.O.E. (Table of organisation and Establishment). Everything was ad hoc. The army was paid because Mujib said it should be paid. Our existence depended on Mujib's word". See Mascarenhas, n.1, p.34.

leadership, however did not attach much importance to building a strong military force.¹⁹ This attitude of the government frustrated the highly nationalistic Bangladesh armed forces. Gen. (Retd.) Osmani, the first commander-in-chief (c-in-c) of the Bangladesh armed forces, was himself disappointed with the way the AL government handled defence affairs. He once complained that post-liberation plan approved by the cabinet in 1972 to organise "well-trained, well-equipped, well-led and, consequently, well-disciplined regular forces capable of meeting a surprise attack, backed by vast non-regular forces, who are periodically trained on an organised schedule and maintained in a state of readiness which enable their instant or reasonably speedy activation, to take the field to defend the country against an aggression" was not implemented; instead, he was disassociated from matters connected with defence.²⁰

During 1972-75, the policy planning introduced by the AL government and the treatment accorded to the military created much discontent among the armed personnel. The repatriates particularly, resented that the facilities offered by the Mujib government to the armed forces were much less than what they used to enjoy in Pakistan. Moreover, Mujib government's differential treatment within the armed forces not only generated mutual antagonism among the armed personnel but also seriously undermined

¹⁹ In 1974, referring to government's commitment of not having a big standing army, Sheikh Mujib said, "I do not want to create another monster like the one we had in Pakistan". See Mascarenhas, n.1, p.36.

²⁰ See Gen. (Retd). M.A.G. Osmani's "Role of the Armed Forces in Bangladesh, *Preksit-I* (The context-I), (Dhaka : July 1, 1986), quoted in Hossain, n.8, p.76.

the *esprit de corps* of the Bangladesh armed forces already plagued by factionalism and internal cleavages.

DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT IN THE ARMED FORCES

The Bangladesh armed personnel complained that they were not treated equally by the Mujib government. The men and officers who took part in the Liberation War received preferential treatment from the AL government. They were offered seniority in the service. The appellation 'Freedom Fighters' was considered as a badge of valour, whereas the word 'Repatriate' became a term of derision for the 'returnees'.²¹

As the AL government offered two years seniority to freedom fighters, the senior repatriate officers found that they were placed under officers who were juniors to them in the former Pakistan armed forces. In fact, even this modified seniority rule was frequently ignored. Loyalty and closeness to the regime became the criteria used for offering promotions or assignment or some important position to the officers.²² Some

²¹ Cited in Mascarenhas, n.1, p.17.

²² Some senior army officers held the view that it was Mujib who adopted the policy of divide and rule in the armed forces, getting rid of any one who seemed to be a threat to him. In the words of Brig. Manzoor, Maj. Gen. Zia's Chief of General Staff, "It was he who divided the army into so many groups. He called them separately, giving one a promotion, another a perk. Things were done without reference to the Chief of Staff", See. Mascarenhas, n.1, p.34.

of the senior officers who returned from Pakistan, were either retired unceremoniously or posted to insignificant commands. A number of officers were transferred to civilian posts.²³ All these were disliked by many in the cantonments.

Not only were the repatriates superseded or passed over for promotion, but they were kept hanging around on 'the attached list' of the Army. All their appointments were ad hoc. The officers and soldiers repatriated from Pakistan also complained that they were not paid a salary for the eighteen months they had to spend in 'Concentration Camps' in Pakistan before being repatriated to Bangladesh.²⁴

The uncertainty about jobs, promotion and appointments created the impression in the minds of the repatriate army personnel that the civilian regime of Sheikh Mujib was not really interested in strengthening the country's Defence Forces. In addition, the feeling of being discriminated against on the part of repatriates vis-a-vis the freedom

²³ For instance, after his return from Pakistan, the senior most army officer, Lt. Gen. Wasiuddin was appointed as an Officer on Special Duty in the Foreign Ministry. He was not offered the post of chief of the Bangladesh Army. See Jahan, n.11, p.93.

²⁴ The repatriates claimed that they also had to suffer for the independence of Bangladesh. All the Bengalee officers and men stranded in West Pakistan were subjected to humiliation of various kinds. They were also disarmed and kept in secluded and well-guarded camps. See Mascarenhas, n.1, pp.16-17

fighters adversely affected military's morale, accelerated the process of polarisation of the two and strained the command structure of the defence services.²⁵

CREATION OF A PARALLEL ARMED FORCE TO THE ARMY

While the interference in the internal affairs of the armed forces and according differential treatment to them generates a crisis situation, the creation of a functional rival to the military only exacerbates it.²⁶ The military is seriously concerned about its professional integrity and corporate exclusivity. Finer maintains that the motive of corporate self-interest stands out boldly in those situations where the government is thought to be contemplating the establishment of some form of militia. The professionals react sharply to the joint threat to their pride and careers.²⁷

The creation of parallel armed force in the form of a people's militia or special security forces is highly resented by the regular members of the armed forces for the following reasons: first, it tends to take away military's monopolistic control over the means of coercion; second, it may weaken the military's ability to safeguard its

²⁵ E. Ahamed, n.9, p.52

²⁶ Ibid, p.12.

²⁷ Finer, n.17, p.48.

corporate interest since the rival may act as a countervailing force; third, it gives the military an impression that armed forces are replaceable.²⁸

Bangladesh presents here an apt illustration of the above theoretical proposition regarding the creation of a parallel armed force and its implications for the regular member of the armed forces. The creation of the *Jatiyo Rakshi Bahini* (JRB)²⁹ -- an elite and well-equipped para-military force owing exclusive allegiance to one leader i.e. Sheikh Mujib rather than the nation at large, infuriated the regular members of the armed forces. The army felt neglected and it regarded the JRB with suspicion. The priority attached to the JRB and the facilities offered by the government to them only reinforced the suspicion of the army officers.

²⁸ See Eric A. Nordlinger's *Soldiers in Politics : Military Coups and Government* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1977) p.75.

²⁹ After liberation, apart from the JRB, the AL government had raised nearly half a dozen *Bahinis* or armed organisation such as *Sescha Shebak Bahini* (Voluntary Force of AL), *Lal Bahini* of Sramik League (Worker cadres of AL) etc. Mujib created so many *Bahinis*, he failed to co-ordinate there functionally and structurally. Clashes amongst these *Bahinis* were quite frequent. See M.A. Mannan's "Mujib's Political Structures : Problems of Coordination" in M.S. Khan, n.13, p.118; see also Jahan, n.11, p.93.

Furthermore, while the training and recruitment drive for the JRB continued, the recruitment to the Bangladesh Army was nearly stopped.³⁰ In 1975³¹, it was further planned that the JRB units would be increased annually so that the total strength of this para-militia could reach the figure of 130,000 in 1980.³²

Apart from the numerical strength of the JRB, which emerged as an 'alternative army,' what antagonised the military personnel was Sheikh Mujib's preferential treatment towards this special security force vis-a-vis the meagre facilities provided to the regular armed forces. In the successive annual budgets since 1972, the Mujib government gradually decreased the total expenditure were allocated for the armed forces. In the 1972-73 budget, only 17p.c. of the total expenditure allowed for the defence. In the budgets of 1973-74, 1974-75 and 1975-76, expenditures allowed for the defence gradually decreased to 16p.c., 15p.c. and 13p.c. respectively.³³ The army

³⁰ In 1974, there were only 26,500 men in the regular armed forces whereas the total strength of the para-military forces was reported to be 29,000. See the *Military Balance*, 1974-75, pp.52-53.

³¹ The total strength of the JRB in 1975 was 16,000. See the *Military Balance* 1975-76, pp.52-53.

³² Cited in Talukdar Maniruzzaman, "Bangladesh in 1975: The Fall of Mujib Regime and Its Aftermath", *Asian Survey*, vol.XVI, no.2, February 1976, pp.120-21.

³³ See Veena Kukreja, *Civil-Military Relations in South Asia: Pakistan, Bangladesh and India*. (New Delhi: Sage, 1991), pp.134-35.

personnel further complained that most of the modest allocation was spent on buying arms and ammunition for the JRB³⁴ while the rank and file of the regular armed forces had been living on much the same level as the civilian population --- in virtual poverty, in over crowded barracks and so on.³⁵

All these factors made the regular armed forces highly resentful of the Mujib government. They perceived that military's corporate interests were seriously jeopardised by Mujib's inept handling of the defence establishment.

MILITARY'S CONCERN FOR NATIONAL INTEREST

The military often relates its corporate interests with that of the interests of the nation. Such belief of the armed forces develops from the fact that they consider

³⁴ While JRB's budget was raised from TK. 74.4 million in 1972-73 to TK. 150 million in 1973-74, the allocation for Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), the other para-military force guarding the boarder stood at TK.80 million only in the budget for 1973-74. See Talukdar Marniruzzaman, *Group Interests and Political charges : Studies of Pakistan and Bangladesh* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1982), pp.158 and 168.

³⁵ The prevailing conditions in the cantonments could be better understood in the words of Maj. Gen. Zia: "We wanted to keep the army absolutely professional, but politics was introduced at all levels...., the army was too small...., it was disorganised...,there was a lot of pressure on us not to have a big army. We did not have even uniform or clothes for the soldiers", See Marcus Franda, "Ziaur Rahman and Bangladesh Nationalism", *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol.XVI, nos, 10-12, March, p.357.

themselves as the selfless and dedicated guardian of the nation's interest. Since the armed forces identify themselves with the nation, and since the nation's honour, sovereignty and power reside with and within armed forces, the military elites think that what is good for them is also good for the nation.³⁶

According to Finer, all the armed forces which have become politicised³⁷, hold, in some form or the other, a similar belief: that they have some special and indeed unique identification with the 'national interest'³⁸

In Bangladesh, the armed forces were not only dissatisfied with the poor handling of the defence services, they also highly resented the foreign policy pursued by the AL government, particularly Sheikh Mujib's repeated emphasis on Bangladesh's cordial ties

³⁶ E. Ahamed, n.9, pp.8-9.

³⁷ Here, the politicisation of the military can be attributed to the inculcation of certain doctrines or ideologies among the armed personnel which sometimes confers a distinct identity upon the military establishment. Such indoctrination process is designed to boost patriotism and national feelings among the armed forces. The idea that the armed forces are national and they are always ready to work in the national interest are inculcated into the military mantle during the training period.

³⁸ See Finer, n.17, p30.

with India.³⁹ The armed personnel in Bangladesh nursed a feeling that, Sheikh Mujib's excessive dependence on India was detrimental to the very independent existence of the infant republic.

The genesis of such feeling among the Bangladesh armed personnel could be traced to the fact that they had been in the thick of the Liberation War of 1971. It has been noticed that, in the countries where the armed forces played an active role in the freedom movement, it developed a penchant for sustained interests in the national decision-making which normally went beyond its professional role.⁴⁰ Mujib's denial of any opportunity to them in this regard became another factor contributing to frustration and resentment among them.

Almost all groups in the Bangladesh armed forces shared a common anti-Indian orientation for a number of reasons. The anti-Indian feeling, in fact started growing almost immediately after India withdrew its troops from Bangladesh in March 1972⁴¹

³⁹ Sheikh Mujib used to put rhetorical emphasis on Indo-Bangladesh ties. He said at his public meeting in Calcutta on February 6, 1972: "Secularism, nationalism, democracy and socialism are the principles of both the countries. Our friendship is based on these principles; no power on earth can create a rift in our friendship", See A.L. Khatib, *Who killed Mujib?* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1981), p.122.

⁴⁰ Kukreja, n.33, pp.131-32.

⁴¹ For further analysis see Jyoti Sengupta, *Bangladesh: In Blood and Tears* (Calcutta: Naya Prakash, 1981), pp.41-42.

and this feeling became heightened when it appeared to the military officers that the close linkage of the AL Regime with India was against their corporate interests.

The military elites in Bangladesh highly resented Mujib's signing of the Indo-Bangladesh Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Peace which they perceived would make Bangladesh a client state of its big neighbour, India.⁴² They also believed that because of this treaty, Mujib now looked to India for protecting Bangladesh from external aggression. The treaty thus, according to them, obviated the need for an effective fighting force and the country's defence establishment was reduced to a police keeping and largely ceremonial role.⁴³ Ex army officers like Maj.M.A. Jalil, Col. Abu Taher and Col.M. Ziauddin complained many times against this treaty.⁴⁴

⁴² Col. Farooq and Col. Rashid have accused the Sheikh Mujib's government of making Bangladesh a client state by deliberately pursuing an Indo-Soviet oriented foreign policy during 1971-75. See Cols. (Retd.) Farooq and Rashid, *Muktir Path* (The Road To Freedom) (Dhaka: Syed Aatur Rahman, 1984), pp 35-36.

⁴³ Mascarenhas, n.1, p.36.

⁴⁴ See Hossain, n.8, p.78.

The higher echelons of the Bangladesh Army also believed that the JRB was designed and planned by the Indian Army for the safety of a pro-Indian government in Bangladesh.⁴⁵

Furthermore, almost all the numbers of the Bangladesh armed forces who fought in the Liberation War had the feeling that the Indian forces "just walked into Bangladesh, when we had already finished the job", thus robbing the *Mukti Bahini* of the glory of liberating Bangladesh.⁴⁶

Again, some of the sector commanders of the Mukti Bahini were unhappy to see that Lt.Gen. Niazi of the Pakistan armed forces had surrendered to Lt.Gen. Arora of the Indian Army. Their grievance was that the surrender was not signed with the c-in-c of the Bangladesh Liberation Forces, Col. (Retd.) M.A.G. Osmani.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ See Taher's testimony in Lawrence Lifschultz, *Bangladesh: The Unfinished Revolution* (London: Zed Press, 1979), p.86.

⁴⁶ Cited in Maniruzzaman, n.34, p.173.

⁴⁷ Sengupta, n.41, pp.41-42.

The poorly equipped Bangladesh armed forces were also misled by the motivated allegations that the Indian Army took away all the sophisticated weapons and vehicles left by the Pakistanis as 'prized booty'.⁴⁸

According to a number of Bangladeshi scholars such anti-Indian feelings gradually developed into an anti-Mujib feeling because of AL government's pro-Indian foreign policy. In their opinion, the armed forces which played the most heroic role in the creation of independent Bangladesh earned with so much blood and sacrifices were highly frustrated to see their motherland fast becoming a 'protectorate' because of Sheikh Mujib's over all foreign policy position and the dependent relationship of Bangladesh on India.⁴⁹

PREVAILING SOCIO-POLITICAL CONDITIONS:

The factors facilitating armed force's involvement in the domestic politics of a new nation are not exclusively of military origin. It also relates to the prevailing socio-political environment of a state. The prevalence of conditions like fragility of political institutions, chronic political instability, dismal economic performance of a regime,

⁴⁸ Z.R. Khan, n.3, pp.102-103.

⁴⁹ See Habiba Zaman's, "The Military in Bangladesh Politics", in Choudhury E. Haque, ed., *Bangladesh : Politics, Economy and Society*, p.21; Hossain, n.8, pp.78-79.

increasing authoritarianism, lack of consensus on important issues in the polity etc., could lead a political system towards a praetorian one.

By praetorian polities, Huntington refers to the political systems marked by low levels of institutionalisation and high levels of participation where the social forces using their own methods act directly in the political spheres. Huntington argues that in praetorian polities, military interventions are only one specific manifestation of the general politicisation of the social forces and institutions. In such societies all sorts of forces and groups became directly involved in politics dealing with general political issues: not just issues which affect their own particular institutional interest or groups, but issues which affect society as a whole.⁵⁰

Taking into account the above mentioned theoretical exposition, it can be presumed that military's assumption of political role depends on a multiplicity of factors, which are not mutually exclusive. The degree and extent of military intervention in politics in a country depends on the prevailing state of civil-military relations, socio-economic and political conditions, and the status and role of the military in the society. The general background of the military politics in Bangladesh (1972-1975) will be analysed in the light of the above mentioned theoretical formulations.

⁵⁰ S.P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), pp.78-83 and 194-195.

LEVEL OF SOCIAL MOBILISATION

Bangladesh contains a highly politicised population.⁵¹ The country has a long tradition of high political participation dating back to the time of the partition of the Indian sub-continent. During 1940-46, Muslim League's demand for the cause of Pakistan generated massive support among the muslim population in the eastern part of Bengal. The tradition of mass movement continued even after the creation of Pakistan as the Bengalees soon started movements for cultural and political autonomy in East Pakistan. In the 1950s the Bengalees, mostly students and professionals, actively participated in the Autonomy Movement of 1950 and the Language Movement of 1952.

The imposition of Martial Law in 1958 and the consequent limitations put on political process gave birth to a series of movements protesting restricted participation and mobilising support behind the cause of Bengali nationalism. The mass movements in 1960s included --- the Anti-Constitution movement of 1962-63, Education Movement of 1964, mostly participated by students, intelligentsia and lawyers, AL's Six-Point Movement of 1966 and the anti-Ayub Movement of 1968.⁵² All these movements culminated in the Liberation War of 1971 which involved higher level of participation from the entire cross-section of the population. Such tradition of mass participation also

⁵¹ Kukreja, n.33, p.137.

⁵² Jahan, n.11, pp.172-73.

continued in the post-liberation period. In fact, the long centuries of struggle against alien rulers fostered an oppositional mentality, and even with independence Bangladeshis have not been able to contain it.⁵³

Apart from the participation in mass movements, the electoral participation of the Bangladeshis had also been fairly high. In all the national elections held between 1946-73, an average of 54 p.c. of the electorates cast their votes.

The Bangladesh political process paradoxically reflects weak party institutionalisation on one hand and high electoral participation and strong political movements on the other. While poverty, illiteracy and lack of strong party organisation tend to lower citizen participation in electoral politics, the tradition of political movements works as a 'counter weight'. It politicises the Bangladesh masses and leads to higher participation.⁵⁴

⁵³ See Talukdar Maniruzzaman's "The Future of Bangladesh" in A.J. Wilson and D. Delton, eds., *The States of South Asia: Problems of National Integration* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1982), p.281-83.

⁵⁴ Jahan, n.11, pp.174-75.

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE OF THE AWAMI LEAGUE REGIME

Post-independent Bangladesh inherited a war- devastated economy and was confronted with the up hill task of rehabilitating millions of refugees and reconstructing the economic infrastructure back to the 1969-70 level. As socialism was declared to be one of the four state principles of Bangladesh, the Awami League nationalised most of the big industries, banks and insurance companies and gained control over 86 p.c. of the total industrial assets and 87 p.c. of the foreign trade of Bangladesh. In the First Five Year Plan, 1973-78, the government spelled out its main objective---to restore production to 1969-70 'bench-mark level'.

During the first two years after the liberation, the economic performance of the AL government was more or less satisfactory. In 1972-73 different sectors of the economy considerably recovered from the losses of 1971⁵⁵ and the government was successful in avoiding a large-scale famine.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ The industrial production made a fast recovery. By August 1972, most of the sectors of industrial production regained over 90 p.c. of their 1969-70 output. Bangladesh's exports also increased and by August 1972, the balance-of-trade stood at TK. 175 million. See Kukreja, n 33, p.151.

⁵⁶ The Bangladesh government averted a major economic crisis in the country mainly with the help of massive relief operations carried by the U.N. Relief Organisation in Bangladesh (UNROB) and other international agencies. See Marcus Franda, *Bangladesh: The First Decade* (New Delhi : South Asia Publishers, 1982), pp.29-30

However, the economic situation in the country began to deteriorate from the beginning of 1974. The regime fell far short of its economic goal of bringing the production and volumes of trade back to the level of 1969-70. The level of production remained lower than 1969-70. Both agricultural and industrial production declined sharply. In 1974-75, the GDP for agricultural and industrial sector fell by 6.7 p.c. and 12.75 p.c. respectively.⁵⁷ The GDP registered a growth of 2 p.c. in 1974-75⁵⁸ while the population increased by 3 p.c.. Thus there was a negative growth rate in per capita income.⁵⁹

The industries throughout the country were reduced to a state of collapse. Sheikh Mujib's party-oriented economic management could be held responsible for the decrease in industrial production. The AL government mostly appointed the party personnel as administrators of the nationalised industries who had neither experience nor managerial ability. They turned the state enterprises into private estates, misappropriated their assets, and sold much of the machineries for personal gain.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ See Emajuddin Ahamed, *Bureaucratic Elites in Segmented Economic Growth: Bangladesh and Pakistan* (Dhaka: University Press, 1980), p.191.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ In order to meet the minimum standard of living Bangladesh needed to generate a rate of growth in GDP of at least 5 to 6 p.c. per year.

⁶⁰ See Matiur Rahman, *Bangladesh Today : An Indictment and a Lament* (London: News and Media, 1978), p.123.

Though the government nationalised 87 p.c. of the foreign trade, the distribution of the imported goods was made through licensed dealers who were mostly Awami Leaguers. They sold them to the traders and became owners of large amounts of unearned income.⁶¹

The relief committees set up in the rural areas immediately after the liberation to distribute relief materials consisted of AL workers, who either took all the relief materials themselves or distributed them to their selected favourites. Furthermore, agricultural inputs distributed by state appointed dealers and distributors also manifested similar misallocation and corruption.⁶²

Agriculture, which accounts for nearly 80p.c. of Bangladesh's economic activity, however, remained in the private sector. Although the government exercised control over some crucial agricultural inputs like fertilizers, pesticides, credit at subsidised rates etc., but only a few structural changes were made in the agricultural sector. Besides, the pre-independence pledges regarding the land reform and land distribution were not honoured. A ceiling of 100 *bighas* (33 acres) was imposed --- the same as in 1950. Thus there was not much land reforms as such.

