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BENGALI REPRESENTATION IN PAKISTAN DEFENCE FORCES (1947-1971): A REVISIT

Abstract

History affirms that the rise of the modern nation-state was closely associated with the development of an equalitarian and representative military. An officer corps recruited on representative and equalitarian criteria may contribute to national integration. The present study presumes that to determine the dynamics of Bengali nationalism and its effect on socio-political development, an insight into the representativeness of applicability of the criteria is essential in order to make the military 'national' in the context of Pakistani military. The author argues that the Defence Forces of Pakistan miserably failed to withstand the 'standard' of 'National' Army and the neglect of nation-building policies in the process eroded the thin veneer of Pakistani national identity. This inquiry into the composition and policies of Defence Services of Pakistan has revealed how the woeful level of under-representation of the Bengalis aided the failure of nation building in Pakistan and deepened the Bengalis' sense of alienation.

INTRODUCTION

History shows conclusively that military capability spells power and the possession of power alters or conditions the attitudes of the predominant ethnic group of the armed forces of a country. This inevitably creates imbalance in the society. As Stephen Cohen asserts, "The nature of recruitment is important to the whole issue of

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national identity and nation-building, especially in a democracy.”¹ The need for broadening the recruitment base of the military in a modern state to enable it to acquire a *National* character could hardly be overemphasised. History is replete with examples that the military formed an integral part of the ruling elite in many newly de-colonised nations (specially following the World War II). The proportional representation of different ethno-linguistic, religious and other sub-national groups in the elite, particularly in an elitist system, therefore, assumes enhanced importance. When an imbalance in the distribution of power among numerous sub-national groups of a state subsists, the viability of that state becomes endangered. In the circumstances, the accommodation of diverse interests becomes a necessity for the promotion of national integration.

Pakistan with its diverse nationalities represented such a classic case. Since the non-elected institutions, civil bureaucracy and especially, the military rose to position of dominance within the state structure and democratic political processes were aborted in the late 1950s, the issue of representation in these institutions and consequential regional dissidence in Pakistan become the central focus of socio-economic and politico-cultural life in the country.²

The present study presumes that to determine the dynamics of Bengali alienation and its effect on socio-political development, an insight into the policies and representativeness of Pakistan Armed Forces is essential. The present study addresses the relationship between military organisation and national integration in order to determine the criteria that make a military ‘national in character’ and

¹. Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army-Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation*, Bombay, University of California Press, 1971, p. 181.

². Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia : Comparative and Historical Perspective*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 185-86

examines its applicability in the Pakistani context. The specific aspects, which have been selected for this brief study are recruitment policy and composition of military elite of Pakistan during 1947-1971, causes of under-representation of the Bengalis, treatment towards the Bengali members of the armed forces, East Wing's share of defence expenditure and defence strategy of Pakistan. The central focus then sets on the implications of Pakistani policies in this regard.

MILITARY AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

“The most formidable problem of nation-building in Pakistan after the state's inception,” as observed by Rounaq Jahan, “was the integration of the Bengali sub-nation.” She further notes that “the urgency of this problem is underscored by the fact that the Bengalis were not merely the largest ethno-cultural sub-group in Pakistan but actually constituted a majority (54 percent) of the country's total population”.³ Famous military sociologist Morris Janowitz argues that an officer corps recruited on representative and equalitarian criteria [*that makes the military 'national'*] may contribute to national integration.⁴ It implies that a *national* military elite, among other factors, is essential for achieving *national* unity. It has been presumed that the military elite of modern nation-states could be classified as truly *national* when⁵

firstly, as Shils asserts, it is more broadly recruited across different ethnic groups or as Harlpen thinks, has more middle class representation;

³. Rounaq Jahan, *Pakistan : Failure in National Integration*, (Dhaka, UPL, 1994), pp. 5-6.

⁴. Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, (New York, Free Press,, 1971), p. 254.

⁵. Quoted in Rounaq Jahan, *Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues*, (Dhaka, UPL, 1980), p.3.

secondly, it has a uniform and national training that serves as a uniting bond, and;

thirdly, as Janowitz maintains, military is less factious and more cohesive and treats its members with greater equality.

To what degree the above stated criteria that presumably make the military *national* could be applied to the context of Pakistani military? Answer to this crucial question needs an insight into the policies of Pakistan State and its Military Establishment.

