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History of bangladesh from 1947 to 1971

Pakistan's colonial rule over India ends in 1947, resulting in the establishment of East and West Pakistan as separate provinces on either side of India. A cyclone in 1970 kills up to 500,000 people in East Pakistan, where the Awami League had won an overwhelming election victory. The party proclaims independence for Bangladesh in 1971 with Indian assistance, leading to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman becoming prime minister and nationalizing key industries. However, severe floods devastate much of the grain crop in 1974, resulting in an estimated 28,000 deaths. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is assassinated in a military coup in 1975. General Ziaur Rahman takes power but is also assassinated in 1981. General Hussain Muhammad Ershad seizes control in 1982, permitting limited political activity and reinstating the constitution in 1986 after lifting martial law. President Ershad declares a state of emergency due to opposition demonstrations and strikes in 1987. Islam becomes the state religion that same year, followed by devastating floods leaving tens of millions homeless. In 1990, President Ershad steps down following mass protests, with Begum Khaleda Zia becoming prime minister and shifting power away from the presidency. The Awami League returns to power in 1996 under Sheikh Hasina Wajed, daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Bangladesh experiences its worst floods ever in 1998, with two-thirds of the country affected. Former army officers are sentenced to death for involvement in President Mujibur Rahman's assassination in 1975. The Nationalist Party takes power in a coalition government in 2001, and the parliament amends the constitution to reserve seats for female MPs in 2004. Political unrest escalates, with the caretaker government clamping down on opposition leaders Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia in 2007. General elections are held in December 2008, with the Awami League emerging victorious. In January 2009, Sheikh Hasina was sworn in as prime minister after winning more than 250 out of 300 parliamentary seats. In February 2009, a mutiny broke out in Dhaka among border guards unhappy with pay and conditions, resulting in the deaths of around 74 people, mainly army officers. Police arrested over 700 guards, followed by the detention of an additional 1,000 guards in May 2013. In April 2013, Sheikh Hasina vetoed a bill to outlaw criticism of Islam, while in May 2013, European retailers agreed to sign an accord aimed at improving safety conditions in factories following the collapse of a garment factory building that killed over 1,100 people. In July 2013, Chulam Azam, leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami party, was convicted of war crimes committed during Bangladesh's 1971 war of independence. In May 2015, Bangladesh banned Islamist militant group Ansarullah Bangla Team, which had claimed responsibility for killing and assaulting several pro-secular public figures. In July 2016, the Islamic State group claimed an attack on a cafe in Dhaka's diplomatic quarter that killed 20 hostages, including 18 foreigners, but the government attributed the incident to Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen. In October 2017, the number of Rohingya Muslims fleeing military action in Myanmar and seeking refuge in Bangladesh was estimated at one million. In February 2018, opposition leader Khaleda Zia was sentenced to five years in prison for corruption, disqualifying her from contesting elections later that year. In December 2018, the governing Awami League won a landslide victory in parliamentary elections, but the campaign was marred by reports of violence, intimidation, and vote-rigging. At least 17 people died in clashes between Awami League and opposition supporters. Srinath Raghavan's book is a deeply researched and standard account of India's 1971 war with Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh, offering a superb interpretation that everyone interested in international politics should consult. The book provides a panoramic view of the 1971 crisis as a turning point for longstanding India-Pakistani tensions, the cold war, and globalizing tendencies. Raghavan chronicles the course of the contest for power in vivid detail, demolishing myths and offering fresh insights into the 14-day war that led to Bangladesh's creation. His assessment of Henry Kissinger and American strategy is devastating, and he adeptly punctures historical myths when dealing with India's role in the crisis. Raghavan's superb analysis uses a wide lens to explain the breakup of Pakistan more convincingly than any preceding account, drawing on an impressive array of sources to investigate strategic ambitions, moral pressures, judgments of risk, and sheer brutality. He shows how the most powerful democracy could become complicit in mass slaughter and how India was pushed to intervene, arguing that the origins of the Bangladesh crisis lie in Pakistan's peculiarities and politics, providing the first authoritative account of debates among Indian decision-makers as they weighed the risks and consequences of intervention. Raghavan's book delivers critical warnings to Indian leaders about the costs of delay in addressing violence...He argues that swift action could have prevented immense suffering and saved lives, leaving Bangladesh less devastated and more capable of rebuilding as a democratic nation. Raghavan has given us an essential study of one of history's most horrific events...Sunil Khilnani praises the book for its comprehensive approach, which explores 1971 and its lead-up from multiple dimensions...Devangshu Datta notes that while many actors have written personal accounts or contributed to archives, Raghavan's work stands out in its scope and thoroughness...Thomas Meaney highlights the international complexities of the Indo-Pakistan War, emphasizing how Raghavan expertly maps these dynamics and provides a nuanced understanding of global perspectives...Chandrashekhhar Dasgupta commends Raghavan for his skillful weaving together of historical processes, diplomacy, and policy evolution in 1971...Raghavan's book demonstrates that the Indian