⁶¹ E. Ahamed, n.9, p.59.

⁶² Kukreja, n.33, p.140.

While production declined sharply both in the industrial and agricultural sectors, the circulation of paper money increased. Inflation inevitably followed. The prices of essential commodities registered a 100 p.c. rise by the middle of 1974 over the 1969-70 price level.⁶³

While the economy was virtually in a state of collapse, the situation was exacerbated by the worst flood in history in July and August 1974. The famine conditions resulted in innumerable deaths due to starvation and disease.⁶⁴

The soaring price level of the essential commodities, sharp fall of production in the nationalised industries, widespread corruption, cross-border smuggling etc. gave birth to a *nouveau riche* class, mostly belonging to the AL. But on the other hand, a vast majority of the population was abysmally poor. In 1974, 46 million people out of a total population of 74 million were living below the bare subsistence level. They were mostly landless peasants and small farmers.⁶⁵ The workers, landless labourers, marginal farmers and other deprived sections of the Bangladesh society gradually turned

⁶³ Mascarenhas, n.1, p.43.

⁶⁴ See Lifschultz's, "Reaping a Harvest of Misery", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 25, 1974, pp.28-30. and his "A Death Trap Called Rangpur", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 15, 1974, p.33.

⁶⁵ See Lifschultz's, "A state of Seize", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 30, 1974, pp.47-51.

against the Mujib government because of the sharp decline in the real wages and deterioration in their living standards.

The common people in Bangladesh expected a betterment in their material conditions after emancipation from the Pakistani exploitation. Instead, the increasing economic hardships in the post-liberation period developed deep frustration among the masses. This was capitalised by political forces opposed to Mujib and made a basis for social mobilisation against him. Finally, it resulted in the disintegration of the Mujib regime.

POLITICAL POLARISATION IN BANGLADESH

While economically Bangladesh stood paralysed, with its industries asphyxiated, commerce in disarray, world market for jute and jute products lost, government's inability to pay for the imports growing, the country was also going through amazing political transformations.⁶⁶ The chronic economic problems indeed, compounded the country's political problems.

Bangladesh was born through a bloody revolution in 1971. Different socio-political forces who fought for the liberation of Bangladesh were sharply divided

⁶⁶ Rahman, n.60, pp.123-24.

on ideological grounds. However, inspite of the ideological differences, all the forces fought against Pakistan with single-minded devotion for the liberation of Bangladesh.

But not long after the liberation, pre-independence consensus on parliamentary democracy began to disappear from the political scene of Bangladesh and there was an increasing polarisation between the different political forces threatening to enmesh the country in a prolonged period of social disorder and political instability.

The year 1974 saw the sharp polarisation of politics --- with the AL and its pro-Moscow and rightist supporters on the one hand, and the several open and underground communist parties on the other. On April 4, 1974, six opposition parties --- National Awami Party (Bhasani), *Bangla Jatiyo League*, *Bangladesh Jatiyo League*, *Bangladesh Gono Mukti Union*, Bangladesh Communist Party (Leninist) and *Krishak Sramik Samajbadi Dal* --- formed a united Front against the AL. The Front demanded the introduction of full rationing system in the country, eradication of widespread corruption, smuggling and profiteering and decided to launch a mass movement from June 1974.⁶⁷ The AL government immediately suppressed the movement by arresting the top leaders of the Front.

⁶⁷ E. Ahamed, n.9, p.60.

The real threat to the political and social stability, however, came from the left revolutionary parties. The Bangladesh war of liberation unleashed a number of revolutionary forces that were not content with mere independence.⁶⁸ They believed that the salvation of the poverty-stricken masses could only be achieved through a social revolution like that of the Chinese People's War.⁶⁹

There were several left revolutionary parties in Bangladesh --- *Jatiyo Samajtrantik Dal* (National Socialist Party), *Purba Bangla Sarbohara Party* (East Bengal Proletariat Party), *Purba-Banglar Sammobadi Dal, Marxbadi-Leninbadi* (Communist Party-Marxist-Leninist of East Bengal), *Purba- Bangla Communist Party-Marxbadi-Leninbadi* (East Bengal Communist Party-Marxist-Leninist) and East Pakistan Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist).⁷⁰

Jatiyo Samajtrantik Dal (JSD) was the most active among these left revolutionary parties. JSD was composed of the dissident and radical factions of the AL and its affiliated organisations. Soon after independence, AL's student front --- *Chhatra League* was divided over the question of introducing 'Scientific Socialism' or Mujibbad

⁶⁸ Maniruzzaman, n.34, p.170.

⁶⁹ See Lifschultz, n.45, pp.26-30.

⁷⁰ See Maniruzzaman, n.34, p.130.

(Mujibism). One group led by Serajul Alam Khan, A.S.M. Abdur Rab and Shahjahan Siraj was trying to introduce 'Scientific Socialism'. They believed that a classless society in Bangladesh could only be established through a social revolution.⁷¹ The other faction led by Nur-e-Alam Siddique and Abdul Quddus Makhan, however, stuck to the four pillars Mujibism-socialism democracy, secularism and nationalism. They argued that socio-economic justice in the society could be achieved through parliamentary democracy and following a socialistic economy. They were opposed to the Marxist notion of class struggle.⁷²

Rab-Siraj group consequently broke away from the *Chhatra League* as Mujib supported the Siddique faction. The split in AL's student front was soon followed by splits in AL labour and other party affiliated organisations. Finally, on October 31, 1972, a new party called *Jatiyo Samajtrantik Dal* was set up with Abdur Rab and Maj M.A. Jalil as General Secretary and President respectively.⁷³

⁷¹ See Nazrul Islam, *Jashader Rajniti: Ekti Nikat Bhishleshan* (JSD's Politics: A Critical Analysis) (Dhaka: Prachya Prakashani, 1981), p.9.

⁷² See Abul, Mansur Ahmed, *Beshi Damey Kena Kom Damey Becha: Amader Swadhinata* (Our Freedom : Purchase at High Price and Sold Cheap) (Dhaka : Ahmed Publishing, 1982), pp.1-8.

⁷³ Lifschultz, n.45, pp.26-30.

Apart from the factional schism within the ruling AL, the left parties were also highly fragmented and characterised by ideological and personal incompatibilities among their leaders. Despite doctrinal disunity, almost all the left revolutionary parties agreed that Bangladesh's revolution was presently unfinished and believed that the attainment of independence in 1971 fulfilled only the first part of a two-stage revolution.⁷⁴

They argued that in the final stage, the contradiction between the ruling elite --- the AL and other agents of imperialism and the proletariat would be resolved through an armed struggle. The parliamentary politics was regarded basically as an instrument of perpetuating the rule of exploiting classes --- the feudal elements, intermediaries and rising middle classes.⁷⁵

The revolutionary parties adopted violent means to replace the AL regime. They were training armed cadres to overthrow the Mujib government and had started attacking government properties and killing AL leaders and other enemies of the revolution. During 1972-75, political assassinations were rampant in the country side. By the end of 1974, Sheikh Mujib himself disclosed that, at least four thousand AL workers,

⁷⁴ Maniruzzaman, n.34, p.131.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.150.

including five Members of the *Jatiyo Sangsad* (National Assembly) had been killed under the cover of darkness by opposition groups.⁷⁶

Since December 1973, JSD started organising mass rallies demanding the immediate resignation of the 'inefficient and corrupt' AL government. In January and February 1974, JSD led two successful nationwide general strikes.⁷⁷ The rising popularity of the JSD, particularly among the students and impoverished peasants bewildered the AL regime.

The increasing opposition and fast deteriorating law and order situation in the country became a serious concern for the ruling AL regime. The ground realities of political management of a state forced the government to take certain steps to bring the situation 'under control'. In September 1973, Constitution (Second Amendment) Bill was passed to incorporate emergency provisions in the constitution. Under the Second Amendment Act, certain fundamental rights could be put under suspension.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Cited in Mascarenhas, n.1, p.44.

⁷⁷ For further details on anti-government activities of JSD and other left parties, see Lifschultz, n.45, pp.46-47.

⁷⁸ M. Ahmed, n.5, p.103.

In response to the increasing antagonism of the radical left parties, the AL government decided to coopt the pro- Islamic and rightist groups. On November 1973, Sheikh Mujib announced a general amnesty for all the thirty three thousand prisoners held under Collaborator's Act. Exceptions were made only in cases where there were specific criminal charges.⁷⁹

Furthermore in its attempts to widen the support base, the Mujib government made alliance with the less radical (pro-Moscow) lefts. By the middle of 1974, AL government formed *Gono Oikkya Jote* (Peoples' United Alliance) with NAP (Muzaffar) and CPB (Moni Sigh).⁸⁰

All these measures were designed to divide the opposition and to isolate the radical groups. By a judicious mixture of repression and reconciliation the regime did succeed in neutralising the moderate opposition, but it failed to contain the violence perpetrated by the underground communist parties and check wide-spread corruption at different levels of the administration.

⁷⁹ See *Bangladesh Observer*, December 1, 1973.

⁸⁰ Sengupta, n.44, p.26.

ARMED FORCES' AID TO CIVIL ADMINISTRATION

In the face of growing economic crises, social and political instability increasingly violent role of the radical political forces⁸¹ and fast deteriorating law and order situation in the country, the faction-ridden and fragmented⁸² AL began to turn to the armed forces to bring things under control.

Sheikh Mujib asked the armed forces to move to the aid of civil authorities, particularly to tackle the insurgency in the country side. In July 1973, a combined operation of the Army, JRB and Police resulted in the arrest of a large number of

⁸¹ The radical left parties on the pretext of eliminating the 'enemies' of the revolution were constantly engaged in various unlawful and violent activities. Political killings, bank robberies, looting the houses of big farmers, reaping their paddy fields and distributing rice among the landless poor etc. were reported in daily newspapers. Lawlessness reached such an extent that many police stations were looted and the JRB camps were often attacked. From June to November 1974, more than 100 armed engagements took place between the police and the extremists. See *Morning News*, November 24, 1974.

⁸² Rounaq Jahan maintains that it was the factionalism within the government and AL, not the political opposition, that posed the real threat to the Mujib regime. (See Jahan, n 11, p.89). Intra - Party quibbles and bickering were rampant in the AL. There were rivalries among the most senior party leaders (i.e. between Tajuddin Ahmed and Syed Nazrul Islam, Khondhaker Mushtaque Ahmed and Tajuddin Ahmed) as well as among the young leaders (i.e. between Sheikh Moni and Tofael Ahmed). These rivalries went down to the district and sub-divisional levels of the country. See Marniruzzaman, n.34, pp.134-35.

'extremists' and 'miscreants'⁸³ and recovery of huge arms and ammunition in December 1973, a similar operation resulted in the killing of one hundred communists and the regime claimed to have wiped out half of the 'miscreants' from the nineteen districts. On April 24 1974, Sheikh Mujib ordered the armed forces to conduct an all out operation to recover unauthorised arms stop smuggling and hoarding, and apprehend 'anti-social' and 'subversive' elements. As a result of the Army operations, by May 31, 1974, one thousand nine hundred forty five persons were arrested and seven thousand six hundred seventy four arms and three lakh seventy one thousand and thirty six rounds of ammunition were recovered. However, on July 8, Sheikh Mujib formally declared the end of the operation and ordered the Army to seal the border and stop smuggling.⁸⁴

During the combing operations, the Army rounded up a good number of political leaders belonging to the ruling AL and its affiliated organisations, district level leaders etc., who put pressure on the government to terminate the operation. The arrested leaders were soon released by the government even though some of them had criminal charges against their name.⁸⁵

⁸³ Sheikh Mujib interchangeably called the underground communists by different names --- 'miscreants', 'ultras', 'Naxalites', 'extremists', 'anti-socials', 'subversives' etc.

⁸⁴ See E. Ahamed, n.9, p.63.

⁸⁵ The charges against the AL leaders included --- smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, intimidation, murder, rape etc.

The army officers who were successfully handling the situation, however, felt frustrated and deeply humiliated when Sheikh Mujib hastily called off the combing operations. The officers also complained that they were not given a free hand to execute their jobs. Every time the Army's anti-corruption operations affected his partymen adversely, Sheikh Mujib ordered them stopped.⁸⁶ His decision to stand by his followers, some of whom were found to be involved in heinous crimes, alienated the army personnel who were questioning the AL government's commitment to social justice.

Through their active participation in the civilian affairs of the state, the armed forces became aware of the basic weaknesses of the AL government, particularly the people's lack of confidence that the regime could bring any good to them. The armed forces, which lost their *esprit de corps* in the early years, regained their cohesion and unity and also became conscious of their corporate interests which, they believed, were not secure as long as the AL government remained in power.

⁸⁶ The junior army officers highly resented government's frequent interference in their police-keeping operations. Major Farooq Rahman, who commanded the Bravo Squadron of the First Bengal Lancers in a number of operations stated: "It was a damned awkward situation. Everytime we caught a chap he turned out to be either an Awami Leaguer or a staunch AL supporter. They were getting protection from the top and were getting a shelling for doing our job". See Mascarenhas, n.1, p.47.

Moreover, the army personnel began to think that their services were indispensable in the management of the state. They nursed a feeling that they were competent enough to deal with the political affairs of the country. Such a feeling would have instigated in any member of an already politicised army, ambitious for political power.⁸⁷

EMERGING AUTHORITARIANISM

As the law and order situation started deteriorating, the economy showed no sign of improvement, armed forces anti-corruption drive proved counter-productive, pressure from the underground left parties and constitutional opposition started mounting and the government was under virulent attack from the press, Sheikh Mujib turned more authoritarian. Infact, by the end of 1974, the Bangladesh polity was in a great turmoil. Mujib's reaction to mounting crises caused by mismanagement and corruption was to evoke some extra-constitutional devices to maintain his power. And in the process AL government became more and more oppressive and Sheikh Mujib emerged as the virtual dictator.

A leading Bangladeshi political analyst, Rounaq Jahan is of the opinion that Sheikh Mujib's strong identifications with the party, his *Zamindari* (land lord) style of

⁸⁷ Hossain, n.8, p.75.

politics, where personal rather than institutional relationship were more important, led him towards authoritarian rule.⁸⁸

The first step towards the direction of authoritarianism was Sheikh Mujib's proclamation of a state of emergency in December 28, 1974, suspending fundamental rights granted by the constitution for an indefinite period. The emergency provided for special powers of arrest, curtailed the powers of the judiciary and muzzled the press. All political meetings, demonstrations, strikes and lock-outs were banned.

Within a month of imposing emergency, Sheikh Mujib brought about a series of far-reaching amendments to the constitution which reduced *Jatiyo Sangsad* to an advisory status and legitimized his own grip on power. In June 25, 1975, on the initiative of Sheikh Mujib and against the wishes of most of the members of Parliament, Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Bill was passed in an amazingly short period of time without much debate⁸⁹ to provide for a Presidential form of government. The President was vested with enormous executive powers. The President was also authorized to form

⁸⁸ See Jahan, n.13, p.137.

⁸⁹ The Constitution (Fourth Amendment Bill) was passed within an hour without much reading and discussion in the Parliament. The vote was 240-0 and the Members of the Parliament were given the copies of Amendment Bill after they entered the halls of Parliament. See Franda, n.56, pp.54-55.

one 'National Party'⁹⁰ and suspend the activities of all political parties which refused to join the 'new party'. The amendment further provided that "*Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation" would be the President of the country for five years from the date of constitutional amendment.⁹¹

Sheikh Mujib countered the slogan-mongering of the radical left parties by dubbing the constitutional changes as 'Second Revolution' aimed to bring about " the economic freedom of the masses in an exploitation free society and to establish socialism and democracy of the exploited".⁹² Some Bangladeshi political analysts, however, have termed Mujib's 'Second Revolution' as a 'Constitutional Coup'⁹³ and 'undemocratic monolith'.⁹⁴

On June 25, 1975, Sheikh Mujib announced the formation of a single national party, called the *Bangladesh Krishak sramik Awami League* (Bangladesh Peasants,

⁹⁰ Many prominent AL leaders and members of Sheikh Mujib's cabinet opposed the idea of forming a National Party. They included the Finance Minister, Tajuddin Ahmed; Commerce Minister, K. Mushtaque Ahmed; Foreign Minister, Dr. Kamal Hossain; Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Taheruddin Thakur; and Gen. (Retd.) Osmani (who joined AL shortly after the independence) etc.

⁹¹ Cited in Manniuzzaman, n.34, p.171.

⁹² Cited in M. Ahmed, n.5, pp.242-44.

⁹³ See Maniruzzaman, n.,34, p.171.

⁹⁴ See M. Ahmed, n. 5 p.242.

Workers and Peoples' League or BAKSAL) reminiscent of Nyerere's *Ujama* (African socialism). All the political parties of Bangladesh were dissolved and asked to join BAKSAL. Despite Mujib's repeated appeals to all the political parties, only two parties --- Moni Singh's CPB and Muzaffar Ahmed's NAP joined the BAKSAL.

BAKSAL was headed by a fifteen member Executive Committee who were either Mujib's relatives or closest political associates.⁹⁵ The Executive Committee was the highest policy making body and its members wielded powers of cabinet ministers. Organisationally subordinate to the Executive Committee, was a one hundred and fifteen member Central Committee whose members were drawn from various segments of the society. From student leaders to the armed forces personnel, everyone become a member of this party. Leaders belonging to NAP, CPB, AL and its affiliated organisations — the *Yuba League* (Youth Front), the *Krishak League* (Peasants' Front), the *Chattra League* (Students Front) etc. were nominated as members of the Central Committee.⁹⁶ Even a cursory glance over the composition of various committees, it seems clear that the BAKSAL was infact the AL in different name.

⁹⁵ BAKSAL's fifteen member committee included --- Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Syed Nazrul Islam, M. Mansoor Ali, K. Mushtaque Ahmed, A.H. M. Kamaruzzaman, A.M. Ukil, Prof: Md. Yusuf Ali, Manoranjan Dhar, Dr. Muzaffar Ahmed Choudhury, Sheikh Abdul Aziz (Mujib's close relative), Mohiuddin Ahmed, Gazi Golam Mostafa, Zillur Rahman, Sheikh Moni, and Abdur Razzak. See M. Ahmed, n.5, p.268.

⁹⁶ For details on the organisational set up of BAKSAL, see Z.R. Khan, n.3., p.137.

The formation of BAKSAL was followed by other authoritarian measures. Through a Presidential Ordinance on June 21, 1975, the country was divided into sixty one districts (by breaking up the nineteen districts), each under a governor on July 16, 1975, Sheikh Mujib announced the name of governor-designates who were to take over district administration from September 1, 1975.⁹⁷

The district administrators were mostly drawn from the members of Parliament, ex-freedom fighter, military and civilian officers and the established lawyers. The BAKSAL committee members and district governor-designates were selected by Sheikh Mujib, Sheikh Moni and Abdur Rab Sarnibad (a Minister in Mujib's cabinet and his brother-in-law).⁹⁸

Sheikh Mujib thus destroyed the conventional hierarchical command structure of the bureaucracy by bringing about sweeping administrative reforms. The selected governors were given enormous power. They were entrusted with the responsibility of implementation of projects and programmes, administration and judiciary in the districts. They were also responsible for law and order in their respective areas. All of them were asked to maintain direct communication with Sheikh Mujib and take orders from him.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Maniruzzaman, n. 34, pp.172-73.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Sukharanjan Dasgupta, *Midnight Massacre in Dacca* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978), p.37.

ALIENATION OF THE MUJIB REGIME

All these authoritarian measures brought down the popularity of Sheikh Mujib and his government and eroded much of the legitimacy of his rule. Abolition of civil liberties and introduction of one party rule which was a new experience for Bangladesh, alienated the Mujib regime from the cross section of the population.

The banning of pro-Islamic groups like the Muslim League, Jamat-i-Islam, Nizam-i-Islam etc, for their negative and anti-people's role during the liberation war had already alienated the rightist elements. The liberals were strongly committed to a western style parliamentary democracy; they were alienated when Sheikh Mujib switched over to the Presidential form of government, dissolved all political parties and asked them to join the single national party --- BAKSAL. Moreover, Sheikh Mujib's loosening of strict control over the state enterprises¹⁰⁰ in the face of acute economic crisis considerably watered down his socialism. This led to the total alienation

¹⁰⁰ The continuing losses of the public enterprises posed serious problems of fiscal management for the Mujib government and consequently the industrial investment policy was revised in July 1974. The ceiling for private investment was raised to TK. 30 million from TK. 2.5 million allowing private foreign investors to enter into partnership with domestic private investors. See Fahmida Akter Khatun, "Privatisation of Industries in Bangladesh: Problems and Prospects of Private Foreign Investment", *BIIS Journal*, vol. IX, no.3, July 1988, pp.327-28.

of the radical forces.¹⁰¹ The radical forces became totally antagonised to the Mujib regime after the armed forces were brought in for their crackdown.