RECRUITMENT POLICY

The Beginning⁶

Pakistan inherited its military from the British Indian military and one of its legacies was the recruitment policy from the so-called martial races⁷, which made the Pakistani military overwhelmingly West Pakistani by origin. At the time of partition, 60 percent of the army consisted of Punjabis (mainly four districts of Northern Punjab), 35 percent were Pathans (largely from two districts of NWFP) and others constituted the remaining 5 percent. At the time of partition, East Pakistanis formed only 1 percent of the total strength of the Armed Forces. Looking from another angle, about 95 percent of the Pakistan Army was recruited from an area containing 9 percent of the total population of Pakistan.

⁶. Veena Kukreja, *Civil-Military Relations in South Asia*, (New Delhi, Sage Publishers, 1991), p. 47 and Hasan Askar Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan*, (Lahore, Progressive Publishers, 1987), p. 137.

⁷. The British, disturbed by the revolt of the local forces in the mutiny of 1857, had deliberately excluded certain groups such as south Indians and volatile Bengalis from the northern and eastern parts of Indian army and confined the recruitment largely to the politically backward rural hinterlands of Punjab and the North-West Frontier, who they argued were especially suited for a military career. The myth of 'martial races' was created to rationalize the change of policy. For details, see, Veena Kurkeja, *ibid.* p. 46.

Preached Policy of Recruitment

There should not have been any imbalance or discrimination in the composition of Pakistan military, either in terms of representativeness or equality. The official historian of Pakistan Army, Major General Fazal Muqem Khan asserts that uniting factor of the Pakistan Army was bond of Islam and claims that “recruitment is open to all the peoples of Pakistan.”⁸

Rapid Expansion-Opportunity to Introduce Equitable Recruitment Policy⁹

The Pakistan military began its journey with a planned one hundred fifty thousand men, which required approximately four thousand officers. But there were probably ‘between 100 and 200 well trained Pakistani officers at the time of independence.’ Temporary commissions, short-service officers, and the employment of almost five hundred British officers made up the difference. Thereafter, the clash with India over Kashmir presented the army a free hand to expand. Consequently, the strength of the defence forces was soon increased to double the original figure and exceeded 300,000 within a few years. Thus, an opportunity was created to dismantle the inequitable system of recruitment and open the avenues for the Bengalis to join defence forces in order to build a ‘national’ military system.

⁸. Major General Fazal Muqem Khan, *The Story of Pakistan Army*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1963, pp.2-3.

⁹. For the details see Stephen P. Cohen, *The Pakistan Army*, New Delhi, Himalayan Books, 1984, p.7; Kazi Anwarul Haque, *In Quest of Freedom*, Dhaka, UPL, 1991 p. 88; Bilal Hashmi, “Dragon Seed: Military in the State”, in Hassan Gardezi, and Jamil Rashid, (eds.), *Pakistan: The Roots of Dictatorship – the Political Economy of A Praetorian State*, Delhi, Oxford University Press Limited, 1983, pp. 154 & 157.

Bengali Interest in Military Service and Government's Response

The World War II, as indicated by the enlistment of more than 50,000 personnel in the defence services from East Bengal,¹⁰ provided great interest in military service. The *independence* that immediately followed created a new zeal in national defence. The Bengali political leaders also repeatedly appealed to the government to discard the British colonial policy of dividing the population into martial and non-martial races and induct more Bengalis into the armed forces. However, Bengali young men were denied recruitment to the Pakistan Army, Navy and Air Force because of their lack of proficiency in Urdu.¹¹ In addition, standards of height and weight were fixed at such levels as to eliminate the Bengalis altogether.¹² Thus, the Bengalis found that *their national military* was not opened yet for them.

Policy of Recruitment¹³

Foregoing analysis asserts that after the independence of Pakistan, instead of dismantling the inequitable and arbitrary recruitment policy, policy of regional concentration continued, with preference to the Punjabis, and a minimum representation from the East Pakistan. Hence, Fazal Muqem Khan's claim that "recruitment is open to all the peoples of Pakistan" was untrue. Following the colonial policy, new army officers also continued to be recruited from the land-owning class, in addition to the small urban educated

¹⁰ . Haque, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

¹¹ . Talukder Maniruzzaman, *Group Interests and Political Changes: Studies of Pakistan and Bangladesh*, New Delhi, South Asian Publishers, 1982, p. 5.