victory was not solely due to military prowess but also to favorable diplomatic and great power dynamics, as well as contingent developments. Srinath Raghavan's work delves into the global dimensions of the Bangladesh event, leveraging archives from the German Democratic Republic, Russia, the U.K., Canada, and organizations such as Oxfam and the United Nations. This broad scope allows him to challenge traditional narratives surrounding the intervention and highlight the importance of international factors in shaping outcomes. Raghavan's reflections on the war's course and its termination are poised to reinforce his reputation as a leading scholar on India's security politics and the subcontinent. His work also addresses the evolution of contemporary India, filling a significant gap in understanding this pivotal period. Critics have noted that Raghavan's research has the potential to inspire a new generation of scholars focused on historicizing India's foreign and security policies. By shedding light on this aspect, his work may contribute to enhancing the quality of strategic discourse in Delhi. Srinath Raghavan is a senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi and holds a position as a senior research fellow at King's India Institute, London. His book, published by Harvard University Press in 2013, explores key themes relevant to contemporary India. West Pakistan and East Pakistan shared a religion, but their disparities went beyond that. For decades after Partition, the East Pakistani government was treated unfairly by West Pakistan over 1,000 miles away. Despite having more people, East Pakistan received less financial support from the government. From the early 1950s, West Pakistan's per-capita income grew three times faster than East Pakistan's each year. In 1948, Urdu became the only state language for both regions, imposed on millions of Bengali-speaking people. This led to the emergence of the Bengali Language Movement and mass protests resulting in deaths in Dhaka in 1952. Bengalis are proud of their heritage, culture, and history centered around language, art, food, fashion, community, family, and religion. The 1971 Liberation War can be seen as a struggle to preserve this cultural identity. Events leading up to the war included Cyclone Bhola in November 1970, which devastated East Pakistan, killing an estimated 3-500,000 people and displacing many more. Relief efforts from West Pakistan were minimal. This led to civil disobedience, martial law, and violence between Bengalis and Urdu-speaking minorities (Biharis) by early March 1971. The most significant event leading up to the war was the 1970 election, in which the Awami League Party won a clear majority under leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's demand for more freedom and independence for East Pakistan. However, the centralised government in West Pakistan rejected the results, declaring them void. This led to Rahman's famous 'Joy Bangla' speech on March 7, 1971, where he declared an independent Bangladesh. The situation escalated with protests by his supporters, culminating in the West Pakistani army invading East Pakistan on March 25, 1971, launching Operation Searchlight and killing many civilians. The nine-month war resulted in estimates of between 500,000 to over 3 million civilian and military deaths, as well as millions of refugees fleeing to neighboring India. Bengali guerrilla fighters and regular soldiers fought back against the West Pakistani army with Indian support. West Pakistan eventually surrendered on December 16, 1971 (Victory Day), leading to the creation of Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Liberation War, also known as 'mukti juddho'/shongram' (battle and resistance), is commemorated in the national flag of Bangladesh - a dark green background with a red circle. The war, which took place in 1971, was heavily influenced by British attention, drawing global awareness to the crisis. During that time, thousands of Bengalis living in Britain were anxiously waiting for news from their families in East Pakistan. Although foreign journalists faced expulsion, local Bangladeshis in the UK supported the resistance through fundraising and peaceful protests. One notable example is the 'Recognise Bangla-Desh Rally' held in Trafalgar Square on 8 August 1971, drawing thousands of participants. The British government formally acknowledged Bangladesh as an independent nation on 4 February 1972. This lesson examines how Bangladesh gained independence after the Liberation War and highlights one of the outcomes of the 1947 Partition of British India. It examines how tensions escalated due to Pakistan's refusal to acknowledge Sheikh Mujibur's victory. Sources 5a and 5b analyze the British perspective on Bangladesh's relationship with Britain, highlighting the significant role of the large Bengali diaspora in London in raising international attention for the war. Source 5b reveals Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's surprise visit to London after being imprisoned by West Pakistan during the war, sparking questions about his choice of destination. Sources 6a and 6b investigate the British recognition of Bangladesh in February 1972 and their interests in the conflict, including financial considerations that may impact British interests. Students can use these sources to infer why Britain closely monitored the situation. The majority of documents come from a British perspective, which can be linked to the colonial past of the region. The impact of Pakistani journalist Anthony Mascarenhas' article "Genocide", published on June 13, 1971, in the British Sunday Times, is still felt today. This rare glimpse into the start of the war drew significant international attention, marking a turning point in history. The Swadhinata Trust, a London-based community group promoting Bengali heritage and culture, has contributed to this legacy by showcasing Bengali history. A visual representation of Bangladesh's liberation can be seen in Yousuf Choudhury's photographs from the book "Bangladesh 50 Years". Additionally, video footage from George Harrison and Ravi Shankar's Concert for Bangladesh in August 1971 reflects the international attention drawn to the war.

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