Sheikh Mujib created enemies even within his own party. The members of the parliament, mostly belonging to the AL, bristled at the curtailment of their power. Again, the ministers who had failed to get into the Executive Committee and had found instead their rival faction leaders as governors in the districts, were angry and resentful.¹⁰²

Sheikh Mujib's 'Second Revolution' used revolutionary rhetoric and threatened to dispossess the dominant social groups. The civil bureaucracy was threatened by the proposed district governors scheme which made bureaucrats subservient to the party. The lawyers felt threatened by Sheikh Mujib's promise of reforming the British style legal system. The Press was already antagonised by the complete takeover of newspapers and publications. Students and teachers, the major source of leadership for all opposition political movements, felt threatened by the total state control of thought and action, implicit in one party system and press restrictions. The surplus farmers were antagonised by the compulsory co-operative scheme. Although the government repeatedly promised that land ownership would be left intact, the surplus farmers feared

¹⁰¹ E. Ahamed, n.9.64.

¹⁰² Dasgupta, n.99, p.38.

that the compulsory co-operative scheme. was a prelude to the state ownership of land.¹⁰³ In short, the formation of BAKSAL become the last nail in the coffin of Mujib's Presidential regime, since it antagonised the people belonging almost all strata of the society.

The public resentment against his policies was running high towards the end of 1974. M. Rahman sums up the nature of anti-Mujib feelings in the following words :

"the realisation that he had duped the people of East Pakistan into slavery and starvation, his callous indifference to their sufferings, the ludicrously ostentious life-style he and his family and friends adopted, so sharply detracted from prestige that by the end of that year he became the most hated man in the whole state, a symbol of the curse that had overtaken it".¹⁰⁴

MILITARY'S DISENCHANTMENT WITH THE CIVILIAN RULE :

Like all other social groups and institutions, the defense services were also opposed to the idea of BAKSAL. BAKSAL envisaged that the units of Army, JRB, BDR and police stationed in the districts would be under the control of the Governor.

¹⁰³ Jahan, n 11, pp.138-39

¹⁰⁴ See Rahman, n 60, p.120.

This made the top brass of the Army, BDR and police think that Sheikh Mujib was trying to bring the armed forces completely under the control of one-party government. Under the BAKSAL Plan, the Army, Navy, Air Force, BDR and JRB were to be represented in the Central Committee of the party. The army personnel also became apprehensive about the plan of 'People's Army' envisaged in the new system. Sheikh Mujib said that such Army would not fight against any one. The Army would be engaged in nation building activities and in the defence of the country.¹⁰⁵ The idea of 'People's Army' created uncertainty and fear in the minds of army officers. They began to think that the proposed scheme of 'People's Army' would considerably reduce their perks and perquisites and also the corporate pride of the military establishment.

The pattern of civil-military relations envisaged in the BAKSAL system corresponds precisely to Janowitz's typology of 'authoritarian mass party control'. In this type of civil-military relations, both the civilian police and para-military institutions operate as counter-weights to the military which is small and not yet fully expanded.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ See M. Ahmed, n.5, pp.245-46.

¹⁰⁶ See Morris Janowitz, *Military Institutions and Coercion in the Developing Nations* (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1977), p.82.

Civil-military relations took a turn for the worse after the announcement of the BAKSAL formulation which subordinated the military completely to one party government. It is true that the civil-military relations had never been smooth during the Mujib period. Despite the conflicting political orientations of the personnel of the armed forces, they shared a consensus at least in one respect, i.e, they were resentful of AL government's handling of the defense establishment. Sheikh Mujib's close political associates encouraged grouping in the army. Some of the senior AL leaders were even trying to drive a wedge between Sheikh Mujib and the Army in order to avenge their powerlessness in directing the guerrilla operation during the liberation war¹⁰⁷ At times, civil-military conflict turned to mutual harassment, intimidation and settling of personal vendettas.¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, the frequent political interference in the internal affairs of the military services was regarded as a violation of the organisational autonomy of the

¹⁰⁷ According to some sources, it was on Mushtaque's bidding, Sheikh Mujib deployed the Army in the districts to curb smuggling and racketeering. It aimed at alienating the Army from Sheikh Mujib by showing the seeds of mistrust and misunderstanding. When the Army rounded up a number of AL leaders at Comilla, Mushtaque's constituency, the operations were suspended midway. It was Mushtaque again who pressurised Sheikh Mujib to terminate the Army operation. The motive was the same --- to create a misunderstanding between Mujib and the Army. Mushtaque also wanted to prod the army into politics. See Dasgupta, n.99, pp.44-45; Khatib, n.39, p.48.

¹⁰⁸ Z.R. Khan, n.3, p.105

military, which further created status deprivation in the military elites.¹⁰⁹ Mujib's constant shuffling of the military personnel added salt to the wounds of soldiers already piqued by their subordination to the JRB.¹¹⁰

From the very beginning Mujib faced the problem of balancing different rival and antagonistic groups in the armed forces. He made Maj.Gen. K.M. Safiullah, the Chief of Army. To prevent Safiullah from building up his own power base, Mujib, however, appointed Maj.Gen. Ziaur Rahman directly under Safiullah in the army hierarchy. He promoted Khaled Mosharraf to the rank of brigadier and after hectic lobbying retired Col. Osmani was elevated to the post of Honourary General. Among the repatriates, Brig. Khalillur Rahman became a Maj.Gen. and put in charge of Chief of BDR while H.M. Ershad and Kazi Golam Dastgir got the rank of Brigadier.¹¹¹ Sheikh Mujib thus "built-up the chain of command in the Army like a delicately balanced house of cards"¹¹² which could not be maintained for long. He had personally to mediate and intervene in most of the internal feuds and rivalries. But while doing so, the institutional chain of command was often broken.

¹⁰⁹ Hossain, n.8,p.79.

¹¹⁰ Franda, n.56,p.58.

¹¹¹ P.B.Sinha, "Armed Forces of Bangladesh," *Occasional Paper*, No.1, (New Delhi:IDSA, 1979), p.34.

¹¹² See Daniel Burger, "The Sheikh's Legacy of Confusion", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 5, 1975.

Mujib also antagonised the military establishment either by dismissing or forcibly retiring the army officers like Maj. M.A. Jalil, Col. Abu Taher, Col. M. Ziauddin. This made Sheikh Mujib very unpopular as all the three army officers were popular war heroes and enjoyed considerable support among the soldiers they commanded in different sectors during the liberation war.

Soon after the liberation, Maj. Jalil was arrested by the AL government, reportedly for the attempt to resist the transfer of arms left by Pakistan to the Indian Army.¹¹³ He was released subsequently following a trial which exonerated and reinstated him in July 1972. But for his involvement in political activities,¹¹⁴ he was forcibly retired from the Army. In October 31, 1972, he formed the extreme radical, political party --- JSD of which he became the president.

¹¹³ As to the reasons for Maj. Jalil's arrest one can discern two other opinions. According to one source, Maj. Jalil was arrested in January 1972 because of some papers he had with him and these were apprehended as notes coming from CIA (See Sengupta, n.41,p.41). Another report suggests that the real reason for the arrest was the outcome of a long standing feud between Maj. Jalil and Col. (Retd.) Osmani, C-in-C of the *Mukti Bahini*, which culminated in a showdown after independence. See *Times*, March 27, 1972.

¹¹⁴ In a press statement, Maj. Jalil supported Maulana Bhasani's movement against the government and his call for a 'hunger march' on September 3, 1972 in protest against the rising prices. Besides, he also addressed the biennial conference of the *Bangladesh Chhatra League*. See Sinha, n.111, p.30.

The Maj. Jalil's incident was followed by another confrontation between the AL government and the Army. But this time it was purely political in nature. By the summer of 1972, another freedom fighter and the commander of Dhaka Brigade, Col. Ziauddin had become deeply disillusioned over the political direction of the country. In a signed article in the opposition weekly, *Holiday*, Col. Ziauddin accused the Mujib government of not fulfilling the goals of independence. He wrote:

"Independence has become an agony for the people of this country. Stand on the street and you see purposeless, spiritless, lifeless faces through the mechanics of life. Generally, after a liberation was, the 'new spirit' carries through and the country builds itself out of nothing. In Bangladesh the story is simply the another way round. The whole of Bangladesh is either begging or singing sad songs or shouting without awareness. The hungry and poor are totally lost. This country is on the verge of falling into the abyss".¹¹⁵

He then concluded with a harsh statement against the Prime Minister, Sheikh Mujib. Referring to sheikh Mujib, who had spent nine months of the liberation war in a Pakistani prison, Col. Ziauddin commented: "We fought without him and won. And now if need be we will fight again. Nothing can beat us. We can be destroyed but not defeated."

¹¹⁵ Col. Ziauddin's article titled 'Hidden Prize' came out in *Holiday*, August 13, 1972. Quoted from Lifschultz, n.45,p.39.

His comments in the article created a furore in the government circle. When it was brought to the notice of Sheikh Mujib; Col. Ziauddin was asked to offer an official apology for that kind of 'soldierly disobedience'. On his refusal to do that, Co. Ziauddin was dismissed from army service in late 1972. Several other senior officers including Col. Taher, who had supported him were also 'released' from active duty. Col. Ziauddin then turned into a Marxist and, in May 1974, he was reported to have joined the underground communist group called *Purba Bangla Sarbohara Party*.¹¹⁶

However, such steps of the government subsequently proved to be counter productive. Col. Taher and Col. Ziauddin distinguished themselves not only for their heroism in the liberation war and their revolutionary ideas in respect of armed forces in a developing country, but they were also renowned for their personal honesty and integrity.¹¹⁷ The dismissal of Col. Taher and Col. Ziauddin alienated the Mujib government from the left - oriented members of the Bangladesh armed forces.

The civil military relations took a turn for the worse by the end of June 1974, when some junior army officers were involved in direct confrontation with the AL leadership. It started with a comparatively minor incident in the Bangladesh Army. It was

¹¹⁶ For further discussion on Col. Ziauddin, see the "Agony of Independence", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 16, 1974, pp.14-15.

¹¹⁷ E. Ahamed, n.9 p.86.

reported that the sons of an influential AL leader --- Gazi Golam Mostafa 'misbehaved' with the wife of a junior army officer --- Major Shariful Huq (popularly known as Major Dalim).¹¹⁸ The matter was then taken to Sheikh Mujib for arbitrament, but rather than displeasing a close political associate, Sheikh Mujib reprimanded the army officer. Such a partisan stand on the part of Sheikh Mujib created tremendous amount of tension between the military and a number of Mujib's close associates. The incident served to bring to a boiling point a simmering discontent that had been growing in the military for some time.¹¹⁹

The conflict between the AL leadership and the army officers was further aggravated by the incident of indiscipline reported from Comilla cantonment in 1974. As a part of the anti-corruption and anti-smuggling operations undertaken by the Army, Majors Dalim and S.H.M.B. Nur arrested a number of AL stalwarts when smuggled goods were discovered in their houses. But in the process they omitted some 'excesses' in dealing with the AL leaders.¹²⁰ When the incident was brought to the

¹¹⁸ For further details on this incident see Lifschultz, "Sheikh Mujib Pays the Ultimate Price", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 29, 1975, pp.10-11.

¹¹⁹ Rahman, n.60, pp.124-25.

¹²⁰ The two army officers went beyond their authority when they reportedly assaulted one of the arrested AL leaders in Comilla and publicly unearthed illegal stocks of commodities in their possession. In the meantime, the Army implicated another AL Members of Parliament, including Begum Mostafa. The army officers, among other things discovered a letter the woman M.P. had written to her relative giving instructions on what to do with their illegal

notice of Sheikh Mujib, he instituted a military enquiry in the officers 'misconduct'. As a result, 22 junior officers including Majors Dalim, Noor and Huda were dismissed or prematurely retired from the service.

This caused wide spread resentment among the junior officers of the Bangladesh Army. "They started to talk openly about their dissatisfaction. Military messes became centres of plotting. The intelligence services kept close tabs on all this and their reports reached Mujib who made no secret of his intension to supplant the army with the *Rakkhi Bahini*. The more he moved in that direction the more he alienated the army".¹²¹

The en block dismissal of the junior army officers gave currency to the rumours that Mujib had been grooming his second son, Sheikh Jamal, to take over the Bangladesh Army after finishing his training at Sandhurst Military Academy in England.¹²² Mujib's action was seen a strategy to keep the ambitious army officers under tight political control and, at the same time, to set a precedent for his personal intervention in military personnel matters.¹²³

commodity stocks. The army officers published all the captured documents in the leading Bengali daily --- *Ittefaq*. See Lifschultz, n. 118, p.10.

¹²¹ Cited in Mascarenhas, n.1, p.46

¹²² See Marcus Franda, "The Bangladesh Coup", *American Universities Field Staff Reports*, vol.XIX,no.15, September 1975 p.3.

¹²³ Z.R.Khan, n.3, p.123.

During their 'aid to civil administration' highly nationalistic, indoctrinated armed personnel, particularly the junior officers and the rank and file became disillusioned with politics and resentful of politicians to see that Sheikh Mujib not only tolerated corruption but also 'allowed' the AL activists to become involved in the illicit border smuggling trade, hoarding, profiteering and other unlawful activities.

Before the Army was called to cleanup the smugglers and loaders, the officers and soldiers, "isolated in their barracks, had been only distant observers of the fading Bangladesh dream. Now they were brought face to face with all gruesome details with the terrible rot afflicting the country. They did not like it. Inevitably, some of them began to think that it was a patriotic duty to save Bangladesh from the waywardness of the politicians. Thus the army was drawn into politics".¹²⁴

Such a rebellious attitude of the Army was carefully exploited by a group of ambitious officers. Evidently, some disgruntled and hostile political groups, both within and outside the BAKSAL, aided and abetted the already discontented army officers to enter the political limelight, motivated the already politicised armed follows and ultimately provided the occasion for intervention in Bangladesh politics.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Cited in Mascarenhas, n.1, pp.44-45.

¹²⁵ Hossain, n.8, pp. 80-81

CHAPTER FOUR

MILITARY'S INTERVENTION IN POLITICS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Pre-independence Bangladesh was economically backward, socially traditional and politically fragmented.¹ So after independence, the priority before Bangladesh was to build up organisations and institutions essential for balanced growth and development of the state, and the creation of a new social order by transforming the old values and structures. The ruling Awami League (AL) leadership, however, did not take appropriate measures to create a viable socio-economic infra-structure and build the essential state machineries like military, bureaucracy and a workable legislature essential for effective functioning of a stable democratic polity. Instead, the policy measures adopted by the AL government not only alienated the political opposition and other politically relevant sections of the society, but also antagonised the army, bureaucracy as well as a group within the ruling party. Moreover, nepotism, personalistic rule and growing authoritarianism precipitated a crisis and eroded much of the legitimacy of the Mujib regime.

In such a situation, the absence of another civilian countervailing force to the discredited regime of Sheikh Mujib, facilitated army's intervention in Bangladesh politics — an army which was already highly politicised and disenchanted with the Mujib regime. The army was joined by a section of purged bureaucracy as well as some

¹ Golam Hossain, *Civil-Military Relations in Bangladesh: A Comparative Study* (Dhaka: Academic Publishers, 1991), p.88.

dissident political leaders from the ruling AL government. The army, despite its imperfect organisation and internal cleavages, was the first to strike at the time of Mujib's eroding popularity. It was under such circumstances that Bangladesh entered the era of coups d'etat.²

THE AUGUST 15, 1975 COUP:

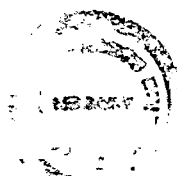
In a pre-dawn coup on August 15, 1975, President Sheikh Mujib, his entire family and near relatives were brutally massacred and his government was overthrown. The two battalions of the armoured corps of the Bangladesh Army, supported by about fourteen hundred soldiers³, also made simultaneous attacks on the residences of Sheikh Moni (Mujib's nephew and General Secretary of BAKSAL) and Abdur Rab Sarnibad (Mujib's brother-in-law and a Minister in Mujib's Cabinet)⁴ and killed them along with the members of their family. Curfew and Martial Law were proclaimed throughout the

² Veena Kukreja, *Civil-Military Relations in South Asia: Pakistan, Bangladesh and India* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1991), p.142.

³ Fourteen hundred soldiers were from 2nd field Artillery Regiment and Bengal Lancers Regiment (Bangladesh's only tank regiment) commanded by Majors Abdur Rashid and Farooq Rahman respectively. See the text of the 'TV Interview with Majors Farooq and Rashid' published in Iftekhar Rasul George, ed., *Madhyaratrer Bangladesh: Ekattar Theke Ekashi* (Bangladesh At Midnight: 1971-81) (Dhaka: Nasas, 1982), pp.25-40.

⁴ Altogether forty six persons were reported to have been killed during the army operation. For details see Jyoti Sengupta, *Bangladesh: In Blood and Tears* (Calcutta: Naya Prakash, 1981), pp.4-5.

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country immediately after the assassination of Sheikh Mujib. The announcement about the change of government was made on Dhaka Radio by one of the army officers involved in the coup.⁵

The coup was orchestrated by about forty seven army officers of the rank of major, captain and lieutenant.⁶ The leadership of the group was, however, concentrated in the hands of six Majors ——— Farooq, Rashid, S.H.M.B. Nur, Shariful Huq (Dalim), M. Huda and Abdul Hafiz.⁷ Available evidence indicates that the senior officers like Major General K.M. Safiullah (Chief of Army Staff) and Brigadier Khaled Mosharraf (Chief of General Staff) and Major General Ziaur Rahman (Deputy Chief of

⁵ After the assassinaion of Shaikh Mujib, Major Dalim reached the Dhaka Radio Station and proclaimed over the radio: "I Major Dalim, announcing the fall of the autocratic government of Shaikh Mujib" (See Sengupta, n.4,p.51). He further added: "...under the leadership of Khondhoker Mushtaque Ahmed, the armed forces have taken over. In the greater interest of the country, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has been detained and his government has been toppled". See A.L. Khatib, *Who killed Mujib?* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1981), p.6.

⁶ See P.B.Sinha, "Armed Forces of Bangladesh", *Occasional Paper*; No.1 (New Delhi: IDSA, 1979), p.15.

⁷ See Lawrence Lifschultz, "The Army's Blueprint For a Takeover", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 5, 1975. According to another source , the whole coup was masterminded by Lt.Colonel Farooq, three other Lt.Colonels, Rashid, Shariful Huq (Dalim),Abdul Aziz Pasha; six Majors Shariful Hossain, Shahriyar, Bazlul Huda, Rashid Choudhury, Mohiuddin, S.H.M.B. Nur; two Captains Khairuzzaman, Abdul Majed; and three Lieutenants Musleuddin, Kishmet Hashem, and Nazmul Anwar. See Zillur Rahman Khan, "Leadership, Parties and Politics in Bangladesh", *The Western Political Quaterly*, vol.xxxix, no.1, March 1976,p.123.

Army Staff) were not directly involved in the planning of the coup.⁸ However, they lent their support when the assassination of the great charismatic leader, Sheikh Mujib failed to generate mass opposition. There was no major resistance nor any widespread protest at the overthrow of the Mujib regime mainly for two reasons. In the first place, the immediate imposition of curfew and promulgation of Martial Law in the country had hardly left an opportunity for the people to express their resentment or anger. Secondly, the common men in Bangladesh were highly discontented and disillusioned by Mujib's one party rule.⁹

DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE AUGUST COUP

Various interpretations have been advanced to explain the causes of the August 15, 1975 coup. A noted political analyst is of the opinion that the main cause behind the bloody overthrow of Mujib was his policy to neutralise the political power of the army through the establishment of a large and well-equipped para-military force — the *Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini* (JRB) and the resultant alienation of many ambitious junior officers

⁸ Some sources claim that the two leaders——Majors Farooq and Rashid approached Maj.Gen.Zia on March 20, 1975 and asked for his support. Zia reportedly agreed that there was need for change, but refused to commit himself to any action at that stage. The two other senior officers Maj.Gen.Safiullah and Brig. Mosharraf were not approached as they were considered as Mujib loyalists. See Lawrence Lifschultz, *Bangladesh: The Unfinished Revolution* (London: Zed Press, 1979), p.103; see also George, n.3, pp.28-29.

⁹ Sinha, n.6, p.17.

who were alarmed by the gradual loss of power that the army once enjoyed during the Pakistani days.¹⁰ Moreover, many senior officers also became apprehensive about Mujib's new scheme of one-party rule in which the position of the armed forces was seriously undermined and relegated from the traditional position.¹¹

The coup leaders justified military's intervention in politics mostly in term of the corruption and misrule of the Mujib regime. Sheikh Mujib was blamed by the coup leaders on four counts: first, imposition of an authoritarian personalistic rule; second, scandalous handling of the economy, and prevalence of rampant corruption in Mujib's administration; third, making Bangladesh a surrogate to a foreign power; and fourth. AL government's denial to give Islam its rightful place in the life of the nation.¹²

According to one analyst¹³, August coup which killed Sheikh Mujib and toppled his government, was the outcome of the year-long conspiracy hatched by a number of right wing AL leaders¹⁴ and some junior army officers with the tacit approval of some

¹⁰ Khan, n.7, p.123.

¹¹ See Habiba Zaman's, "The Military in Bangladesh Politics", in Choudhury E. Haque, ed., *Bangladesh: Politics, Economy and Society* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba, 1987), p.22.

¹² See Lt. Farooq's Statement to the Press, given in Appendix G, pp. 199-200.

¹³ Lifschultz, n.8, pp.117-36.