¹² . A. M. A. Muhith, *Bangladesh-Emergence of a Nation*, Dhaka, Bangladesh Books International Limited, 1978, p. 62.

¹³ . Drawn upon Kukreja, *op. cit.*, p. 46; Hashmi, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-155; Sisson, cited by Jahan (1980), *op. cit.*, p.51.

middle class. For the recruitment of officers, the "Y" cadet scheme was adopted which encouraged boys with a family tradition in the military to enter the military academy.

COMPOSITION OF MILITARY ELITE AND BENGALI REPRESENTATION

For known historical reasons, at the time of partition there was no Bengali infantry. In 1948, primarily due to the initiative and insistence of Major Ghani and few other Bengali officers, East Bengal Regiment was instituted and two infantry battalions for the new Regiment were raised. It took another twenty years to raise six more battalions. In the following paragraphs, an enquiry is made into the composition of Pakistan Defence Forces to determine the Bengali representation.

Bengali Representation in the First Decade

A comparative analysis of the regional profile of the composition of defence personnel would provide an indicator of national representativeness of the two regimes. Recruitment of soldiers from two wings in first few years is shown in the following table:

Table – 1: Recruitment in the Army

YEAR	WEST PAKISTAN	EAST PAKISTAN
1948	2,708	87
1951	1,008	134
1954	3,204	165

Source: Safdar Mahmood, *Pakistan Divided*, (Lahore, Ferozsons Ltd, 1984), p. 33; and Lt Gen (Retd) Kamal Matinuddin, *Tragedy of Errors-East Pakistan Crisis 1968-1971*, (Lahore, Wajidalis, 1994), p. 75.

In case of officers' recruitment, the gap between the two wings remained very substantial throughout the first decade. For example, in the 9th PMA Long Course (1952-54), there were only 6 Bengali cadets out of 100. In the subsequent 10, 11 and 12 PMA Long

Courses there were not more than 11 from the eastern wing in each course.¹⁴ In Navy, 3 Bengali cadets were recruited in 1957 as against 15 from West Pakistan.¹⁵ In 1955-1956, East Pakistan had a share of 1.6 percent of the officers rank in the Army, and the corresponding percentage for Navy and Air Force being 1.1 and 9.3 respectively.¹⁶ The representation of Bengalis in official positions in different branches of defense forces in 1956 is documented in Table 2.

Table – 2 : Officers in Defence Forces – 1955-56

POSITION	E. PAKISTAN	W. PAKISTAN	TOTAL
General	0	1	1
Lt General	0	3	3
Maj General	0	20	20
Brigadier	1	34	35
Colonel	1	49	50
Lt. Colonel	2	198	200
Major	10	590	600
Navy Officers	7	593	600
Air Force Officers	60	640	700

Source: Ali Riaz, *State, Class & Military Rule – Political Economy of Martial Law in Bangladesh*, (Dhaka, Nadi New Press, 1994), p. 82.

Second Decade – No Basic Change during Ayub Regime

Although Ayub cited *national disintegration* as the major rationale behind military take-over (1958) and promised priority to *nation-building*, no basic change in the recruitment policy was noticed and East Pakistan's representation in the military remained

¹⁴ . Lt Gen (Retd) Kamal Matinuddin, *Tragedy of Errors-East Pakistan Crisis 1968-1971*, Lahore, Wajidalis Pvt Ltd, 1994, p. 78.

¹⁵ . Safdar Mahmood, *Pakistan Divided*, Lahore, Ferozsons, 1984, p. 33.

¹⁶ . Jahan (1980), *op. cit.*, p. 4.

nearly as marginal as before.¹⁷ Bengali representation in the military elite was less than 10 per cent during the 1960's when their position improved slightly because of rising Bengali demands.¹⁸ Despite these slight improvements, Bengalis were nowhere near reaching the top strata of the military bureaucracy; West Pakistanis held all the key positions. In the navy and air force, the percentage of the Bengali officers showed some gains; but they still continued to be at a distinct minority. In both the navy and air force, Bengali officers served mostly in the technical and administrative branches rather than in command positions. A complete picture showing the representation of the Bengalis in army, navy and air force in 1963 is presented in tables 3.1-3.3:

Table - 3.1: Army (In Percentage)

RANK	REPRESENTATION
Commissioned Officers	5.0*
Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs)@	7.4
Other Ranks@	7.4

* This does not include the Medical Corps in which East Pakistani representation was 23%.