¹⁴ Some other analysts also hold a similar view. According to them, 'coup planning cell' was constituted by Mujib's Foreign Trade Minister, Mushtaque Ahmed, Minister of Information and Broadcasting Teheruddin Thakur and the Foreign

outside powers. In his opinion the failure of Mujib government in handling effectively the radical forces in the country motivated the national and international rightist and reactionary forces to unite.¹⁵

According to another source, Maj.Gen.Zia attempted, even before the August coup to impose Martial Law in Bangladesh and the plan received enthusiastic support from the resident U.S. ambassador. But it did not materialise as Zia was superseded by Safiullah as the Chief of Army Staff.¹⁶

A group of scholars have viewed the military intervention in Bangladesh in terms of the legacy of Pakistan rule. They argue that the coup leaders had been trained in Pakistan, which suffered from military rule during most of the years from 1947 to 1971,

Secretary of the Bangladesh Government-in-exile, Mahbub Alam Chashi. They were also referred to as 'Mushtaque Triangle'. See Khatib, n.5, pp.40-55; Sengupta, n.4, pp.45-87.

¹⁵ A leading Bangladeshi political analyst, however, maintains that there was no collusion between the junior army officers and any civilian political group. Mushtaque Ahmed was not aware of the coup plan. The coup leaders contacted Mushtaque after having killed Sheikh Mujib and Mushtaque accepted their request to assume the Presidency. See Talukdar Maniruzzaman, *The Bangladesh Revolution and its Affermath* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Books International, 1980), p.187.

¹⁶ See Sukharanjan Dasgupta, *Midnight Massacre in Dacca* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978), p.55.

and the experience of participation in 1971 liberation struggle could not chasten them, or infuse in them a democratic consciousness.¹⁷

The precipitating factor of the military intervention was, as suggested by several scholars¹⁸, the personal grievances of the coup leaders, some of whom were either dismissed or demoted by Sheikh Mujib. The lightening and the bloody coup which was staged in the early hours of August 15, 1975 and killed almost every members of Sheikh Mujib's family, was engineered by three Majors who had developed bitter personal enmity against Sheikh Mujib.¹⁹

It has also been argued that some disgruntled junior army officers, who with the support of about fourteen hundred loyal soldiers of armoured and infantry regiments,

¹⁷ See Muntassir Mamoon and Jayanta Kumar Ray, "Nationalism, Military and Politics", *Journal of Social Studies*, No.58, October 1992, p.143.

¹⁸ See Marcus Franda, "The Bangladesh Coup", *American Universities Field Staff Reports*, vol.xix, no.15 September 1975; Maniruzzaman, n.15,p.186; Matiur Rahman, *Bangladesh Today: An Indictment and a Lament* (London: News and Media, 1978),pp.124-25; See also "Anatomy of Dhaka Coup", *Sunday*, September 7, 1975.

¹⁹ After the Comilla incident, (see Chapter 3, n.120, p.117) Mujib dismissed several junior army officers including Major Dalim. Two other conspirators, Majors Noor and Shahriyar, who reportedly traced Sheikh Abu Nasser's (Mujib's younger brother) illicit trade links with India, were also dismissed from the army. These dismissed officers in collaboration with Majors Rashid and Farooq (related to each other as brother-in-law) executed neatly the brutal operation on August 15, 1975. See Maniruzzaman, n.15, pp.186-87; Marcus Franda, *Bangladesh: The First Decade* (New Delhi:South Asian Publishers, 1982), pp. 50-57.

executed the operation had no coherent vision or plan for the future. It was an 'ad hoc coup in a vacuum of political ideas ——— first eliminate Mujib, then see what happens'.²⁰

Broadly speaking, the August coup in Bangladesh was the outcome of the symbiotic relationship between two factors namely ——— the prevailing praetorian conditions and military's corporate grievances. The August coup took place in the background of widespread frustration, discontent and general anxiety in the country. The three and half years of AL rule was very much of a personal rule by Sheikh Mujib, who governed more by charisma than through institutions.²¹ Mujib's overthrow came at a time when his regime was completely alienated from the politically relevant sections of the society by the imposition of an authoritarian one-party rule. Even a sizeable number of his party members wanted to continue with parliamentary democracy. The Majors who planned the coup calculated on winning the support of all the group dismayed by the BAKSAL formula.²²

²⁰ P.B. Sinha argues that the bloody overthrow of the Mujib regime on August 1975, was neither a revolution nor even a coup. He calls it a 'putsch'. To him, this was act of vengeance against personal insult, and anger at being passed over for promotion for which the plotter held Mujib and his family responsible. See Sinha, n.6, p.19.

²¹ Rounaq Jahan, *Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues* (Dhaka: University Press, 1987), p.123.

²² *Ibid.*, p.139.

During 1972-75, the political parties in Bangladesh were marked by a low institutional development. The political opposition consisted of a large number of splintered parties, ranging from the right to the extreme left. Even the ruling AL was weak and factionalised. Besides, AL failed to provide necessary stability and national cohesion for keeping the democratic system intact. The party also failed to develop into a mediation mechanism between the needs, problems, and wishes of the electorate and the purposes, limitations and problems at the level of national government.²³

In post-liberation Bangladesh, the formal institutions (i.e. the permanent state apparatus like military and bureaucracy) were comparatively more developed than the informal institutions (i.e. the political institutions like parties and pressure groups).²⁴ The over-development of civil-military bureaucracy was the direct outcome of the colonial rule. Bangladesh experienced a colonial rule first under the British and then under the Pakistanis. The British administration had put more emphasis on strengthening the civil-military bureaucracy and used it as a countervailing force to the nationalist organisations fighting for self-determination.

²³ Kukreja, n.2, p.142.

²⁴ Syed Nazrul Islam, *Bangladesher Rajnaitik Sthitihinatay khamatashin Ghosthir Avyantarin Kalaher Gurutta* (The Significance of Internal Squabbles Among the Ruling Groups in the Political Instability Bangladesh) in Al Masud Hasannuzzaman, ed., *Bangladesh: Crisis of Political Development* (Dhaka: Jahangirnagar University, 1988), p.30.

After partition, the civil-military complex in Pakistan, however, did not act as an institution controlled by political leadership. Instead, it played a more decisive role in formulating and implementing policy decisions of the government.

Thus, independent Bangladesh inherited a powerful bureaucratic-military apparatus with its institutionalised practices vis-a-vis the weak and fragmented civilian political institutions.²⁵ In order to ensure the civilian political supremacy, the AL government brought the civil-military bureaucracy under its strict control. Consequently, the military and bureaucratic elite lost the dominant position in the national decision making process they used to enjoy during the Pakistan period.

Experience has shown that in such a situation, crisis arises when the political leadership seriously challenges the relative autonomy and mediatory role of the civil and military bureaucrats and it is the latter which finally emerge victorious in this kind of conflict situation.²⁶

Thus, Bangladesh military's intervention in politics can be analysed in terms of the prevailing praetorian conditions in the country. Huntington's assumptions regarding

²⁵ Hasamuzzan, "Over-Developed Bureaucracy and Political Development in Bangladesh", n.24. pp.44-58.

²⁶ Hamza Alavi, "The State in Postcolonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh," in Kathleen Gaugh and Hari P. Sharma, eds., *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), p.149-50.

the united Pakistan (from which Bangladesh emerged) is equally applicable to Bangladesh as a state in which "institutional evolution was unbalanced: civil-military bureaucracies were more developed than the political parties, and the military had strong incentive to move into the institutional vacuum ---"²⁷

According to Finer, armed forces have three massive political advantages over civilian organisations: a marked superiority in organisation, a highly emotionalised symbolic status, and a monopoly control in the means of applying force.²⁸ The Bangladesh Army despite its small size and non-cohesive nature, constituted the only organised body in the Bangladesh polity which could pose a serious threat to the civilian regime of Sheikh Mujib. As Finer has stated, even the most poorly organised or maintained army is far more highly and tightly structured than civilian group.²⁹ Therefore, it was no wonder that the Bangladesh Army was the first to strike.

²⁷ See S.P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p.85.

²⁸ S.E.Finer, *The Man On Horseback: The Role of Military in Politics* (London: Penguin Books, 1975), p.5.

²⁹ Finer,, n.28, p.5.

THE NEW REGIME

After the assassination of Sheikh Mujib, the coup leaders hastily formed a new government headed by Mushtaque Ahmed, the Foreign Trade Minister in Mujib Cabinet. Immediately after the take over, the new president told the nation that he had assumed Presidency "in greater interest of the country and in view of historic necessities".³⁰

The composition of the new government was not altogether different from the Mujib government. No military officers were included in the new cabinet. Almost all the Executive and Central Committee members switched their allegiance to the new government. In fact, eleven of the nineteen ministers and eight of the nine ministers of state of the Mujib cabinet joined the new government.³¹ Mushtaque Ahmed named Mahmadullah, one time President and later a Minister in Mujib's cabinet, as his Vice-President.

³⁰ Mushtaque Ahmed told the nation in a radio broadcast that the armed forces had "opened the golden gate of hope,.....the period of darkness is over and bright morning of sunshine and light has dawned." See Sinha, n.6, p.19.

³¹ The Mushtaque Cabinet included the following members———justice Abu Sayeed Choudhury, Md.Yusuf Ali,. Phani Mazumdar, Md.Sohrab Hossain, Abdul Mannan, Monoranjan Dhar, Abdul Momin, Assaduzzaman Khan, Dr.A.R. Mallik and Dr. Muzaffar Ahmed Choudhury. See Moudud Ahmed, *Bangladesh: Era of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman* (Dhaka: University Press, 1983), p.268.

The policy measures and the strategies adopted by the Mushtaque government were not radically different from the previous regime. Though Martial Law was declared and party activities were suspended, no Martial Law Court was set up. A week after the coup, the government arrested many of Mujib's political associates and relatives on the charges of corruption and misuse of power.³² The Mushtaque faction of the AL which came to power wanted to purge its rivals from the party and at the same time rally the support of other parties opposed to Mujib's one-party system, behind the new regime.

On October 3, 1975, Mushtaque government announced that the Parliamentary system of government would be re-established, political activities would be restored from August 16, 1976 and general election would be held on February 28, 1977 to elect the new government.

The new government repealed a part of the constitution, which was related to the formation and functioning of the National Party ——— BAKSAL. The government also scrapped the scheme of 61 districts and the district governors in place of the existing 19 districts administered by Deputy Commissioners. The government also annulled the Presidential Order No.9, which permitted Mujib to dismiss any civil servant without giving any reason. The ban on some dailies and weeklies was also lifted.

³² Some of the prominent leaders arrested after August 15, 1975, were———Syed Nazrul Islam, Kamaruzzaman, Tajuddin Ahmed, Korban Ali, Sheikh Aziz, Abdur Razzak, Tofael Ahmed, Golam Mostafa and many others. See Sengupta, n.4,pp 7-8.

The above decisions were taken by the new government to redress the grievances of certain groups in the society. But on the whole, Mushtaque tried to maintain the pre-coup status quo. The *Jatiyo Sangsad* (National Assembly), which represented overwhelmingly Mujib's AL, remained as it was. The four fundamental principles of the state i.e. socialism, secularism, nationalism and democracy, were retained. The new government, however, attempted to bring about a basic change in only one facet of Mujib's ideology. Instead of a continued emphasis on secularism, a more demonstrative emphasis was put on Islam.³³ The government also announced that the country's foreign policy would remain unchanged. Repeated statements about there being no radical shift in policy were meant to buy time to consolidate the regime's shaky base and at the same time to recruit support of the anti-Mujib groups behind the new government.³⁴

REORGANISATION OF THE ARMED FORCES

The August 15, 1975 coup created a highly volatile situation within the Bangladesh armed forces. During the first week of the coup, it was widely rumoured that some coup leaders were either manoeuvring for position or planning counter-coups. The coup was planned and executed by a small group of junior army officers, the Bangladesh Army as a whole was not involved in it.

³³ For instance, the slogan of *Joy Bangla* (Glory of Bengal) was replaced by *Bangladesh Zindabad* (Long Live Bangladesh).

³⁴ Jahan, n.21, pp.141-42.

After the coup, when the senior army officers asked the Majors to return to their normal duties, they put forward conditions——one of which was for "guarantees that they would not be punished for taking the law into their own hands".³⁵ The senior officers became seriously concerned about the possible repercussions of the coup within the armed forces. All these factors made it imperative for the government to set the armed forces in order.

Thus on August 25, 1975, ten days after the coup, Mushtaque appointed Gen. (Retd.) M.A.G. Osmani his Defence Advisor, a new post created to promote co-operation among the various sections of the armed forces and to facilitate co-ordination between the military and the new government. Osmani's appointment was welcomed by all the groups —— the freedom fighters, repatriates and many members of Mujib's JRB.³⁶ Osmani's role as C-in-C of the *Mukti Bahini* during the Liberation War was remembered by the freedom fighting Bengalee officers with great fondness. He was also respected by the repatriates from Pakistan. The repatriate officers regarded Osmani as one of the excellent officers reared up in the 'finest British South Asian military tradition'.³⁷ Senior Bengalee officers blamed the Pakistanis for doing injustice

³⁵ *Morning News*, August 26, 1975.

³⁶ Franda, n.19,p.61.

³⁷ Emajuddin Ahamed, *Military Rule and Myth of Democracy* (Dhaka: University Press, 1987), p.123.

to him by not promoting him when he had reached the rank of colonel. In short, Osmani was seen as a bridge between the repatriates and the freedom fighters.³⁸

Within twenty four hours of Osmani's appointment as Defence Advisor, a major reshuffle took place in the top echelons of the Bangladesh armed forces. Maj.Gen. Ziaur Rahman was appointed as the Chief of Army Staff in place of Maj. Gen. K.M. Safiullah as he indicated his willingness for retirement after coup because of his close identification with Sheikh Mujib.³⁹ Brig.Khaled Mosharraf, who was junior to both Zia and Safiullah, had no reason to be disappointed by the post-Mujib reorganisation of the military. Zia's elevation to the post of Chief of Staff satisfied a number of middle-level and junior officers who were highly impressed by his role during the Liberation War.⁴⁰

Furthermore, two of the senior repatriate officers ——— Brig. H.M. Ershad and Brig. Kazi Golam Dastgir, were also elevated in rank. Brig. Ershad was promoted to the rank of Maj. General and made Deputy Chief of Army Staff. Brig. Dastgir, the commander of Chittagong Brigade, was also promoted as Maj. General and appointed Director-General of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR). Maj.General Khalillur Rahman, the former

³⁸ Zillur Rahman Khan, *Martial Law To Martial Law: Leadership Crisis in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: University Press, 1984), pp. 134-35.

³⁹ Maj.Gen.Safiullah's services were placed at the disposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁴⁰ Khan, n.38, p.135.

Director General of BDR was made Chief of Defence Staff in the Ministry of Defence. On October 16, 1975, Group Captain M.G. Tawab was promoted as Air Vice Marshall and made Chief of Air Staff.⁴¹

The repatriates from Pakistan, whose loyalty to Bangladesh was doubted by Sheikh Mujib were now rehabilitated. Almost all the repatriates who had either been forcibly retired or transferred to civilian posts were taken back into the military services. The elevation of the repatriate officers assuaged their sentiments and in fact heightened their expectations.

Another important aspect of the reorganisation of the forces was the merger of JRB with the regular Army.⁴² This was seen by the members of the Bangladesh armed forces as a step in the right direction. The JRB was a bone of contention between the Army and the AL regime as Mujib tried to use this elite para-military force as a counter-weight to the Army. Its integration with the Bangladesh Army was aimed at

⁴¹ Sinha, n.6, pp.4-8.

⁴² By promulgating an ordinance—*Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini* (Absorption in Army) Ordinance, 1975, all the JRB members were asked to join the Bangladesh Army. The Ordinance also said that the arms, ammunition and equipment of the JRB were to be transferred to the Bangladesh Army. (See Sinha, n.6, p.10). The Chief of the JRB, Brig. Nuruzzaman was given a foreign assignment and his Deputy, Col. Sabehuddin was made the head of a government organisation. See Khan, n.38, p.146.

bringing about unity in the Bangladesh armed forces plagued by internal cleavages and factionalism since the beginning.⁴³

The JRB members themselves appreciated this move for several reasons: first, after the coup, the JRB men feared that the whole cadre might be abolished and cases might be started against them for the 'excesses' they committed during their operations under the shield of AL government; second, they believed that the integration of JRB with the regular armed forces would raise their status.⁴⁴

IMPLICATION OF THE AUGUST COUP

The August coup brought about far reaching consequences in Bangladesh. It adversely affected the discipline and cohesiveness of the Bangladesh armed forces and seriously disturbed the delicate balance of power in the state. There was a civilian cabinet for the sake of appearances. A handful of junior army officers who masterminded the coup were trying to direct the major government policies.

⁴³ The new political leadership also realised that unless the JRB was effectively curbed, it could pose a threat to the new regime as it was believed to have a fierce loyalty to assassinated Sheikh Mujib.

⁴⁴ Ahamed, n.37, p.75.

The chain of command under a unified command structure was shattered by the August coup and the lines of communications among the different units of the armed forces became seriously affected. The senior officers were highly resentful of the coup leaders who wanted to continue to be kingmakers behind-the-scenes.⁴⁵

The senior officers, who maintained their control over the cantonments, wanted the junior officers to go back to their cantonments and accept their command.⁴⁶ The coup leaders, however, refused to do that fearing that they would be disarmed. Mushtaque failed to negotiate the demands made by the two conflicting groups within the Army. Instead, he sided with the coup leaders who installed him as the President. His partisan stand only intensified rivalries between senior and junior officers within the Bangladesh Army.

Mushtaque was also fast losing support of different political groups for his government. The radical political parties, pro- Islamic groups and those who opposed the

⁴⁵ At one point of time, the young officers also wanted to form a revolutionary council with themselves in it, some civil servants and a few political leaders. But Gen.Osmani persuaded them not to take such a step because that might bring them in direct confrontation with their senior colleagues. See E.Ahamed, n.37, pp.75.

⁴⁶ The senior officers like Brig.Khled Mosharraf and Col.Shafat Jamil were reported to have said:"Two armies cannot exist in one country". They demanded that the Majors and their troops who had refused to come back to their respective barracks should be treated as insubordinates and handled as such. See Lifschultz, n.8, pp.64-68; Mascarenhas, *Bangladesh:A Legacy of Blood* (London:Hadder and Stoughton, 1986), p.94.

BAKSAL system, welcomed the coup at the initial stage. JSD initially supported the coup, but later became critical of the rightist leanings of the Mushtaque government. Mushtaque did not dissolve the Parliament in the expectation that he would receive some support from among the Members of Parliament who had been his political associates for several years. With this aim he convened a meeting of the members of Parliament. A majority of them attacked him bitterly and accused him of being involved in the assassination of Sheikh Mujib. In that troubled situation, Mushtaque made a desperate bid to enlist the support of the radical elements in the Army.⁴⁷

Moreover, the bridging mission of Osmani also failed to produce the desired results. Senior officers expected him to act as a power broker. But he failed to bring about any moderation among the coup makers. This further alienated the senior officers who hoped to re-establish their control in the Army.⁴⁸

Thus for more than two months, an uneasy power struggle continued among the coup makers, Army High Command and the civilian political leaders. Besides, the armed

⁴⁷ Col.Taher in his testimony stated: "In the last part of September, Major Rashid brought a message from President Khondakar Mushtaque Ahmed that I and Lt.Colonel Ziauddin should form a political party and that he would provide all facilities of finance. I rejected the proposal....It was clear that Mushtaque had absolutely no political base. But for a small faction, he had no support in the Army as a whole, and he had no support among the people". See Lifschultz, n.8, pp. 88-89.

⁴⁸ Khan, n.38, p.143.

forces were also divided between pro-Mujib and anti-Mujib elements. Under these conditions, a counter coup took place on November 3, 1975. This time it was engineered by a section of senior army officers ——— who decided to subordinate the coup makers when the negotiations proved to be a failure.

THE COUNTER COUP OF NOVEMBER 3, 1975

On November 3, 1975, a faction of the Bangladesh Army led by Brig. Khaled Mosharraf, Garrison Commander of Dhaka and Chief of General Staff (CGS)⁴⁹, and several senior officers staged a counter coup and seized power from the leaders of August 15 coup.⁵⁰ Khaled's forces were manned by a few battalions of soldiers from the 46 (Dhaka) Brigade, some members from Mujib's JRB, and a few battalions of BDR *jawans*. The entire operation was bloodless. The rebel army units under Col. Shafat

⁴⁹ Brig. Khaled Mosharraf had defected from the Pakistan Army after the military crackdown on March 25, 1971. Then, a Major, he commanded the *Mukti Bahini* forces in the Comilla sector where he was wounded. Soon after the liberation he was made colonel and in 1973 promoted as Brigadier.

⁵⁰ The senior officers involved in the November 3 coup were ——— Brig. Nuruzzaman, former JRB Chief; Brig. Rouf, Director of the Intelligence Force; Col. Shafat Jamil, commander of Dhaka Brigade; Col. Nazmul Huda, commander of Rangpur Brigade; Col. Amzad, commander of Comilla Brigade; and veteran freedom fighters like Col. Haider, Col. Malek etc. BDR Chief Maj. Gen. Dastgir and Chief of Defence Staff, Maj. Gen. Khalillur Rahman appeared neutral. See William Mattern, "Burying the Memory of Mujib", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 21, 1975, pp. 18-20.

Jamil, the Commander of the Dhaka Brigade quickly seized all major strategic positions in Dhaka except the Bangobhaban i.e. the Presidential Palace where the August coup leaders had taken refuge since August 15, 1975.⁵¹

The Army Chief, Maj.Gen. Ziaur Rahman and Air Force Chief, Air Vice Marshall M.G. Tawab were put under house arrest. Khaled promoted himself as Maj. General and appointed himself the Chief of Army Staff in place of Maj. Gen. Zia, who was reported to have resigned earlier.

Khaled dissolved the cabinet and proclaimed a Martial Law. In the final round of negotiations on November 3, in which the outgoing President Mushtaque also participated, Khaled allowed the August coup leaders to leave the country⁵² but refused permission to Mushtaque, Zia, Tawab and Osmani when they expressed a desire to do so.⁵³

⁵¹ While Khaled was in control of the Dhaka cantonment, the radio station and the airport, the Majors were still in control of the Presidential Palace, many parts of Dhaka City and most importantly, the tank regiment. The Presidential Palace was heavily guarded by the tank regiment and it was almost impossible for Khaled's troops to break through the cordon. All these practical problems made Khaled conciliatory in his approach. He sent his emissary, Major Hafizuddin, a veteran freedom fighter to reach a negotiated settlement with the August coup leaders. See Mascarenhas, n.46, pp.92-102.

⁵² Fifteen officers, two NCOs and fourteen members of their families were allowed to leave Bangladesh in a specially chartered aircraft to temporarily stay in Bangkok. See *Statesman*, November 6, 1975.

⁵³ *Financial Times*, November 6, 1975.

On November 6, Mushtaque resigned and handed over the charge of Presidency to A.S.M. Sayem, the Chief Justice of Bangladesh Supreme Court.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, on the night of November 2-3, Mujib's four closest political associates——Tajuddin, Mansoor Ali, Kamaruzzaman and Syed Nazrul Islam were brutally killed in the Dhaka Central Jail (where they had been lodged after the August Coup) reportedly by the henchmen of the August coup leaders before leaving the country.⁵⁵

The common people received the news of secret killings with great shock. The four slain leaders steered the Bangladesh liberation struggle in the absence of Sheikh Mujib. The jail massacres set off a powerful reaction against the leaders of the August coup. Public demonstrations against the killings took place in different parts of the country. A three-member high level judicial committee was appointed to investigate the

⁵⁴ A report from Dhaka, however, mentioned that Bangladesh was now to be ruled by a ten-member military dominated National Revolutionary Council with President Sayem as its nominal Chairman. India's P.T.I., on November 5, identified six of the Military officers who were to sit in it —— (i) Maj.Gen.Khaled Mosharraf (ii) Admiral M.H. Khan (iii) Air Vice Marshall M.G. Tawab (iv) Maj. Gen.Dastgir (v) Col.Shafat Jamil and (vi) Maj.Gen.Khalillur Rahman. See Sinha, n.6, pp.24-25.

⁵⁵ According to one analyst the August Coup leaders had despatched a 'combat team' led by Naik Risalder Musleuddin, a repatriate soldier, to the Dhaka Central Jail where they brutally killed Mujib's four political associates in their cells. It is widely believed that such step was taken in order to forestall the AL's possible comeback to power. See Mascarenhas, n.46, pp.96-97.

jail-incident and enquire into the circumstances under which some of the criminals were given safe passage out of Bangladesh.⁵⁶

REASONS BEHIND THE NOVEMBER 3 COUP

Different opinions have been put forward as to what motivated Brig. Khaled Mosharraf and other senior officers to stage a counter-coup on November 3, 1975. A noted Bangladeshi political analyst has tried to project Khaled's November 3 coup as a pro-Mujib coup designed to restore assassinated Mujib's image and his one-party system. His argument is based on three assumptions.⁵⁷ First, he holds that Khaled and Col. Shafat Jamil, the two ring leaders of the coup, were closely linked with the AL, and some of their kins had joined Mujib's one-party system. Second, by restoring Mujib's image, they wanted to re-establish the original military hierarchy which was undermined by the coup of August 15, 1975. Finally, in support of the November 3 coup, a demonstration consisting mainly of leaders and students of AL and other pro-Moscow groups was organised on November 4 in which Khaled's mother and brother played a key

⁵⁶ *Times*, November 6, 1975.

⁵⁷ See Khan, n. 38, pp. 150-51

role. The demonstrators wanted to re-establish Mujib as 'the father of the nation' and to punish the leaders of the August coup.⁵⁸

Some political observers in Bangladesh did not take that demonstration as a scattered and isolated event but as a part of a conspiracy hatched by a foreign government to reinstate the discredited pro-Mujib forces.⁵⁹ They viewed the November 3 coup as a pro-Indian coup, designed by India's foreign intelligence unit ——— RAW (Research and Analysis wing) in co-ordination with Khaled.⁶⁰ The August coup was a great setback for India in that India lost not only its most trusted friend in Sheikh Mujib but also its 'face' in the new republic which was partly its own creation. Under this

⁵⁸ See Khan, n.38, pp.150-51.

On November 4, 1975, the day after Khaled's ascent to power, his brother Rashid (an AL MP) and his mother (a staunch Mujibite) led a procession of fifteen hundred people from Dhaka University to Mujib's residence to observe 'Bangabandhu Memorial Day'. It was reported that the march had been in the works for at least two weeks, organised by the pro-Moscow NAP (Muzaffar) and CPB (Moni Singh) and they wanted to salvage Mujibism. See "Bangladesh: State and Revolution-I", *Frontier*, vol. VIII, no.30, December 6, 1975, p.2.

⁵⁹ See *Bangladesh Times*, November 8, 1975.

⁶⁰ A foreign correspondent reported that the coup led by Khaled was sanctioned by the Government of India and intended to pave the way for armed intervention by invoking the Indo-Bangladesh Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation, 1972 which enabled either government to call upon the other for armed assistance in the event of a crisis. It was also reported that the Indian troops had already penetrated six miles inside the Bangladesh territory to bolster Khaled's position. See Mattern, n.50, p.20.

backdrop, the old international axis (Indo-Soviet bloc) was looking for an opportunity and thus the November 3 coup came into being.⁶¹

Some journalists in Bangladesh accused the forces of 'expansionism' (India) and 'social imperialism' (U.S.S.R.) for lending support to Khaled in staging the coup.⁶²

Another author suggests that the November 3 coup lacked a prior political planning and necessary tactical preparations. It was the sudden outcome of the grievances of a section of senior army officers. Khaled, Col. Shafat Jamil and other senior officers feared that they might face retribution from the Mushtaque regime as they were considered as confidants of Sheikh Mujib within the Bangladesh military circle. The November 3 coup was seen in the light of a pre-emptive strike against the Mushtaque government backed by the August coup leaders. To this was added the 'national responsibility' of punishing the killers of the 'father of the nation'.⁶³

⁶¹ See E. Ahamed, n.37, pp.77-78.

⁶² The editor of the government owned *Bangladesh Times*, wrote a front page editorial on November 8, 1975: "The alien hand in the counter-coup of November 3 was apparent --- As the usurpers attempted a restoration of a fallen image of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, they took advantage of the ambition of some unpatriotic army leaders --- and they struck, however briefly, in their bid to undo the change and succeeded for a while to create a smokescreen."

⁶³ See Ishtiaque Hasan, *Mujib Hattayar Antarale* (The Conspiracy Behind Mujib's Assassination) (Dhaka: Nayabrata Prakashan, 1980), p.140.

Most of the above stated reasons for the November 3 coup are exaggerations. No firm evidence has ever been produced to reveal that Khaled acted on November 3 with the prior knowledge of the government of India or at its behest.

A section of Bangladesh military personnel insisted that there was no Indian backing whatsoever, and the coup had occurred over issues internal to the Army.⁶⁴

The version that the four of Mujib's closest political associates arrested immediately after the August coup, came to know about the November 3 coup beforehand and that Tajuddin wrote to Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka asking for India's help is a concocted story. An investigations made by some journalists established that the whole story was a propaganda exercise. The jail conditions and the extreme hostility of the environment made it impossible for the leaders to take such an initiative.⁶⁵

Moreover, the argument that the senior officers who staged the November 3 coup, wanted to salvage 'Mujibism' also ignores certain important facts. First, Khaled and his associates at no stage of the coup or prior to it tried to mobilise the support of the

⁶⁴ Military sources close to the Khaled group in the Bangladesh Army claimed that the November 3 coup had the objective of 'restoring the chain of command' in the Army. See Lifschultz, n.8, p.64.

⁶⁵ For details see Mascarenhas, n.46, p.97; Lifschultz, n.8, pp.65-66.

Mubijibites either inside or outside the armed forces.⁶⁶ Second, the AL leaders never recognised Khaled as the 'conscious representative of Mujib's restoration' through the November 3 coup.⁶⁷ Instead, a section of AL held Khaled responsible for allowing the killers a safe passage to leave the country. The AL leaders also resented that Khaled had been blissfully neglectful of the need for the safety of the four leaders who were brutally murdered on the night of November 2-3.⁶⁸ The killings occurred by most accounts, either simultaneously with Khaled's swinging into action or while he was busy in negotiating with the August coup leaders.⁶⁹ Third, Khaled in fact turned down some of the demands of the AL leaders⁷⁰ and when some sections of pro-Mujib forces tried to organise themselves and were preparing to launch a mass movement for restoring Mujib's image Khaled resisted them in the name of Martial Law.⁷¹ Finally, had Khaled's coup been pro-Mujib and pro-India, it can be argued, he would have never asked Mushtaque to continue in his office. Mushtaque later said that Khaled had indeed

⁶⁶ The noted Bangladeshi political analyst, Emajuddin Ahamed argues that Khaled worked under Sheikh Mujib and like many others in the armed forces developed a kind of respectful admiration for him, but he never tried to project himself as a staunch Mujibite. He also dissociated himself from the demonstration that took place on November 4, 1975. See E. Ahamed, n.21, p.78.

⁶⁷ See Lifschultz, n.8, p.65.

⁶⁸ See Sengupta, n.4, p.97.

⁶⁹ See *Frontier*, n.58, p.3.

⁷⁰ Khaled did not allow the corpses of four leaders to be buried in the High Court premises, though *Chhatra League* and some AL leaders pressed for it. See. E. Ahamed, n.37, p.78.

⁷¹ See Hasan, n.63, pp.140-141.

asked him to stay on in office, but Mushtaque in the light of the new conditions had refused to do so.⁷²

Brig.Khaled, Col.Shafat Jamil and other senior officers became highly apprehensive about the prevailing circumstances for a number of reasons. In the first place, the senior officers were shocked at what was done in August 1975, but also enraged at being ignorant spectators of events. Secondly, the August coup had exposed their own weaknesses and the senior officers wanted to reassert their position in the Army. Thirdly, one of the most important motivating factors of the November 3 coup was the restoration of the chain of command in the Bangladesh Army. The usual command structure virtually ceased to function after the August coup and the senior officers led by Brig. Khaled wanted to re-establish the hierarchical command structure characteristic of a conventional military organisation.⁷³

Fourthly, professional rivalries also helped hasten the move by the senior officers against their junior colleagues, who seemed to be not only running the government but also making policies for the whole military organisation.

⁷² See Lifschultz, n.8, p.65.

⁷³ Lifschultz, n.8, p.64-65.

Fifth, another factor which perhaps motivated Khaled to stage the coup was his intense personal rivalry with Maj.Gen.Zia, the then Chief of Army Staff.⁷⁴ The relationship between the two senior officers had never been easy in the post-liberation period. After the August coup, their relationship took a turn for the worse. According to Lifschultz Zia tacitly supported Mushtaque and opposed elements in the Army represented by Khaled, who wanted to disarm the Majors and restore the chain of command.⁷⁵

Finally, one of the motivating factor of the November 3 coup was also to prevent the radical forces from taking over control of the armed forces. Immediately after the assassination of Sheikh Mujib. Some radical elements⁷⁶ particularly the JSD and its armed wing *Biplobi Gono Bahini* (People's Revolutionary Army) extended their

⁷⁴ See *Times*, November, 1975; *Dawn*, November 6, 1975.

⁷⁵ By late October, 1975, Khaled urged immediate action against the Majors, but was dissuaded by Zia who told him that any such action would be premature. Khaled in turn argued that senior officers were fed up with taking orders from Majors acting as if they were Generals. All these differences culminated in a showdown on November 3. See Lifschultz, n.8, p.65.

⁷⁶ The radical groups included———Bhasani's NAP, Md.Toaha's *Purba Bangla Sammobadi Dal*, Matin-Alauddin's *Bangla Communist Party* etc. and enjoyed some amount of following among the rank and file of the Bangladesh armed forces.

co-operation to the new regime in the hope of penetrating the lower echelons of the armed forces.⁷⁷

Though ideologically Mushtaque was poles apart from the radical elements who considered him basically as a rightist and pro-Islamic, Col. Taher's Gono Bahini stepped up its activities after the change of government for several reasons: first, the violation of the military hierarchy by the coup leaders was likely to serve its purpose of destroying the conventional set up of Bangladesh military; second, the JSD leaders felt that the August 15 coup would lead to a bitter power struggle in the Army involving the senior officers, and in the process Army discipline would be seriously affected, providing more opportunities for the *Gono Bahini* for mobilising the jawans (the privates).⁷⁸ The *Gono Bahini*, thus, began to infiltrate into the Army and Air Force, to form revolutionary cells inside the armed forces, and prepare for the radical take over. The November 3, counter coup was staged by Khaled and other senior officers with the objective of fore-stalling any such move of the radical elements in the armed forces and to reorganise the Bangladesh armed forces on the pattern of British-Indian and Pakistan armed forces.

⁷⁷ See Mosharaf Hossain, "Nature of State Power In Bangladesh-II", *Mainstream*, vol. XVIII, no.26, February 23, 1980, p.20.

⁷⁸ See E. Ahamed, n.21, p.90.

KHALED'S SHORTCOMINGS

Khaled although tried to discipline the disgruntled army officers who brutally killed Sheikh Mujib and his closest political associates and prevent the radical forces from taking over control of the armed forces, but he largely failed to consolidate his position within the armed forces and gain the confidence of the political elites. He from the very beginning projected the image of a person who did not know what to do.

Both before and after the coup, Khaled and his cohorts showed themselves to be indecisive and politically inept. From November 3 to 5, 1975, Bangladesh was practically without a government. For three days people wondered who was in charge ——— Mushtaque or the coup-leaders.⁷⁹ Between the time the senior officers coup was staged and the time Mushtaque handed over the Presidency to Chief Justice Sayem, confusion and pandemonium prevailed all over the country.⁸⁰ The coup leaders did not form a government immediately after seizing power, which could have strengthened their power base. This created a political vacuum and resulted in a near anarchy situation in Bangladesh.

⁷⁹ Mascarenhas, n.46, p.103.

⁸⁰ Khan, n.38, pp.151-52.

All the factors made Khaled highly unpopular eventually hastened the pace of his downfall. Within few hours of Khaled's assuming power, he was misunderstood by practically all sections of population. He created the impression among the people that he rose to revolt to advance his own interests. On November 7, 1975, only four days after capturing power, Khaled and his Army units were overwhelmed by a soldier's uprising. While attempting to escape from the cantonment, Khaled and some of his supporters were killed by the mutinous soldiers. Thus, ended the short lived coup of November 3.

THE NOVEMBER 7, 1975 'SOLDIERS' UPRISING

The morning of November 7, 1975, saw the unprecedented spontaneous popular uprising in the capital city of Dhaka. Soldiers, sailors and airmen revolted openly against Khaled and his supporters and were joined in their thousands by the common people. Leaflets were circulated among the *jawans* of the Army at Dhaka and other cantonments of the country by JSD's military wing Biplobi Gono Bahini accusing Khaled of being the 'paid agent' of the Indian government, describing the November 3 coup as an attempt by the Delhi-Moscow axis to re-establish its control over Bangladesh, and urging the *jawans* to revolt against Khaled.⁸¹

⁸¹ See Talukdar Maniruzzaman, *Group Interests and Political Change: Studies of Pakistan and Bangladesh* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1982), p.177.

The question of national sovereignty and the independence of the infant republic of Bangladesh acquired a new dimension during the November 7 uprising and the fear of 'Indian hegemony' figured very prominently.⁸² Inspired soldiers under the leadership of retired Col. Taher, the commander of the Gono Bahini, marched to the cantonment and freed Maj.Gen. Zia who was kept under house arrest since November 3. The soldiers celebrated the victory of nationalist forces and shouted the slogans ——'Bangladesh Zindabad' (Long Live Bangladesh), 'Sepoy Biplob Zindabad' (Long Live Soldiers Revolution), 'Biplobi Gono Bahini Zindabad'(Long Live People's Revolutionary Army), 'General Zia Zindabad'(Long Live General Zia), 'Sepoy Janata Bhai Bhai' (Soldiers and People are Brothers), 'Sepoy Janata Ek Hao' (Soldiers and People Unite), and so on.⁸³

By the evening of November 7, things took a more organised shape. Maj.Gen.Zia (who was temporarily deposed by Khaled on November 3) was re-installed as the Chief of the Bangladesh Army.⁸⁴ In a broadcast over the radio, Zia told the nation that he had

⁸² M. Rahman has described the nature of the soldiers uprising of November 7 in the following words: "--- nothing like the uprising of November 7 has ever been seen in the history of Bangladesh: a strong, uncompromising assertion of national will, an affirmation of its determination to cast off the chains Khaled Mosharraf planned to forge, and unqualified rejection of India's hegemony. Soldiers ran out of their barracks, and mingled with the crowds in the streets in a united remonstrance against the forces of evil." See Rahman, n.18, p.127.

⁸³ See Maniruzzaman, n.81, p.177; Hasan, n.63, pp.145-46.

⁸⁴ Zia, then a Major in the 8 EBR first made the announcement of the independence of Bangladesh over Radio Chittagong on March 27, 1971 and

to "take over for the time being at the request of the people, Army, Navy, Air Force, BDR, Police, Ansar and others".⁸⁵ Former President Mushtaque, in a radio broadcast that followed immediately after Zia's announcement, praised the "unparalleled revolution in defence of independence and sovereignty of Bangladesh " and urged the continuation of Justice Sayem as a 'non-political, non-partisan President of the country'.⁸⁶

President Sayem announced that Bangladesh would be governed under Martial Law Regulations and he would himself be the Chief Martial Law Administrators (CMLA). He also announced that he would be assisted by a Three-Member Committee comprising the three service chiefs, viz., Maj.Gen.Ziaur Rahman, Commodore M.H. Khan and Air Vice Marshall M.G. Tawab, as Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrators (DCMLAs).⁸⁷

proclaimed that he was the president of new republic of Bangladesh. He rectified it quickly and stated that he was acting on behalf of Sheikh Mujib. In the same statement, he however, declared himself to be the provisional c-in-c of the Bangladesh Liberation Army. (See the text of Maj.Zia's 'Declaration of Independence of Bangladesh' given in Appendix B. p.184). Such as 'ambitious self-appointment' had since been bitterly resented by Sheikh Mujib. After independence, he expected to be the Army Chief, but Mujib appointed Safiullah to the position.

⁸⁵ See *Bangladesh Observer*, November 8, 1975.

⁸⁶ See *Patriot*, November 8, 1975.

⁸⁷ See *Bangladesh Observer*, November 8, 1975.

President Sayem gradually elaborated the scheme of four Zonal Martial Law Administrators (ZMLAs) and appointed an Advisory Council consisting of people's representatives, to advise the government.⁸⁸ The advisors were given the rank of Ministers and the President allocated responsibilities for Ministers and divisions among them.⁸⁹

On November 8, President Sayem assumed the office of CMLA. He formally ordered the dissolution of the *Jatiyo Sangsad* with effect from November 6. He, however, assured that elections would be held according to the schedule earlier announced by the Mushtaque government.⁹⁰

GENESIS OF THE NOVEMBER 7 UPRISING

According to most of the available sources, JSD's armed wing --- *Biplobi Gono Bahini* was the driving force behind the November 7, 1975 insurrection. The man apparently at the centre of the drive organised by *Gono Bahini* was retired Col. Abu

⁸⁸ The Advisory Council consisted of three educationists, one former civil servant, one doctor and one female social worker. See Maniruzzaman, n.84, p.178; See also *Bangladesh Observer*, November 8, 1975.

⁸⁹ Maniruzzaman, n.81, p.178.

⁹⁰ See *Times of India*, November 9, 1975.

Taher⁹¹, who was known as 'Communist Commander' within the military circle in Bangladesh. After being 'released from the Army service in 1972, Col. Taher joined JSD and organised its military wing --- *Biplobi Gono Bahini*, comprising the young and radical freedom fighters who took part in the Liberation War of 1971.

JSD claims⁹² that its cadres had been forced underground since the 'Minto Road Massacre' on March 17, 1974, when most of its frontline leaders were arrested and nearly thirty of its members were killed by the JRB units which opened fire on a JSD hunger march destined to the Home Minister's residence. Since then, the cadres of *Gono Bahini* has been secretly organising *Biplobi Shainik Sangstha* (Revolutionary Soldiers Organisation).

Col. Taher attempted to re-cast and re-orient the Bangladesh armed forces by establishing several *Sainik Sangsthas* in various cantonments like Dhaka, Comilla, Bogra,

⁹¹ See "Bangladesh: State and Revolution-II", *Frontier*, vol. VIII, no.31, December 13, 1975, pp.2-4; Lifschultz, n.8, pp.8-15.