@ Jahan has noted that the authorized quota for the JCOs and other ranks was fixed at 7.8%.

Table - 3.2: Air Force (In Percentage)

Rank	Pilots	Navigators	Technical	Administrative	Educational	Overall
Officers	11.0	27.0	17.0	31.0	13.0	17.0
Warrant Officers	-	-	13.2	45.0	11.3	13.2
Other Ranks	-	-	28.0	36.0	37.8	28.0

¹⁷ . Jahan, *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁸ . Jahan (1994), *op. cit.*, p. 62.

Table - 3.3 : Navy (In Percentage)

Ranks	Technical	Non-Technical	Overall
Officers	19.0	9.0	10.0
Branch Officers	4.0	6.0	5.0
Chief Petty Officers	8.4	13.4	10.4
Petty Officers	21.3	14.7	17.3
Leading Seamen and Below	28.4	28.5	28.8

Source: Rounaq Jahan, *Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues*, (Dhaka, UPL, 1980), p.8.

As late as 1965, reportedly the entire Pakistan military had only 13,000 Bengalis. Out of total 6,000 army officers, only 300 were Bengalis; and only one of them attained the rank of Major General.¹⁹ Upward mobility of all Bengali officers remained very limited throughout. According to one estimate the strength of Pakistan armed forces in 1970 was 500,000, of which only 20,000 were Bengalis.²⁰ Although over the time the total number of Bengalis in the armed services increased slightly, there was no gain in the context of their percentage vis-à-vis the total numerical strength of the armed forces.

Impact of 1965 War on Recruitment Policy

In the aftermath of the war with India in 1965, as public demonstration of the Pakistani Army's efforts to attract more Bengalis, the height requirement was reduced and 'quota' was doubled. Measures were also announced to increase the percentage of Bengalis in the other two services. In spite of all these measures

¹⁹ . Rahim, *op. cit.*, pp. 526-527.

²⁰ . Noted by a Group of Vienna Scholars in Sheelendra Kumar Singh, *et. al.*, *Bangladesh Documents*, Dhaka, UPL, 1999, p. 20.

Bengali participation ratio could not increase, which proves that above measures accounted for only pretence.²¹

EXPLANATIONS FOR UNDER-REPRESENTATION

Pakistani Attempt to Justify Under-Representation²²

In an attempt to justify the marginal position of the Bengalis in the Armed Services, following explanations were presented and highlighted by the Pakistani Military Authority:

- a. Bengalis had been alleged as non-martial and particularly unsuited for military life;
- b. The failure of the Bengalis to meet the physical requirements;
- c. The cowardice of the Bengalis; and
- d. Bengali response to military service was not encouraging.

Validity of the Above Explanation²³

The above arguments appeared to be misleading on examination:

- a. Bengalis are a short statured lightweight people. But, as Air Marshall Ashgar Khan argues, the chest and height measurements for entry had little to do with the combat effectiveness;
- b. A 'pre-fixed' quota for East Pakistan accounted for low representation (separately discussed in the next section of this paper);

²¹ . Rahim, *op. cit.*, p. 527.

²² . See, M Asghar Khan, *Generals in Politics – Pakistan: 1958-1982*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1988, pp. 18-19; Mahmood, *op. cit.*, p. 33; Matinuddin, *op. cit.*, Muhit, *op. cit.*, p. 62; Rizvi, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-40.

²³ . See Rahim, *op. cit.*, p. 530; Asghar Khan, *op. cit.*, pp18-19; Muhit, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63; See also for evidence, Abdur Rauf, *Agartala Conspiracy and My Life as Sailor*, [in Bangla], Dhaka, Jatiyo Grantho Prakasan, 1998.

- c. The post-independence growth of the armed forces in Bangladesh suggests that there was no shortage of Bengalis ready to seek recruitment;
- d. Additionally, the West Pakistani Recruiting and Medical Officers purposefully eliminated many Bengali candidates;
- e. The location of the defence installations and recruitment centers in West Pakistan also contributed to non-recruitment of Bengalis; and
- f. Unsuitability of the Bengalis for the military service was only a pretext, as proved by an excellent account of fighting prowess of 1 East Bengal Regiment during the 1965 war and of the Bengalis during Liberation War of 1971.