⁹² The JSD leadership decided to transform party's mass movement against the Mujib regime into an armed resistance one after the incident of March 17, 1974. Col. Taher and his supporters stepped up their activities to recruit members from among the *jawans* of the Army to organise an armed struggle in order to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in Bangladesh. See JSD leader, Mahbubur Rab Sadi's statement in Nazrul Islam, *Jashoder Rajniti : Ekti Nikat Bhisleshon* (JSD's Politics: A Critical Analysis) (Dhaka: Prachya Prakashani, 1981), pp.140-41.

Rangpur, Chittagong etc.⁹³ Even working under conditions of illegality. *Gono Bahini* succeeded in infiltrating the lower echelons of the armed forces, particularly among the *jawans*, JCOs and NCOs for a number of reasons. In the first place, Bangladesh Army despite its small size and homogeneous socio-cultural background, was plagued by deep internal cleavages and factional rivalries. Moreover, Mujib's favoured treatment to the JRB further weakened the Army and took away its *esprit-de-corps*. All these conditions provided ample opportunities to Col. Taher to recruit support from among the ranks in the armed forces for his radical cause. Secondly, being a war hero and the then commander of the 44 (Comilla) Brigade, Col. Taher enjoyed the respect and loyalty from the rank and file of the armed forces which made the task of mobilisation quite easier.

Gono Bahini under the leadership of Col. Taher was planning for a people's revolution when both the soldiers and common men acting in unison would overthrow the authoritarian regime of Sheikh Mujib and form a revolutionary council to implement 'Scientific Socialism' in the country.

The abrupt end of the Mujib regime through the bloody coup of August 15, 1975, came as a surprise to the radicals of Bangladesh politics. However, they immediately extended their support to the post-coup government in the hope of penetrating the lower

⁹³ *Biplobi Sainik Sangsthas* existed among different Army units in the form of study groups, clubs, work camps etc. They used to generate consciousness among the *sepoys* about their role and nature of discriminations between them and officers. See Ahamed, n.37, pp.88 and 105.

ranks of the Bangladesh Army. This alliance was bound to be short-lived because the economic and social objectives of the radical elements soon conflicted with the avowed aims of the ruling circles. The radicals ceased to support the Mushtaque government and felt obliged to oppose the ruling alliance as strongly as they opposed the AL and other nationalist forces.⁹⁴

Meanwhile, the high handedness of some of the August coup leaders created dissatisfaction among a section of the senior army officers resulting in another coup on November 3 led by Brig. Khaled Mosharraf. It was at this stage that the underground *Gono Bahini and Sainik Sangstha* emerged on the scene, revealing its strength and extensive7/rganisation by setting in motion agitation among the armed forces' rank and file.⁹⁵

Between November 4 and 6, several secret meetings of junior officers and soldiers were held under Col. Taher's organisational direction. On November 5⁹⁶, under the authority of *Sainik Sangstha*, thousands of leaflets were distributed among soldiers in

⁹⁴ M. Hossain, n.77, p.20.

⁹⁵ See Lifschultz, "Mutiny on Behalf of the People", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 5, 1975, p.30.

⁹⁶ JSD's involvement in the November 7 soldiers' uprising becomes more clear from the statement of one its leader, Mahbubur Rad Sadi said: "--- on November 5, a leaflet in the name of *Biplobi Sainik Sangstha* was circulated in Dhaka cantonment. We intervened into the matter directly for the first time through the leaflet". See Islam, n.92, p.29.

Dhaka cantonment, calling upon soldiers to cease to be pawns of officer's plot and counter plots and ready themselves for a general uprising to achieve their "goals of liberating themselves". The rank and file soldiers, the leaflets accused, had been pitted against each other by narrow, competing and ambitious factions among the upper echelons of the officer corps, none of whom represented the class interests of the rank and file of the armed forces.⁹⁷

By November 6, plans were reportedly finalised in a meeting attended by the members of the *Biplobi Sainik Sangstha* under the chairmanship of Col. Taher and some important decisions were taken for a generalised insurrection against Brig. Khaled Mosharraf to begin on the morning of November 7. The decisions were as follows: to oust Khaled and his cohorts; to free Maj.Gen. Zia from captivity; to establish a Revolutionary Military Command Council; to free all political prisoners irrespective of party affiliations; to withdraw all warrants of arrests on political workers; to form an all-party democratic national government excluding BAKSAL; and to accept and implement the 'Twelve Point Demands' of the *Biplobi Sainik Sangstha*.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ One of the leaflet said: "--- officers are abetting coups and *jawans* are sacrificing their lives. Oppressed and deprived *jawans* would no more be the cannon fodder. The fate of *jawan* and people is same. So power should be captured through the revolution of people and *jawans*. Therefore, prepare yourself for the revolution and class struggle." Cited in Hasan, n.63, p.144.

⁹⁸ See Taher's testimony in Lifschultz, n.8, p.90.

The soldier's mutiny had two-prong objectives. Its first objective was to overthrow Khaled, free Zia from detention and restore him to Chief of Staff of the Army. The second and the more significant objective was to establish a 'revolutionary army --- a people's army' in the country which would stand as the armed forces of the 'poorer class' against and over the bourgeois echelons of the officer corps and the bourgeoisie itself.⁹⁹

It was also decided that demonstrations and processions supporting the insurrection were to be organised from November 7 and the 'Twelve Point Demands' were to be made a fundamental issue once Zia took the charge.

THE TWELVE POINT DEMANDS OF THE SOLDIERS

The soldiers' 'Twelve Point Demands' ranged from a call for the establishment of a 'revolutionary people's army' to the total abolition of the British military rules and regulations that still dominated the military procedures in Bangladesh. Among the twelve demands, was included the idea of the formation of a 'classless army' as the first step towards the establishment of a 'classless society' in Bangladesh. The opening lines of the first demand read:

⁹⁹ See *Frontier*, n.58, p.3; Lifschultz, n.95, p.30.

"Our revolution is not simply to change one leadership for another. This revolution is only for the interest of the oppressed classes. We have accepted you (i.e. Maj.Gen.Zia) as our leader in this revolution. For that you are to express very clearly that you are to change the structure of the armed forces. For many days we have been army of the richer classes. The rich have used us for their own interests. The event of 15 August is but one example. This time we have revolted neither for the cause of the rich nor on their behalf. This time we have revolted along side the masses of the country. From today onwards the armed forces of the nation shall build themselves as the defender of the country's oppressed classes."¹⁰⁰

The other demands were equally radical. They included: removal of differences between soldiers and their officers; provision of higher pay to soldiers and abolition of accommodation fees for them; the selection of officers from among the ranks of common soldiers in the place of existing system of recruitment from the elite groups through the cadet colleges and public schools; and the abolition of the batmen system under which the sepoys were required to serve as domestic servants to the officers ————— a legacy of the British Indian Army.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Quoted from the 'Charter of Twelve-Point Demands' of the sepoys raised on November 7, 1975 uprising. See Appendix F, pp. 197 - 98 .

¹⁰¹ For details see Appendix F, pp. 197-98.

The most significant of all points was the call for the establishment of new organs of the armed forces for decision- making ——— *Biplobi Sainik Sangstha* (Revolutionary Army Organisation) for each unit, to be linked up with the central revolutionary organisation stationed at Dhaka cantonment. The declaration said:

"The *Biplobi Sainik Sangstha* would serve as the central policy- making body for the armed forces. General Ziaur Rahman would take any decision in regard to defence forces only after consulting this body.

This central policy-making body would co-ordinate the activities and policies of other such bodies in different cantonments, and enlist support of revolutionary students, peasants, workers and common men of the country.¹⁰²

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UPRISING

The November 7, 1975 soldiers uprising was a significant political event in Bangladesh. A number of leading political analysts in Bangladesh have termed the uprising as a 'revolution', though a short-lived one.¹⁰³ The soldiers uprising contained all the characteristics of a revolution: proposals for the drastic changes in the

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Prof. Maniruzzaman has, called the November 7 soldiers uprising as '*Sepoy Revolution*'. See Maniruzzaman, n.81, p.177.

organisational framework and the role of the armed forces in Bangladesh, an ideologically oriented leadership and several thousand armed cadres actively supporting the proposals, revolutionary slogans, a programme of action intended to bring about revolutionary changes not only in the armed forces but also in the polity.¹⁰⁴

It was for the first time since the Liberation War of 1971, that soldiers defying military discipline joined hands with the civilians for a cause they considered nationally important.

The emergence of a powerful radical force within the organised military for South Asia was an unprecedented development. Such radical uprising among the rank and file of the soldiers terribly jolted the very foundation of the military establishment in Bangladesh. On the nature of the soldiers' uprising, a premier leftist weekly of Calcutta, *Frontier* commented:

"The Bangladesh Army rose up in the form of a generalised insurrection with rank and file *jawans* defying their officers and calling not only for the overthrow of 'the Indian agent' Khaled Mosharraf, but also for the immediate implementation of their own 'Twelve Demands.' They were not simple requests for a cup of tea at noon and a bigger bowl of rice, but constituted a radical expression never before seen in any regular

¹⁰⁴ E. Ahamed, n.37, p.80.

army in South Asia. This was the fruit of a conventional army turned into a guerrilla force during 1971 coming ripe after four years of subterranean gestation".¹⁰⁵

Thus the origin of this rebellion can be traced back to March 25, 1971 when the Bengalee members of the Pakistan armed forces who for years had upheld the British military traditions and used to suppress the nationalist movements, were themselves suddenly thrust into the role of organising armed resistance for the cause of Bangladesh.¹⁰⁶

ZIA'S RESPONSE TO THE SOLDIERS' DEMANDS

On November 7, 1975, Zia signed the Twelve Point Demands put forward by the soldiers and promised that they would be implemented. Zia also ordered the release of JSD leaders including Maj.M.A.Jalil and A.S.M. Abdur Rab who had been imprisoned during the Mujib regime.

Immediately after their release, JSD leadership called for an 'uninterrupted' revolution under the banner of Biplobi Gono Bahini This raised the concern of Zia and many other military officers who suddenly realised the real intent of the radical soldier groups who spearheaded the uprising on November 7. These soldiers pushed ahead in

¹⁰⁵ See *Frontier*, n.58, p.3

¹⁰⁶ Lifschultz, n.8, p.10.

Dhaka, Comilla and Rangpur cantonments. Serious confrontations occurred between officers and soldiers from November 7 to 9. In Dhaka alone, thirty officers were reported to have been killed by their men. The sepoys of several units told their commanders that they were no longer in command. The officers were asked to agree to their soldiers' demands for the establishment of 'revolutionary soldiers' organisations' in each unit as the new organ of authority.¹⁰⁷

In Comilla, the uprising reportedly developed without major loss of life. Officers were isolated and not allowed to resume command. *Gono Bahini* cadres claimed that they were against the killings and hoped to segregate and eventually change the thinking of those officers who failed to support the revolutionary demands. They admitted that general insurrection was an event they could not control.¹⁰⁸ On November 13, reports from Chittagong spoke of mutiny in Bangladesh's small two thousand-men navy with sailors pressing demands on wages and abolishing the class system within the armed force.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ See *Frontier*, n.91, pp.2-4.

¹⁰⁸ The strong anti-officer feelings among the common soldiers was reflected in the following slogan:
*"Sephai, Sephai, Bhai, Bhai,
 Officer Der Rakta Chai"*
 (All soldiers are brothers, we want the blood of officers). Cited in Mascardnhas, n.46, p.103.

¹⁰⁹ Lifschultz, n.95, p.34.

The critical situation inside the cantonments compelled Zia to take immediate steps. Zia took a determined stand not only to preserve the corporate interests of the officers in the armed forces but also to perform the elemental functions of government which were shattered during the uprising.

On November 9, JSD announced that it would hold a public meeting, Zia was believed to have promised there would be no interference with the gathering. But as the processions approached the scheduled spot, JSD cadres were halted by Police and the meeting was stopped. By then, JSD leaders began to accuse that Zia had returned to his pre-November 3 position and was unwilling to support the radical demands raised during the mutiny.

On November 11, Zia made a nationwide speech condemning those who had tried to use his name for 'certain ends'. with this announcement, his break and dissociation with the JSD was complete. He said, "I would like to make it clear, I have no connection whatsoever with politics. I am not a politician, I am a soldier'. He further added, "I am surprised to see my name entangled with various propaganda of certain quarters".¹¹⁰

According to one analyst, forces fundamentally antagonistic to the radical dimensions of the upsurge quickly tried to re-establish their position and were able to

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

persuade Zia onto a new course. The post-November 7 political alignments in Dhaka centred around three leading fronts. The first group consisted of Mushtaque, the former President and his two closest political aides ———— Mahbub Alam Chashi and Teheruddin Thakur. This group was regarded as rightist and pro-Islamic. Zia began to gather around him a political base with the help of this group.¹¹¹

The second group comprised of a section of the revolutionary left mainly represented by Mohammad Toaha's *Purba Bangla Sammabadi Dal*. Toaha extended full co-operation to the Martial Law Administration. In a press statement, Toaha cautioned that the principal danger in the country was the imminent threat of foreign aggression and invasion and that those who advanced a theory of 'class struggle' at the moment were acting as either direct or indirect agent of prospective aggressors.¹¹²

The third group was represented by JSD and its *Gono Bahini*. The JSD believed that the moment was ripe for 'class struggle' and called for an insurrection to be carried through to the end: bringing about the overthrow of a shaken and nearly shattered bourgeois state. It also called for the establishment of proletarian administration based on the unity of revolutionary soldiers, peasants and students. The JSD leaders did not deny the danger of 'Indian intervention', which they more or less expected in some form,

¹¹¹ Lifschultz, "The Crisis Has Not Passed", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 5, 1975, p.28.

¹¹² *Frontier*, n.95, p.4.

but claimed that the best defence cannot be organised by a conventional army, but only by a 'people's army' which from village to village, would mount resistance if India attempted to intervene directly.¹¹³

Zia went into action to set his army's house in order. He declared that the spreading of leaflets inside the cantonments should be stopped. On November 15, new regulations were issued prescribing the death penalty for those attempting to cause disaffection among the officers and men in the armed forces. Thus Zia's message to the revolutionaries was clear: Army High Command would not entertain any idea of 'classless army'.

Zia was 'commissioned' as the frontman of the *sepoy* revolution because of his position in the armed forces and popularity as a war hero. He went along for some time with the revolutionaries and then turned the table against them, made himself their leader and turned the whole movement in a direction which the revolutionaries wanted to change.¹¹⁴

By November 15, the JSD had publicly begun to dissociate itself from Zia, after he refused to order further prisoner releases and continued a ban on political meetings.

¹¹³ See Lifschultz, n.111, p.29.

¹¹⁴ E. Ahamed n.37, pp-80-81.

JSD charged that Zia, who had been freed by the revolutionary soldiers, was now rallying the 'rightist reactionaries and pro-USA elements.'

On the role of Zia the revolutionaries said:

"Knowing full well that Major-General Zia was an ambitious man and lacked a progressive personality, he was nevertheless put in power mainly because the prevailing situation called for the upholding of national unity. By placing at the top a seemingly non-political man like Zia, whom the people in general and the army would support, this could be achieved. In addition, the weak position he was in due to having been saved from certain death presented an opportunity to utilise him for the cause of working people's politics. He would be used if possible, for the release of political prisoners, the staging of a free early election, the formation of an interim national government, liberating the country from the Indo-Soviet influence, and such other activities conducive to the revolutionary movement.

But shortly after having been put in such a powerful position, Zia realised that his personal class-based hopes and ambitions would not be materialised if he remained under the influence of progressive forces....

By November 10-11, he assumed a full reactionary role. Despite whatever correct statements he put forward at the outset, Zia right from the start moved towards the reactionary camp".¹¹⁵

Zia was able to restore discipline among the bulk of soldiers. The government arrested nineteen JSD leaders, including Major Jalil, A.S.M. Abdur Rab, and Col. Taher (the chief of the *Gono Bahini*) On November 23 and 24. This was followed by a general crackdown throughout the country against the JSD. In a hard hitting speech over the radio Zia warned the "foreign agents engaged in conspiracy against our independence".¹¹⁶

With the crackdown on JSD, the revolutionary euphoria demonstrated in the soldiers' uprising began to die down. The November 7 soldiers' uprising succeeded only in changing the government, but it failed miserably to stabilise the victory and transform the Bangladesh society.

¹¹⁵ Cited in JSD's 'Political and Organisational Report: 7th November and Subsequent Events: *Samyabad*, no.4, February 23, 1976, p.14. Quoted from Khan, n.38, p.166.

¹¹⁶ It was reported that, the *Gono Bahini*, with the help of their supporters in the Army, planned a coup in Dhaka on November 24, 1975. But the coup bid was foiled and two dissident battalions were disarmed on November 24. See *Bangladesh Times*, November 25, 1975.

JSD leaders asserted that the uprising was mainly initiated by them¹¹⁷ but they were betrayed once Zia was reinstalled into power. However, it is pertinent to note that there were two competing groups among the soldiers, participating in the mutiny. One group was influenced by the conflicting class interests within the armed forces, while the other was more anti-Indian, anti-AL and pro-Islamic than having anything to do with class conflicts.

Gono Bahini cadres shouted slogans in favour of socialism, proletarian rule and the 'unity of revolutionary soldiers, peasants, workers, and students'. The other group shouted slogans in support of Islam, Mushtaque Ahmed and against the Indo-Soviet bloc.¹¹⁸ These diverse slogans demonstrated that the radical elements in the armed forces represented a different ideological camp from the section of soldiers who had rebelled mainly against the alleged 'Indian plotter Khaled', and from a sense of Islamic nationalism. Zia capitalised on the anti-Indian and anti-BAKSAL feelings in an attempt to garner support and strengthen his power base in the Bangladesh armed forces.

¹¹⁷ JSD President Major Jalil claims, "Nothing happened spontaneously on November 7. It was a pre-planned act and JSD organised it." See Hasan, n.63, p.145.

¹¹⁸ The Islamic slogans like, '*Naraye Taqbir-Allah-o-Akbar*' (Praise that God is Great), '*Jago Jago Muslim Jago*' (Awake-O-Muslims) etc. were raised in different places of the country. There were also slogans against India and her agents such as '*Bharater Dalalder Khatam Karo*' (Eliminate Indian Stooges), '*Russiar Dalalder Khatam Karo*' (Eliminate Russian Stooges) etc. The change of government through the soldiers' uprising was characterised by *Bangladesh Times* as 'Bangladesh Wins Freedom'. See Hasan, n.63, pp.145-46.

Gono Bahini triggered the uprising but could not control the later developments stemming out of the mutiny.¹¹⁹ Probably the JSD leaders and Col.Taher failed to provide the kind of leadership the situation demanded at that time.

In fact, JSD leadership itself was divided on the issue of principal motivating factors behind the soldiers uprising. This is evident from Party documents. One of JSD's party documents clearly admits:

'We have delivered so many self-contradictory statements on November 7 soldiers' uprising that it is very difficult to find out the truth. We are placing those statements side by side. For instance, we said in *Larai* (Struggle), "in that moment, questions of national independence and sovereignty figured prominently", whereas in *Samyabad* (Egalitarianism) it was stated, "when we tried to create a proletarian power base capitalising the soldiers'-officers' schism, the military fascism took over due to our organisational weakness.'¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ The JSD President Major Jalil himself later admitted, "The Post-November 7 developments were so intense that we could not control it." *Ibid.*, p.148.

¹²⁰ See JSD's 'Past Assessment: 44-Page Document' cited in *Islam*, n.92, p.38.

THE REVIVAL OF CIVIL-MILITARY BUREAUCRATIC ELITE UNDER THE ZIA REGIME

After rejecting Taher and his revolutionary cause, Zia tried to take a centrist position for himself in order to build a majority support behind the Martial Law Regime. The revolutionary slogans of the *Gono Bahini* and JSD frightened the middle classes, particularly the civil-military bureaucratic elite, who represented the interests of the middle class.¹²¹ The middle class wanted a guarantee of its life and property and was willing to support any leader who could re-establish order in the armed forces.

The civil-military bureaucratic elite, who ruled Bangladesh (the then East Pakistan) during the undivided Pakistan period, and seemed to have lost its *esprit de corps* and relegated to a secondary position during the Mujib period, once again gained prominence during three months of Mushtaque regime. Under the Zia regime, the civil military bureaucratic elite reasserted itself and continued to consolidate its position and dominate decision-making since the beginning.¹²²

Many bureaucrats who lost jobs during the Mujib period were placed in key positions by Zia while some pro-Mujib officers were either dismissed or demoted. The

¹²¹ Jahan, n.21, p.205.

¹²² See E. Ahamed, "Dominant Bureaucratic Elites in Bangladesh". *The Indian Political Science Review*, vol.XIII, no.1, January 1979, pp.30-48.

civil-military elite were given the responsibility for the formulation of development strategy and policies and all key policy making institutions were dominated by them.¹²³

Initially at the core of the new governmental system, was a seven-member Council of Advisers to the President, which was established on November 26, 1975. It included the three DCMLAs and four bureaucrats and technocrats. The number of advisers was subsequently raised to twenty four of whom most were either bureaucrats or technocrats. In the overall power structure, the positions of the President, the CMLA, DCMLAs and the advisers to the President were crucial and 50 p.c. of them were held by the bureaucratic elite.¹²⁴ As Rounaq Jahan puts it, the council was full of 'non-political' bureaucrats and technocrats, who served in the regimes of Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan during the Pakistani colonial rule, and who knew the art of running a civil-military bureaucratic regime.¹²⁵

Zia firmly held the reins of power and gradually emerged as the most powerful man by the end of 1975.¹²⁶ The November 7 soldiers' uprising and Zia's coming to power thus marked the beginning of military rule in the fledgling republic of Bangladesh.