Real Explanation

Stephen Cohen, a keen observer of South Asian Military system, forwards two arguments for the under-representation. Firstly, the fear of the Punjabi dominated Pakistan Establishment that a huge Bengali representation in the army would lead to the easy separation of East Pakistan, which was geographically isolated by one thousand miles of hostile Indian territory; and secondly, the fear of their losing influence and power.²⁴ Accounts of Air Marshall Asghar Khan²⁵ and Lieutenant General Niazi²⁶ directly or indirectly validate such a hypothesis. Even Ayub believed that “they (*The Bengalis*) are not going to stay with us.”²⁷

²⁴ . Cohen, (1971) *op. cit.*, p. 193; and: Cohen (1984), *op. cit.*, p.43,

²⁵ . Asghar Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

²⁶ . Lt. Gen. A. A. K. Niazi, *The Betrayal of East Pakistan*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. xxv and 34.

²⁷ . Altaf Gauhar, *Ayub Khan—Pakistan's First Military Ruler*, Dhaka, UPL, 1996, p. 285.

Enayetur Rahim, drawing on a classified document [*Pakistan Army, The Army Regulation*, (Rawalpindi, 1960), *Section I, Class Composition*], argues that one tool that was clandestinely used to ensure low recruitment ratio for the Bengalis was 'class composition' or 'ethnic composition' regulation, which allocated only a maximum quota less than 8 percent for the Bengalis in the composition of Pakistan Army. Thus, Rahim maintains, "... in the army a pre-fixed quota for East Pakistan marginalised their presence up until the War of Independence."²⁸ Thus, available evidence asserts that the Bengali elements were deliberately excluded from any meaningful participation in the armed forces and defence preparedness of the country.

TREATMENT TOWARDS THE BENGALI MEMBERS

Attitude of the West Pakistanis towards the Bengalis

The West Pakistani military officers, mostly the Punjabis, used to look down upon the Bengalis. "They (*the senior officers of the armed forces*) conducted themselves with the arrogance of imperial guardians and hardly ever as fellow-countrymen."²⁹ Their feeling was voiced by Ayub Khan, who felt that the people of East Pakistan belong to "downtrodden races".³⁰ This racial policy was scrupulously followed in every sphere of governmental and public activity, including armed forces. Despite the raising of two battalions of the new East Bengal Regiment (EBR), as noted by Stephen Cohen, "there was strong resistance within the Pakistan Army to greatly expanding East Bengal's representation in the

²⁸ . Rahim, *op.cit.*, p. 530.

²⁹ . Stanelly Masson, cited by Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama: An Inquiry Into The Poverty of Nations*, Vol. I, New York, Pantheon, 1968, p. 316.

³⁰ . Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters – A Political Autobiography*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1967, p.187.

military, as well as considerable distaste for the equality of Bengali officers and other ranks." He further notes that the Bengali officers and other ranks were virtually segregated and subjected to discriminatory treatments.³¹

Hurtful treatment experienced by Colonel Osmany, a senior Bengali officer, who, in spite of 'some excellent qualities was superseded for good', was even condemned by Pakistani Generals like Gul Hassan Khan and Rao Farman Ali Khan.³² Lieutenant General Kamal Matinuddin, a well-known Pakistani soldier turned scholar, also denounced the "contemptuous attitude of the West Pakistanis towards the Bengalis."³³ In his short memoirs titled, *The Birth of a Nation*, Lieutenant General Ziaur Rahman, a resolute hero of Bangladesh Liberation War, recalls a number of incidents that exemplify the arrogance and haughtiness of the West Pakistani officers towards the Bengali officers and soldiers.³⁴ Major General K. M. Safiullah, a Liberation War veteran, wrote: "Being in absolute minority (*in the military*), they (*the Bengalis*) were subjected to adjunct treatment by their West Pakistani destiny makers."³⁵ Obviously, such racial attitude blocked the promotion of 'cohesiveness' and 'national spirit'.

³¹. Cohen (1984), *op. cit.*, p. 43.

³². Lieutenant General Gul Hassan Khan, *Memoirs of Lt. Gen. Gul Hassan Khan*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 270-271; and Maj. Gen. Rao Farman Ali Khan, *How Pakistan Got Divided*, Lahore, Jang Publishers, 1992, p. 18.

³³. Matinuddin, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

³⁴. See Ziaur Rahman, "Akti Jatir Janma" ("The Birth of a Nation"), in Iftexhar Rasul George (ed.), *Ziaur Rahman – Jangani Sakal Khamatar Utsa (Ziaur Rahman – People is the Source of all Power)*, Dhaka, Ananna, 1995, pp. 10-16.

³⁵. Maj. Gen. K. M. Safiullah, *Bangladesh At War*, Dhaka, Academic Publishers, 1989. p.12

Training Environment

As regards training and adherence to 'military ethics', it would be interesting to cite the views of Major General (Retd.) Tajammal Hussain Malik, a Punjabi officer, who served in Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) in 1954-55 and in 1971 commanded 205 Brigade of Pakistan Occupation Army. He recalls: "Another glaring weakness, which was very noticeable, was that although the proportion of Bengali Cadets as compared to their population vis-à-vis West Pakistan was very negligible, yet they were often neglected and kept in the background. They were generally given poor grades and seldom given any higher appointments."³⁶

Internal training facilities and overseas training opportunities also expanded immensely with the rapid expansion of the armed forces. For example, under the Military assistance Programme (MAP), hundreds of Pakistani military officers and other ranks were sent to the U. S. for training.³⁷ But higher training facilities were overwhelmingly allotted to West Pakistanis as is depicted in the following table.

Table-4: Representation in Overseas Training 1947-1963 (In%)

Services	Officer		Junior Commissioned		Warrant Officers		Others		Civilian	
	E.*	W.*	E.	W.	E.	W.	E.	W.	E.	W.
Army	8	92	1	99	-	-	2.3	97.7	6	94
Navy	10	90	12	88	12	88	20	80	3	97
Air Force	12	88	-	-	14.2	85.8	17	83	-	-

* E. refers to East Pakistan and W. refers to West Pakistan.

Source: Mohammad Afsaruddin, *Second World War and My Military Life* [in Bangla], (Dhaka, Bulbul Prakashani, 1994), p. 154.

³⁶. Major General (Retd) Tajammal Hussain Malik, *The Story of My Struggle*, Lahore, Jang Publishers, 1991, p. 30.

³⁷. See Hashimi, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-64.

EAST WING'S SHARE OF DEFENCE EXPENDITURE

A look at the defence expenditure of Pakistan during 1950-51 to 1968-69 reveals that out of a central revenue expenditure of Rs. 3795.58 crores, in 16 years Rs. 2117.81 crores i.e., more than 56 percent was allocated for defence expenditure. Out of the above amount of Rs. 2117.81 crores, hardly 10 percent was spent in East Pakistan.³⁸ The high defence budget of Pakistan became an effective instrument to collect taxes in East Pakistan which were spent in West Pakistan. Additionally, the United States military grants or Military Assistance Programme (MAP) under the pacts signed from 1953 onwards supplemented the military budget. The United States pumped some two billion dollars for arming and expanding the defence forces of Pakistan for the period between 1954 and 1965. The army deployed in East Pakistan did not receive any share of the MAP.³⁹

Since all Services' Headquarters and almost all the defence installations were concentrated in West wing, and as most of the defence personnel were drawn from and also physically located at that wing, almost all the defence expenditure were incurred in that wing. Dr. Aleem Al-Razee maintains that, "injection of the defence expenditure on such a colossal scale has given an initial 'jerk' and 'push' to West wing economy. On the other hand, East wing remained forlorn and away from such a major push."⁴⁰ While the contribution of the Bengalis to the defence budget was substantial, their share of the dividends was neglectful. Hence, the Bengalis could not identify themselves with the national defence policies of Pakistan.

³⁸. Md. Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, *Emergence of Bangladesh and Role of Awami League*, Dhaka, UPL, 1982, pp. 80-81.

³⁹. Singh, *et. al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 10; and F M Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

⁴⁰. Quoted in Syed Humayun, "The Issue of Economic Disparity: An Economic Factor of Bengali Nationalism", *Bangladesh Political Studies*, (Vol. XIV, 1990), p. 52.