¹²³ Kukreja, n.2, p.155.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Jahan, n.21, p.205.

¹²⁶ See Michael Chinoy, "Dacca's Strongman Consolidates", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 16, 1976, pp.31-32.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

The Bangladesh Liberation War was a politico-military struggle fought against the Pakistani military for a period of nine months. In this war, the EBR and EPR personnel of the erstwhile Pakistan armed forces played a heroic role. They in fact formed the core of the armed resistance to the Pakistani military.

The Liberation War was mostly fought by guerrilla methods. Both the political leaders and the Bengalee armed forces worked in close co-operation for the liberation of Bangladesh. While the regular forces took the responsibility of leading most of the military operations, the political leaders helped in mobilising support from the Bengalee masses for the cause of liberation.

In the process of their active participation in the Liberation War, the Bengalee armed forces were exposed to the ideas and ideologies of various political groups. The regular forces fought in co-operation with different political groups, and came in close contact with their leaders. Consequently, several Bengalee military personnel got informally affiliated to different political groups and were fully politicised.

Thus the Bangladesh military which was the lineal descendent of the British Indian Army and the Pakistan armed forces, was transformed during the Liberation War into

a freedom fighters army. As the strategy of guerrilla warfare radicalised a large section of the Bangladesh armed forces; a colonial army got converted into a political army.

The Liberation War of 1971 broke the distance between the civilians and the armed forces personnel that had existed during the colonial period and made the armed forces aware of the nature of political leadership and political institutions. This led to the emergence of a highly politicised military force in the post-liberation Bangladesh.

The new Bangladesh armed forces were raised from the former Bengalee members of the Pakistan armed forces and some new recruits from among the irregulars of the Mukti Bahini. They constituted the nucleus of the Bangladesh armed forces for the first one and half years. The Bengalee military personnel who had been stationed in West Pakistan and could not participate in the Liberation War were repatriated in 1973 and were gradually inducted into the Bangladesh armed forces.

During the first few years, the Bangladesh armed forces in spite of their small size and homogeneous ethnic origin were deeply affected by internal schism and factionalism. They were divided both on ideological and personnel grounds. The radical elements like Cols. Taher and Ziauddin advocated that the Bangladesh armed forces should be transformed into a kind of 'productive army' on the model of Chinese People's Army. The majority of the armed forces personnel, however, favoured the

retention of the conventional army on the pattern of British Indian Army and the Pakistan armed forces.

The difference within the Bangladesh armed forces had yet another dimension. Compared to the freedom fighters, who were highly politicised, exuberant and full of ideological fervour, the repatriates retained much of the conservative outlook that characterised the armed forces in Pakistan. Moreover, the armed forces were also plagued by professional rivalries, mutual antagonism and groupism either between the different wings of the armed forces or between factions within the same wing.

The ruling Awami League government on its part did not adopt appropriate integrationist measures for the armed forces. Instead, Mujib's government encouraged the internal cleavages in the armed forces by political patronage and putting one faction against the other which finally resulted in sharpening the internal cleavages and further politicising the armed forces of Bangladesh.

In the post-independence period, Sheikh Mujib and his Awami League government were anxious to ensure civilian political supremacy by making it impossible for the military bureaucratic apparatus to seize power as in Pakistan. Therefore, the Awami League government, since the beginning was against maintaining a large standing army. It was particularly afraid of the ambitious officers within the Bangladesh Army. This

gave rise to serious misgivings among the armed forces of Bangladesh that had taken part in the liberation struggle.

The creation of a parallel armed force——— the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini (JRB) owing exclusive allegiance to Sheikh Mujib and his government irked the regular armed forces personnel. The JRB was supposed to reduce the influence of the Pakistan trained Bengalee military personnel and counter-balance those sections of the freedom fighters within the Bangladesh armed forces which affiliated themselves to ideological camps other than the Awami League. What antagonised the military personnel was Sheikh Mujib's preferential treatment towards this well-equipped elite para-military force as compared to the meagre facilities provided to the regular armed forces.

The period between 1972-75 was marked by systemic weakness and performance failures of the Awami League regime. In the face of growing economic crises, social and political instability, widespread corruption and the increasingly violent role of the radical political groups, the faction-ridden and fragmented Awami League regime had to turn to the Army. The Army conducted a number of successful operations in checking smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, recovering illegal arms and combing the extremist political forces.

The increasingly active participation of the Army in civil administration made them even more aware of the weaknesses of the civilian political regime. particularly the

corrupt practices of some of the Awami League leaders and made them sensitive to political power. Thus the military elite, which lost its esprit de corps in the early years regained confidence and began to nurse a feeling that the military alone could save the nation.

The creation of new authoritarianism through BAKSAL and Sheikh Mujib's intention to bring the armed forces under its control alienated them still further. Mujib's increased unpopularity led to his political isolation. The armed forces stepped into this vacuum when a group of junior army officers, assassinated Sheikh Mujib on August 15, 1975 and brought to an abrupt end the political regime in Bangladesh before the proposed reforms under the BAKSAL plan could be implemented.

The August coup could be considered as one of the most significant political events in Bangladesh for a number of reasons. First, the coup was followed by a series of coups and counter coups and severe internecine conflicts within the Bangladesh armed forces. Secondly it paved the way for the military to emerge as the ruling elite in Bangladesh.

In the post-August coup period, an uneasy power struggle continued between the junior officers who masterminded the coup and the Army High Command. The high handedness of the August coup leaders created a serious dissatisfaction among a section of the senior army officers resulting in another coup on November 3, 1975 led by Brig.

Khaled Mosharraf. However, both before and after the coup, Brig. Khaled and his supporters showed themselves to be indecisive and politically inept.

Meanwhile, there were infiltration of radical elements like JSD and its Biplobi Gono Bahini into the lower ranks of the armed forces and other preparations for radical take over. On November 7, 1975, Brig. Khaled and his supporters were overwhelmed by a soldiers' uprising and Maj.Gen. Ziaur Rahman was re-installed as the Chief of the Army Staff.

The JSD leaders and Col. Taher, the commander of the Gono Bahini tried to capitalise on the prevailing class contradictions within the armed forces. In Bangladesh armed forces, the officer corps belonged to the elite and affluent families whereas the common soldiers came from the modest lower middle class background. However, along with the radical elements, some pro-Islamic and anti-Mujib forces also participated in the mutiny, Col. Taher succeeded in enlisting their support by projecting Brig. Khaled and his supporters as Mujibites and raised the bogey of 'Indian hegemony'. They did this to accelerate the fall of Brig. Khaled. At the same time, much of the ideological strength of the revolutionaries got diminished. Maj.Gen. Zia refused to go along with the Gono Bahini and its Twelve Point Demands. He soon consolidated his position both within and outside the armed forces on the basis of the support of rightist and pro-Islamic groups.

Under the Zia regime, the civil-military bureaucratic elite reasserted itself, consolidated its position and started dominating the decision-making process. By the end of 1975, Zia emerged as the real strong man in Bangladesh. Zia's accession to and consolidation of power was a turning point in the country's politics as it marked the beginning of military rule in the nascent republic of Bangladesh.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX - A

TEXT OF SHEIKH MUJIB'S MARCH 7, 1971 HISTORIC SPEECH

"OUR STRUGGLE THIS TIME IS A STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE"

March 7, 1971 witnessed the historic public meeting at Dhaka Race Course where at least one million eager Bengalees came to receive orders from their leaders. Most of the people present had come to hear a declaration of independence by their leader. In his usual thunderous voice, *Bangabandhu*, delivered his epoch-making speech:

"Brethren",

"I am before you to-day with a heavy heart. You know and understand everything. We have done our best and yet the streets of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rangpur and Jessore are drenched with the blood of my brothers.

To-day the people of Bengal want freedom; they want to live; they want their rights restored.

You elected Awami League to frame the constitution. We hoped that the National Assembly would sit and we would frame the constitution. Through this constitution, the people would achieve their economic, political and cultural freedom. The history of the last 23 years is the history of the agonised cry of the people of Bengal, it is a painful history of giving blood, it is the history of the tears of an oppressed people.

We gave blood in 1952. In 1954, even though we won the election, we were denied the opportunity to rule. By promulgating Martial Law in 1958 Ayub Khan kept us in bondage for ten years.

In 1966, the Six-Point formula was submitted before the nation and for this many of my brothers were killed.

In 1969, in the face of the mass movement Ayub fell and Yahya came. Yahya said, he would hand over power to people and there would be a constitution. We accepted his promise. You all know what happened after that. We had discussions with Yahya Khan. We requested him to summon the National Assembly Session on February 15, but he did not listen to me, although I am the leader of the Majority Party. He listened to Mr. Bhutto --- the leader of minority party in the Assembly. I am not only the leader of majority party in Bengal, I am the leader of Pakistan as a whole. Bhutto demanded National Assembly should meet in the first week of March. Yahya obliged Mr. Bhutto and called the session on the March 3. I said, even then we would attend the session and although we constitute the majority in the National Assembly, we would listen to any one who would talk reason, even if it came from an individual member.

Mr. Bhutto came to Dhaka. We had discussions with him before he left, Mr. Bhutto said that the door of discussions was not closed and that these would continue further. Other parliamentary leaders of West Pakistan including Moulvi Hazarvi and Mufti Mahmud came to Dhaka and we had discussions with them. Our aim was to frame a constitution through mutual consultations. However, I informed them that I have no right to alter the Six-Point Programme; it belongs to the people.

Mr. Bhutto came out with threats. He said, he was not ready to be a double hostage by coming to Dhaka. He said that the Assembly would turn into a slaughter house. He told the West Pakistani members of the Assembly that if they attended the Assembly Session there would be a blood bath, their heads would be smashed and they would all be killed. He would launch a movement from Peshawar to Karachi. Not a single shop would be allowed to remain open.

Despite these threats thirty five West Pakistani members of National Assembly arrived in Dhaka. But on March 1, Yahya Khan postponed the session of the National Assembly. He blamed the people of Bengal, he blamed me and he said that it was not possible to achieve anything because of my obstinacy.

The people of Bengal resented this postponement. I called for a '*hartal*' in order to carry on a peaceful movement. People came out in streets spontaneously. But what did we get. Arms have been used against the unarmed people of Bengal. They have no weapons. The arms we bought at our own cost to defend the country from external aggression are being used to kill my innocent people. The suffering people are the targets of bullets.

Whenever we Bengalees, the majority of nation, sought power to exercise our right to rule, a conspiracy was immediately hatched to stop it. They unleashed repression on us.

Yahya Khan had alleged that I had agreed to attend the Round Table Conference on March 10, but the facts were otherwise. I had conversation with him. I told him, he was the President of the country, he should come to Dhaka and see how my poor people were being killed; how the laps of mothers have been made empty.

I had made it known before that there would be no more Round Table Conference. What Round Table Conference and with whom? Would I sit in a Round Table Conference with those who have robbed our mothers of their children?

On March 3, at Paltan Maidan I gave a call for Non-co-operation Movement. I asked you to stop offices and courts from functioning and stop paying taxes and you did.

Suddenly without any consultation with us and after discussion with Mr. Bhutto, lasting for five hours, Yahya Khan made a speech putting the entire blame for the developments on me and on the people of Bengal. While Mr. Bhutto was the guilty one, the people of Bengal were fired upon. We are the people who got bullets and we are the people who are blamed.

Our struggle from now on is a struggle for emancipation, for freedom. Blood stains of those killed have not yet dried, and I cannot step over the blood of the martyrs to attend the National Assembly on March 25.

Yahya Khan has convened the National Assembly. But my demands are : Lift Martial Law; take the soldiers back to the barracks; investigate the mass killings; and transfer power to the elected representatives. After the fulfilment of those four pre-conditions we will consider whether we could sit in the National Assembly or not. Before these demands are fulfilled, there is no question of our sitting in the Assembly. The people have not given me that right. My brethren, do you have faith in me?

I do not want the Prime Ministership of the country. I want to get for the people their rights. The enemies of these rights have not succeeded in making me surrender by offering me the Prime Ministership, or by their plot of having me hanged. You freed me from the Conspiracy Case. I told you at Race Course ground after my release that I would repay the debt of blood with blood. Do you remember? I am ready to do so now.

I would like to tell you that from to-day all courts, including the High Courts and Supreme Court, all offices and educational institutions will remain closed for an indefinite period. No officer will attend office. This is my direction. Rickshaws and trains will, however, run so that the poor are not subjected to hardship. The Secretariat, Supreme Court, High Court, District Court, Government, Semi Government, and autonomous bodies would remain closed. Banks would remain open for two hours only for transactions within East Bengal. No money will go from East Bengal to West Pakistan. The Bengalees should act with caution. The Telegraph and Telephone systems could continue service within Bangladesh but journalists, would be allowed to send their despatches abroad.

There is a plot to finish off the people of Bangladesh. So please be careful.

You would draw your salary at the usual time. If they do not pay you, if they fire one single bullet, if they kill another man, turn every home in Bengal into a fortress. You will have to face the enemy with whatever arms you have. We must make you (enemy) die of thirst and hunger. The roads and ferries will have to be closed down. If I am not there to give you directions or if none of my colleagues is there for this purpose you would continue yourselves.

To the soldiers of Pakistan Army I say -

You are my brothers, if you stay in the barracks, you will be left alone, but if you come to murder us the consequence will be bad. You will not be able to suppress seventy five million people any more. Bengalees have learnt to face death - nobody can suppress them.

For the families of martyrs, the Awami League have formed a Relief Committee. We will try to help. Contribute as much as you can afford.

The mill owners will pay workers who have taken part in the last seven days *hartal* or were unable to work because of the curfew. Government employees, please note, must obey what I say. We don't want to see anybody in the office. Till the freedom of this country is achieved payment of taxes would remain suspended. I know how to carry on movement. Please leave it to me.

But be on your guard, you should remember that the enemy has infiltrated among us. They would try to create dissension among us under cover. Bengalees, Non-Bengalees, Hindus and Muslims are all our brothers. It is our responsibility to protect them all.

Trains will run, but not for the purpose of transporting troops. If they carry troops, then I shall not be responsible for the consequences.

If the Radio, Television and newspapers do not circulate news of our movement, then no Bengalee would go to work in these institutions.

There is still possibility of our living like brothers with the people of West Pakistan, if there is a peaceful settlement. Otherwise there is none. If the Pakistan army commits any more excess we may never look at one another's face again. I request you to form committees of action in every village, *mohalla* and union under the leadership of the Awami League. Be ready with whatever weapons you have in your hands. Since we have given blood once, we will give more, but Bengal must be liberated. This is a struggle for our liberation. This is a struggle for freedom.

You should remain prepared and let not your struggle lose its intensity. Continue with your movement and demonstration. If the movement cools down they will crack down upon us. You should maintain discipline because without discipline no nation can win a struggle".

--- JOY BANGLA

Source : Gaziul Huq, *Bangladesh Unchained* (Calcutta : Indian Associated Pub, 1971), pp. 140-44.

APPENDIX - B

**TEXT OF MAJ. ZIAUR RAHMAN'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE
OF BANGLADESH BROADCAST FROM THE CHITTAGONG RADIO
STATION ON MARCH 27, 1971.**

"I Major Zia, provisional commander-in-chief of the Bangladesh Liberation Army, hereby proclaim on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the independence of Bangladesh.

I also declare, we have already formed a sovereign, legal government under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman which pledges to function as per law and the constitution. The new democratic government is committed to a policy of non-alignment in international relations. It will seek friendship with all nations and strive for international peace. I appeal to all governments to mobilise public opinion in their respective countries against the brutal genocide in Bangladesh.

The government under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the sovereign legal government of Bangladesh and is entitled to recognition from all democratic nations of the world."

On March 30, 1971 Major Zia further declared:

"Punjabis have used 3 Commando Battalion in Chittagong city are to subdue the valiant freedom fighters of Shadhin Bangla. But they have been thrown back and many of them have been killed.

The Punjabis have been extensively using F-86 aircraft to destroy the civilian strongholds and vital points. They are killing the civilians, men, women and children brutally. So far at least thousands of Bengalee civilians have been killed in Chittagong area alone.

The Shadhin Bangla Liberation Army is pushing the Punjabis from one place to other."

Source : Golam Hossain, *Civil Military Relations in Bangladesh : A Comparative Study* (Dhaka : Academic Publishers, 1991), p. 38.

APPENDIX - C

OSMANI'S OPS PLAN

Col. (Retd.) M.A.G. Osmani, C-in-C of the Bangladesh Liberation Forces prepared an Operational Plan (OPS) for the troops fighting in the different sectors of Bangladesh in September 1971. Text of the Operational (OPS) Plan is given below.

INTRODUCTION

1. The liberation war has gone on for last six months. It is time to assess the progress in the field, isolate and analyse failings and problems, if any, and work out plans to speed up progress of the war to achieve our goal of complete independence of Bangladesh within the shortest possible time. To enable us to draw up a viable plan it is essential to first study our achievements/failings as they stand today.

2. During the last six months progress in the field has varied widely and gone through phases of ups and downs. However, it can be broadly said that though we have inflicted a degree of damage on the enemy, it is far short of what we should have achieved. In fact, from the study of the steps a positive decline in our war effort and success becomes evidently clear.

3. Our effort in the field, for the purpose of analytical study can be broken up as follows :-

(a) **Raising of Bde and its ops:** We have raised a bde with three E. Bengal Battalions. These battalions, however, had only 50 p.c. or less of the original troops. Therefore, short fall had to be made up by milking troops such as EPR, *Mujahids* and *Ansars* from Sectors. This did not provide the standard of troops we required for regular bns. The bde started its training in the month of July and has been under training for three months. With this short training and shortage of officers the ops efficiency of the bde can not be assessed as very high. In any case, without armour, it is incapable of launching major offensive and therefore, the thought of liberating lodgement area and to hold it, it is not practicable. For all this period, the bde has not been effectively utilised and cannot be utilised effectively in the near future for role it has been raised.

(b) **Sector Troops:** During early stage of the Liberation War the sector troops were operating reasonably well. However, with the mixing of best troops from the sectors for bde, the effectiveness of the sector troops decreased significantly. Some of the EPR, *Mujahids* and *Ansars* who were left behind and old and have lost their usefulness as ops troops. In fact, a number of them while going inside for ops have been indulging in loot, rape etc. Their ops, therefore, has been counter productive and has turned a large section of people, particularly in the border region where they have been operating, against us. The state of discipline of the sector troops is also very poor and

is not conducive to the successful launching ops. At best they can be utilised in defensive role provided they are not subjected to heavy enemy offensive.

(c) **Guerilla Ops:** The guerillas have been trained since the month of May, initially at the rate of five thousand per month. The figure is now twenty thousand per month. Till to -date approximately thirteen thousand guerillas have been inducted inside. However, the result expected out of them has not been realised. In fact, their performance has been disappointing. Some of the guerillas are indulging in loot and other anti-social activities, some are sitting idle, some are carrying out very insignificant ops like cutting telephone lines and only 15 to 20 p. c. guerillas are carrying out proper operation. Even the effectiveness of these guerillas is negligible, because of lack of co-ordinated ops organisation and leadership. Another factor which has contributed towards the poor performance of the guerillas is that the recruitment of guerillas have not been carried out properly and therefore right materials have not selected and framed. The selection has been indifferent. As a result there are large number of people who have joined only to have means of livelihood, or to act arms for anti-social activities or for self protection.

4. The Over all Result Achieved

From the above it can be seen the total force available at our disposal have not been operating effectively. Absence of an overall planning and realistic allocation of priorities are some of main factors responsible for the above. The complete absence of contact between the forces HQ and the forces in the field is another factor which is no less measure responsible for the above. At the present we are hardly killing any Pakistani troops and maximum efforts have been diverted in killing *Rajakars* or other civilians - our own people. To set an example it can be mentioned that in Vietnam, Vietcong rarely killed peace guards. They won them over. It will now take a major effort only to arrest this downward trend of our ops and therefore, necessitates an immediate review of the entire ops plan and to reallocate priorities if required, to be able to reverse this downward trend and to step up the ops to inflict the desired rate of attrition on the enemy.

5. Allocation of Priorities

In this war we have faced with an enemy who is very well trained, well equipped and resourceful. We will need force of 15 Divisions of troops to be able to defeat the enemy in a conventional war. This is impracticable and needs no further consideration. Therefore, we have to base our war strategy primarily on the unconventional war. It is therefore, essential that the guerillas ops is accorded the highest priority. Normally the guerilla ops starts with the nucleus of a handful of hard core dedicated men and the leadership automatically evolves over a period of time. We have to wage this war to successful conclusion within a small time frame for obvious reason. In our case therefore, we have to induct guerillas and the leadership.

Considering the limited time available at our disposal, we will be able to achieve this by inducting our regular forces into coy/pl groups along with their commanders inside Bangladesh. This coy or pl group will not have any firm base, but keep on operating exactly like guerillas. With this hard core nucleus alongside, the other guerillas will operate with greater confidence and under effective direction and control with the availability of coy Pl it will be possible to successfully take on larger tasks thus creating a sense of confidence both among the guerillas and the local populace. This way, the guerillas will be able to increase our areas of influence, thus gradually liberating larger areas without resorting to set piece conventional battle.