PAKISTAN'S DEFENCE STRATEGY AND INDO-PAK WAR OF 1965

In the words of Hasan Askar Rizvi, a noted Pakistani scholar, "...the defence planners of Pakistan did not favour a self-sustaining defence system for East Wing.⁴¹ The key-note to the strategy dates back to 1956 when Ayub Khan, being Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) of Pakistan Army, commented that East Pakistan could not be adequately defended. When this irresponsible statement of the C-in-C was strongly protested by Aatur Rahman Khan, the then Chief Minister of East Pakistan, Ayub clarified through Prime Minister Suhrawardy that what he meant was that "the strategic defence of East Pakistan rests on Lahore front."⁴² According to a report by Dawn, on 18th January 1955, Ayub Khan even maintained that East Pakistan was not defensible even if the entire military strength was thrown there, as long as the western base was not made strong. Such a strategy argues that in case India invaded East Pakistan, offensive strategy would be adopted in the west to capture Indian Territory or advance in Kashmir. This strategy would check India from invading East Pakistan.⁴³ Thus, East Pakistan was left virtually defenceless. In an attempt to justify this theory Punjab was graded as the 'core area' of Pakistan in geopolitical terms, "the military loss of which would normally result in the collapse of national resistance." But no ethnic, regional, or cultural group likes to be told that it is strategically second-rate. The army's stress on the importance of the Punjabis further intensified the bitterness of the Bengalis toward Pakistan State.⁴⁴

⁴¹. Rizvi, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-41.

⁴². Hasan Zaheer, *The Separation of East Pakista: The Rise and Realization of Bengal Muslim Nationalism*, Dhaka, UPL, 1998, p. 96.

⁴³. Rizvi, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-42.

⁴⁴. Cohen, (1984), *op. cit.*, p. 45.

The above defence strategy proved false as well as suicidal during Indo-Pakistan War of 1965. Though East Pakistan was not a theatre of war, the Bengalis felt gravely insecure, because the lone army division, which was in fact scantily equipped, could hardly defend itself against any possible aggression. In this context, distinguished strategic analyst Talukder Maniruzzaman maintains,

This brought a major rethinking among the leaders and politically relevant sections of the people of East Pakistan about their strategy to survive in the event of any military attack from outside . . . As the Pakistan forces were halted near the West Pakistani border by the Indian forces during the war, the theory propagated by Pakistan's rulers that the defence of East Pakistan lay in West Pakistan proved wrong.⁴⁵

The self-esteem of the Bengalis was further hurt when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Foreign Minister of Ayub Government, stated that a third country stood guarantee for East Pakistan's safety. Bengalis reasoned that, if a third country had to guarantee East Pakistan's safety and not the military strength of West Pakistan (which was always boasted about) East Pakistan had no reason to stay with West Pakistan.⁴⁶

IMPLICATIONS – REINFORCING BENGALI ALIENATION

The military claimed to be an all-Pakistani organisation. All Pakistanis had, therefore, legal right to serve in the military. Similarly, all provinces/regions were expected to have equal claim to defence from external threat. But the foregoing scrutiny clearly reveals that the Pakistan military did not reflect nationalist and equalitarian doctrine, nor did it respect the defence need of the 'whole' country. Hence, the criteria that presumably make the military national could not be applied to the context of Pakistani

⁴⁵ Maniruzzaman, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 17. and S.M. Burke, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 338.

military. Moreover, this points to the near-total absence of the Bengali elements at the crucial decision-making machinery of Pakistan and lack of accommodation of interests of diverse nationalities, which was so essential for the promotion of national integration.

Demands for Equal Rights and Responsibility

Soon after the inception of Pakistan, the political leaders from East Pakistan were unanimous in vociferously registering their grievances on the inadequate representation of Bengalis in the Armed Services. Drawing upon the Constitutional Assembly Debates (1951-52), Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, in his seminal work *Pakistan's Defence Policy, 1947-58* wrote that "Most members from East Pakistan continued to stress that participation of the East Pakistanis in the armed forces should not only be encouraged but steps should be taken to give East Pakistan its due share in defence sector."⁴⁷ The Bengali Members of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly tabled periodical questions and cut motions during 1948-57 and 1962-68 on recruitment policy and defence expenditure.⁴⁸ To create a respectable defence structure in East Pakistan, in addition to reasonable representation in the armed forces, demands such as establishment of an Ordnance Factory, a Military Academy and Navy Headquarters were raised time and again by the public of East Bengal since 1954.