6. Recruitment

One of the pre-requisites of success of guerillas ops is that the right material is trained and inducted. Only the most dedicated and motivated youths can provide this. It will therefore, entail certain changes in our recruitment system. It has been experienced in the past that to recruit such large number of youths, employment of professionals are essential. It is not possible for our political leaders such as MNAs/MPAs to devote whole time for recruitment only. Therefore, it is necessary that enthusiastic and energetic people are employed to carry out the recruitment, properly and selectively.

7. Leadership

In spite of induction of bns inside we will still be short of leaders of guerillas at various levels. We are expecting to receive approximately sixty officers in the first week of October 1971. These officers should be initially posted to the sectors for gaining experience. After two to three weeks of ops in the sectors, most of these officers should be inducted inside to provide leadership.

In addition, volunteer and enthusiastic MNAs/MPAs and political workers should be trained in guerilla warfare and inducted inside as guerilla leaders.

While the guerilla will operate inside we must keep the border alive with ops so that the enemy is unable to pull out troops from the border for re-enforcement inside against our guerilla ops. Sector ops will ensure, besides causing damage and harassment to enemy, tying up of number of troops along the border. Because of the delay in launching of guerillas, we have a large number of guerillas still waiting to be launched. At any one time, we will have 15 thousand to 20 thousand guerillas awaiting on the border. If these guerillas are used effectively as sector troops, the number of ops carried out would be large enough to inflict the desired rate of harassment and attrition on the enemy and will tie down large number of troops along with the border and infact drawing more from inside, as the war progresses.

8. Brigades

As the utility of Bde and Bns are very limited at present, these regular troops should go in Coy/Pl group to form the nucleus of guerilla ops. These regular units, must be connected with wireless communication so that they can be regrouped in the shortest possible time. The wireless communication will also ensure proper co-ordination of guerilla activities.

9. Overall Plan

Overall plan should be to base our war strategy primarily on guerilla ops. Nucleus and leadership of guerilla ops should be provided by regular bns in Coy/Pl groups inducted inside. They will also direct and co-ordinate activities of the guerillas.

Remaining gap in the leadership should be filled in by inducting the newly trained officers and by trained MNAs/MPAs/Political workers. While the guerillas will tie down, large number of forces inside, the sector ops must be on full swing to ensure tying of a large number of enemy forces on the border. This will ensure wide dispersal of enemy in smaller strength thus offering small and weak targets to us. The regular forces operating inside as guerilla should have wireless communication so that they are capable of concentrating large forces for ops inside and also to be able to be regroup themselves into battalions for Bde for launching regular ops. In order to get the best Material for successful ops inside, recruitment must be carried out in close co-ordination with the youth camp organisation and through professionals whole time employed for this purpose. We are short of certain basic as well as sophisticated weapons. With some sophisticated weapons the guerilla activities can be substantially stepped up. The fund raised by Bangladesh nationals abroad, should be immediately utilised to procure basic as well as sophisticated weapons at the earliest.

APPENDIX - D

BANGLADESH OPERATIONAL SECTORS

1. **Sector No.1** - Includes the districts of Chittagong and western part of Chittagong Hill Tracts. The border area extends up to Shuvapur bridge including Feni river :
 - (a) **HQ** - Sabroom.
 - (b) **Sector Command** :
 - (1) Major Ziaur Rahman, psc - upto June 1971.
 - (2) Capt. Rafiq - from July 1971 onwards.
 - (c) **Civil Affairs Adviser** - Mr. A. Mannan, MNA.
2. **Sector No.2** - Includes the districts of Noakhali, part of Faridpur, Comilla excluding Brahmanbaria subdivision and part of Dhaka. The border area extends from excluding Feni river upto Akhaura.
 - (a) **HQ** - Melaghar.
 - (b) **Sector Command** :
 - (1) Major Khaled Mosharraf, psc - upto third week October, 1971.
 - (2) Capt Md. Salek Chowdhury - from last week of october 1971 to November 1971.
 - (3) Capt A.T.M.Haider - from December 1971 onwards.
 - (c) **Civil Affairs Advisers** :
 - (1) Mr.Nurul Haq, MNA.
 - (2) Prof. Khorshed Alam, MNA.
3. **Sector No.3** - Includes parts of the districts of Sylhet, Comilla, Mymensingh, Tangail and Dhaka. The border area extends from Akhaura upto Churaman Kati.
 - (a) **HQ** - Simna.
 - (b) **Sector Command** :
 - (1) Major K.M. Safiullah, psc - upto September 1971
 - (2) Capt A.N.M. Nuruzzaman - from October 1971 onwards.
 - (c) **Civil Affairs Advisers** :
 - (1) Prof. Khorshed Alam, MPA.
 - (2) Mr. Lutful Hye Sachchu, MPA.
4. **Sector No.4** - Includes eastern part of Sylhet district. The border area extends from excluding Churaman Kati upto including Karimgang-Zakiganj.
 - (a) **HQ** - Karimganj
 - (b) **Sector Command** - Major C.R.Dutta.
 - (c) **Civil Affairs Adviser** - Mr Dewan Farid Ghazi, MNA.
5. **Sector No.5** - Includes northern part of Sylhet district. The border area extends from excluding Karimganj-Zakiganj upto including Tekerghat. This sector became operational from end - August 1971 onwards.
 - (a) **HQ** - Dauki.
 - (b) **Sector Command** - Major Mir Shawkat Ali psc.
 - (c) **Civil Affairs Advisers** :
 - (1) Mr. Abdul Haque, MNA.
 - (2) Mr. Dewan Obaidur Reza Chowdhury, MNA.

6. **Sector No.6** - Includes the districts of Rangpur and Dinajpur. The border area extends from Bhurungamari in Rangpur upto Hilli in Dinajpur.

(a) **HQ** - Tetulia.

(b) **Sector Command** - Wing Commander A. Bashar.

(c) **Civil Affairs Advisers** :

(1) Mr. Matiur Rahman, MNA.

(2) Mr. Fazlul Karim, MPA.

7. **Sector No.7** - Includes the districts of Rajshahi and Pabna. The border area extends from excluding Hilli upto Hardinge bridge.

(a) **HQ** - Kaliganj

(b) **Sector Command** :

(1) Major Najmul Haque - upto July 1971.

(2) Major Qazi Nuruzzaman, psc - from August 1971 onwards.

(c) **Civil Affairs Advisers** :

(1) Mr. Azizpur Rahman, MNA.

(2) MR. A. Salam.

8. **Sector No.8** - Includes the districts of Kushtia, Jessore, partly Faridpur and Khulna. The border area extends including Hardinge bridge upto Kaliganj.

(a) **HQ** - Kalyani.

(b) **Sector Command** :

(1) Major Abu Osman Chowdhury - upto August 1971

(2) Major M.A. Manzur, psc - from September 1971 onwards.

(c) **Civil Affairs Adviser** - Mr. Rawshan Ali, MNA.

9. **Sector No.9** - Includes the districts of Khulna, Barisal and Patuakhali. The border area extends from excluding Kaliganj upto Shundarban.

(a) **HQ** - Taki.

(b) **Sector Command** - Capt Jalil.

(c) **Civil Affairs Adviser** - Mr. Salahuddin Yusuf, MNA.

10. **Sector No. 10** - Includes the eastern part of Chittagong Hill Tracts upto Teknaf. This sector was never made operative.

11. **Sector No. 11** - Includes the northern parts of the districts of Mymensingh and Tangail. The border area extends from excluding Tekerghat upto Rahumari. This sector became operational from end - August 1971 onwards.

(a) **HQ** - Tura.

(b) **Sector Commands**:

(1) Major M.A.Taher - from end-August to November 1971

(2) Sqn. Ldr. Hamidullah - from December 1971 onwards.

(c) **Civil Affairs Adviser**- Mr. Rafiquddin Bhuyan, MNA

Source: Maj.Gen (Retd.) K.M.Safiullah *Bangladesh At War* (Dhaka: Academic Publishers,1989), pp.225-27.

APPENDIX - E

POSITION PAPER PREPARED BY THE RESEARCH CELL, EXTERNAL PUBLICITY DIVISION OF THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE, JUNE, 1971

The present Bangladesh Government will face the following problems soon after independence or any other kind of settlement that will restore it to power.

I. SOCIAL

1. (a) Because of the special circumstances communal and racial tension will prevail at the time of achieving independence. Riots will take place and Bengalees now supporting Bangladesh cause will want to take revenge upon the non-Bengalees and Bengalee collaborators.

(b) Some people may try to put the blame of such a massacre upon certain group of students and consequently may re-act accordingly.

(c) Students and sections of public may feel very disappointed with Awami League leadership and at the same time being inspired by the left revolutionaries, who by that time will gain some support however disorganised that may be, may even go for a planned assault on the AL Leaders. In order to resist such attacks staunch Awami Leaguers will be joined by other usual opportunists who will again come across to AL, may act in retaliation. This will create another serious situation.

All these, however, irrational though they may appear to be, contain ingredients of a dangerous and shameful civil war. Charged with emotion and unending enthusiasm at the time of victory our people instigated by miscreants may go for such disastrous ventures.

II. REFUGEES

Nobody exactly knows how many people have crossed the border. The Indian figures of seven million-plus is based on a vague calculation and, therefore, may not be wholly correct. Reasonable estimate says that the figure would be around 4 million. If independence comes there will be a rush of the refugees to go back. Considering the economy of West Bengal and Socio-political situation, people originally from Bangladesh who are not very happy here or not settled (figure is estimated to be 7 million including unemployed youths) may find worth trying to go back to Bangladesh. As it would not be possible to check at the initial stage, their return may create serious socio-economic situation for us.

III. RESTORATION OF PRIVATE PROPERTIES ETC.

Because of the destruction of many offices and complete non functioning of civil administration, papers and documents will be difficult to find for the ownership of land and properties. Moreover, because of loot, distribution and sale of properties by the army destroying the original documents, further complication has been added. Poor and innocent people in the village area will suffer most in this chaotic situation.

IV. ECONOMIC

1. (a) Total economic ruination has taken place. Capital has been taken away, both by the Government and West Pakistani industrialists. Industries will be difficult to start or restart. Labour mobilisation will have to be re-established and re-organised. When the Pakistan army will finally go they will possibly destroy everything whatever is left now.

(b) Communication is completely dislocated, rail and road system will take long time to re-build. This will affect both the industrial and agricultural sectors and will make the pace of growth even slower.

(c) Banks and Financial Houses would be without resources.

These have rendered our infrastructures of economy completely shattered. Our economy will be so much broken that by the time we achieve independence we will discover ourselves economically at the lowest ebb and perhaps poorest as a Nation in the world.

2. **FOOD:** There will be a severe shortage of food and famine will continue to starve our people to death. Dislocation on the agricultural sector will be no less serious mainly because of the lack of supply and communication system.

3. **MILITARY:** Our army would neither be sufficiently disciplined nor adequate to protect our land even if the whole of *Mukti Bahini* come to the fold of the New Government. It has been found to be difficult in the past of similar conditions, to bring all the liberation forces under one command particularly when the leadership itself is not fighting force. There will be a tendency to hold the areas by the respective guerilla leaders once independence is close to being achieved, and those who are some way or other connected to any radical ideology other than AL programmes will not surrender their arms and will continue their war efforts till the goal is achieved. At present, members of the *Mukti Bahini* irrespective of their political background are overwhelmingly against the present political leadership and it may be that many of them will actively resent their installation as a Government after independence.

The reason they do not come out now to defy the Government is that they are aware without a political leadership like that of AL's they would get little support

from outside world and particularly from India. In other words they know that whatever legal and financial backing which they now have is because of the existence of a Government. Therefore, because of the various circumstances that prevail, it is only convenient to let Bangladesh Government continue with its present role.

4. POLITICAL: (a) AL was committed to constitutional politics. It was committed to socialism to the extent which would be achieved only through reforms and legislation, keeping the overall economic system a capitalistic one.

A sober and serious thinking effort is required whether the same politics would suit our people any more in the new circumstances. If not possible then what system is to be advised.

As we have to start from scratch particularly economically, it should be decided right now what system we are going to pursue. What kind of political machinery, we would like to introduce to administer the affairs of the people, what kind of State organs we would like to have and on what philosophical basis? Where would our emphasis be - development through private or public sector? Upon this will depend the future of Bangladesh.

(b) Members of the National Assembly were elected for Pakistan as a whole and Members of the Provincial Assembly were elected for legislature within the constitutional framework of Pakistan as a whole. Even if the Government plans to hold a fresh election immediately after the independence the respective status of MNAs and MPAs during the interim period will also have to be determined. On the other hand if there is no programme like this or holding election takes time the institutional problems of MNAs and MPAs will have to be solved. Their status, functions and jurisdiction will need to be clearly defined.

(c) Most crucial problem for AL at the time of independence will be to meet the absence of Sheikh (in case we do not get him back). Without Sheikh situation will be terrible and there will be total lack of leadership. This is not a reflection on the present leadership but because of the serious situation that will prevail at the time of independence, we would very much be in need of a leader who could command the people. Sheikh's popularity, stature and personality could be a great asset to counteract factionalism, rivalry within the party members, insurgency and rebellion by section of Mukti Bahini and youths, pressure from the radical left and other factors leading to chaos and instability in the newly born society.

5. ADMINISTRATION: An administrative system through a bureaucracy that we have experienced in the past has already proved to be wrong and menace. The whole thing would require thorough and radical change to which AL is already committed through their Election Manifesto. Serious allegations are made both by Mukti Bahini and

public and Bangladesh Government instead of having different attitude is completely relying upon the civil servants and its old system and has already established a white-elephant-structure at a huge cost even at this time of liberation struggle. The Government is spending more money on the administration in Calcutta than on the people who are actually fighting inside Bangladesh to liberate the land. The whole approach and set-up has far-reaching repercussions with potentially serious reactions and consequences.

The Government should face the facts, however, unpleasant they may be. The problems can be solved if a realistic approach is exercised.

APPENDIX - F

**CHARTER OF THE TWELVE-POINT DEMANDS OF THE
SOLDIERS RAISED ON NOVEMBER 7, 1975 UPRISING.**

1. **Demand for Changing the Structure of the Armed Forces :** Our revolution is not for changing leadership only; this revolution is for the interest of the poor classes. We have accepted you as our leader in this revolution. For that reason, you are to express very clearly that you are the leader of the poor classes and for that reason you are to change the structure of the armed forces. For many years we have served as the soldiers of the rich classes. The rich classes have used us for their interests. The August 15 incident is an example of that. This time we have revolted not for the rich and not on their behalf. We have revolted this time along with the masses. From this time onward the armed forces of the country will build themselves as the protector of the interests of the masses.
2. **Release of All Political Prisoners :** We demand the immediate release of all political prisoners.
3. **Confiscation of Properties of All Corrupt Officials and Individuals :** All properties belonging to corrupt officials and individuals should be confiscated immediately. Arrangements should be made to bring back the money from foreign banks and invest it in the interest of society.
4. **Demand for Ending All Discriminations Between the Officers and Sepoys in the Armed Services :** Our demand is to do away with all discriminations between the officers and sepoys, and ensure payment to each according to his work and capability.
5. **Demand for Ending Recruitment of Officers from Privileged Classes :** Our demand is to recruit officers from among the capable sepoys and not from special schools such as cadet colleges and public schools.
6. **Demand for Changing the Existing Colonial Practices :** There are many colonial practices in the defence services and we demand immediate changes in these dehumanizing practices obtaining in the cantonments.
7. **Demand for Enhancement of Salary of Sepoy :** We demand enhancement of the salaries of sepoys, and immediate abolition of the rent payment system for the accommodation of sepoys.
8. **Demand for Abolition of the Batman System :** Our demand is to immediately abolish the batman system under which the *jawans* are required to work as personal servants of the officers at their houses.

9. **Call for the Establishment of a *Biplobi Shainik Sangstha*** : We call for the establishment of a revolutionary army organization for the whole of Dhaka Cantonment.
10. **Role of the *Biplobi Shainik Sangstha*** : The Revolutionary Shainik Sangstha would serve as the central policy-making body for the armed forces. General Ziaur Rahman would take any decision in regard to defence forces only after consulting this body.
11. **Co-ordinating Role of this Central Body** : This central policy-making body would co-ordinate the activities and policies of other such bodies in the different cantonments, and enlist the support of revolutionary students, peasants, workers and common men of the country.
12. **Future Role of the Armed Forces** : The revolutionary army in league with the progressive and revolutionary students, peasants and workers would play its role in bringing about a revolution in the society.

APPENDIX - G

STATEMENT BY Lt. COLONEL FAROOQ RAHMAN.

Following is the full text of a statement issued on May 26, 1976 by Lt. Colonel Farooq Rahman of the Bangladesh Army :

"Let the Bangladesh government put me on trial for the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I say it was an act of national liberation. Let them publicly call it a crime. I engineered the coup of August 15 last year to put the brakes on my country's headlong descent into hell. I ordered Mujib's killing because I had personal knowledge that although he was head of state, he set free and protected his party henchmen of the Awami league, who, in the town of Tongi, near Dhaka, raped and murdered a young bride and laughed in our faces when we tried to bring them to justice. I ordered Mujib's death because he also ruthlessly killed some of his political opponents. Let the present government deny it, if it can, that it has evidence of this. In law such a man is considered to be accessory both before and after the fact of murder. But in Bangladesh there was no law except Mujib's word. I wanted to re-establish the sequence of crime and punishment. Sheikh Mujib had to die for four reasons. First, because of ill-conceived personal power he needlessly enslaved a nation which had willingly made him its father. Mujib's politics of deceit put brother against brother when he should have united the people. He crushed the Press. He reduced the national assembly to a rubber stamp. He sent thousands of people to jail because he would not tolerate dissent. Secondly, Mujib and his family, his Awami Leaguers and corrupt officials plundered the country while the rest of the people starved. Thirdly, Mujib's corrupt and worthless administration prostituted my country to foreign power. By forever holding out a beggar's bowl he made us an object of international contempt. Last, but not least, Mujib betrayed his faith, Islam, which is the religion of my people and the one thing which can give the ideological thrust to our forward march. Thus Mujib, in the short space of four and half years, almost destroyed the Bangladesh for which by his own admission 2 million people lost their lives in the 1971 liberation struggle. Since I had no ambition for personal power, I agreed last August to a suggestion by my colleague and brother-in-law, Colonel Abdur Rashid, that Khondakar Mushtaque Ahmed, a senior politician be made president to replace Mujib. He was given the task of national reconstruction. At the same time I personally insisted that Major General Zia be appointed Chief of staff of the army. I thought he could unite and build up the force which had not only been humiliated by Sheikh Mujib but also had suffered terrible neglect at his hands.

In accepting the jobs we offered them, Mr. Mushtaque and General Zia endorsed our reasons for the change. But they failed to follow through. For his own reasons which were not known to us Mr. Mushtaque, during his Presidency from August to November last year, kept putting off the economic, social and political reforms that were required. We have General Zia timely warning of a counter coup by officers immediately under him, but he did nothing to squash it. As a result Mushtaque and Zia were forced to resign on November 3 while we went into voluntary exile to prevent a civil war. Four days later when our troops awakened to the power struggle among the officers, they

revolted and reinstated General Zia as the army chief in the hope of restoring the direction we set on August 15. Since then, they have been victimised for their loyalty and patriotism while those responsible for the counter coup on November 3 were rather curiously released from jail last month without benefit of court martial. We were forced to remain out of country at the pleasure of the government.

As we have been accused of inciting indiscipline in the armed forces, let me set the record straight. Colonel Rashid and I left the country last November and remained out of touch, but since then there have been at least four major incidents of men refusing to obey their officers' orders. The first was in Dhaka, second in Chittagong on February 28. The third a few days later in Brahmanbaria and the fourth in Dhaka - all before Rashid and I returned last month on a brief visit to discuss our future. I went to Bogra (north of Decay) on April 29 to meet my troops at General Zia's request. Next day Col. Rashid was arrested and sent out of Bangladesh. I returned to Decay on May 9 against the wishes of my troops, who suspected a similar trick would be played on me. I had been assured by senior officers that General Zia only wanted to talk to me, and that I would be allowed to return. In the event these assurances were worthless, Zia did not talk to me, but had me expelled again. Some newspapers have suggested I was plotting a coup to remove Zia. I refute this utterly, I could have killed him in his office as I had a revolver in my pocket for self-defence, but I had no intention of killing him. I only wanted to give him another chance to redeem his word before the troops. The tragedy for the people of Bangladesh is that, apart from the dissolution of the assembly and a reduction in the price of rice - due mainly to the people's own action against smugglers - nothing has substantially changed. The repression continues, with the police replacing Mujib's Awami League as the instruments of terror. The Press remains gagged. The grab for personal power grows noticeably stronger each day as the promise of early elections fades. Islam is still denied its rightful place in the life of the nation. Mujib's ghost lives in his successors, first Khondakar-Mushtaque Ahmed, and now General Zia. Neither has basically altered the patterns he set. The danger to my country lies in the fact that Zia and his commanders cannot or will not come to terms with the forces of change. The people want a change but they are silenced by martial law. So the common soldier who is well-grounded in common earth of Bangladesh speaks for them. In the absence of democratic expression (it seems there will be no elections) the troops constitute the most representative assembly in the country today. They are at variance with the senior officers who are pulling the other way. The government calls this 'mutiny'. If there is to be no change, why did Mujib have to die? Let Zia get on with my trial. The people will give their verdict."

Source : Matiur Rahman, *Bangladesh Today: An Indictment and a Lament* (London : News and Media Ltd., 1978), pp.179-81.

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