After 1965, East Pakistani leaders and the conscious section of the people became convinced that they could no longer leave the defence of East Pakistan to others, but would instead have to take into their own hands the responsibility for defence of their own

⁴⁷. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *Pakistan's Defence Policy-1947-58*, London, Macmillan Press, 1990, p. 125.

⁴⁸. See Rizvi, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-45.

lands.⁴⁹ In fact, the Bengalis for long had demanded their right to internal defence capability. The skill and bravery exhibited by a handful of Bengali soldiers in the war front (1965 war) created a sense of pride in East Pakistan. The stories of Bengali fighting prowess only emboldened them to take a more radical stand on autonomy.⁵⁰ Historic Six-point demand in February 1966 came at a time, therefore, when the Bengalis were looking for a new formula to express their recently intensified national pride and desire for a substantial measure of independence from the centralised political structure. "In this context the significance of the sixth point was easily understandable. Point six demanded that East Pakistan be self-sufficient in defence, and a military force be set up in East Pakistan. Point four⁵¹ was also intended to have East Pakistan's control over the composition of the Pakistani Defence Force."⁵² Thus, when the mass movement for complete autonomy was finally launched, the issues of under-representation, share of defence expenditure and defence needs featured prominently in the agenda against West Pakistani dominated Central Government.

Bengali Alienation Accelerated

Nationalism is a result of accumulation of perceived grievances and a sense of injustice, repression, and hopelessness. Such phenomena makes a group of people politically conscious, who then begin to demand political rights based on social, economic, as well

⁴⁹. Maniruzzaman, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁵⁰. Rahim, *op. cit.*, 595.

⁵¹. "The power of taxation and revenue collection shall vest in the federating units and that the Federal Centre will have no such power. The Federation will have a share in the state taxes for meeting their required expenditure. The Consolidated Federal Fund shall come out of certain percentage of all state taxes." See Singh, *op. cit.* p. 28.

⁵². Emajuddin Ahamed, "The Six-Point Program: Its Class Basis", *Society and Politics in Bangladesh*, Dhaka, Academic Publishers, 1989, p. 40.

as cultural categories. The rise of Bengali nationalism lends support to this concept. In fact, denial of an equal opportunity to the non-elected institutions and their unrepresentative character angered the Bengali middle class and contributed to a great degree to the emergence of 'territoriality' as a *raison d'être* of Bengali nationalism and precipitated the direct cause of Bengalis' alienation from the central government. As Ayesha Jalal observes, "Unable to assert themselves in democratic arenas or seek advance through representation in the non-elected institutions, Bengalis ... considered the merits of formally exiting from the national mainstream".⁵³ The Bengali members of the armed forces gradually became sensitive to regional interests, indoctrinated with nationalist ideas and extended full support to the nationalist movement and formed the nucleus of Liberation Force. Enayetur Rahim in his scholarly monograph *Military in Pakistan Politics*, persuasively argues,

An important quantitative manifestation of the political domination of East Pakistan by the western wing was the continued gross under-representation of the Bengalis in the armed forces. ... The supremacy of one group or region, especially at the cost of exclusion of the numeric majority from such a mighty apparatus crystallized in time into a major Bengali grievance against continuing Punjabi subjugation. ... In fact, during the 1971 war of independence, the handful of Bengali elements of the armed forces stationed in East Pakistan rose up in the earliest opportunity challenging the repressive Punjabi tactics. The years of Bengali accumulated grievances had reached an explosive height.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

What this inquiry into the composition of Pakistan Armed Services has revealed is how the woeful level of under-representation of the Bengalis aided the failure of nation making in Pakistan. This

⁵³. Jalal, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

⁵⁴. Rahim, *op. cit.*, p. 529.

non-representation in the elite in a highly elitist system naturally deepened the Bengalis' sense of alienation. Furthermore, not only the Bengalis did not get the deserving dividends of defence expenditure but their motherland was also left defenceless during the 1965 war. Thus, the Armed Forces of Pakistan miserably failed to withstand the 'standard' of 'National' Army defined by Shills, Halpern and Janowitz.⁵⁵ The defence services were always an exclusive preserve of West Pakistan and East Pakistan had neither any control over it nor any stake in its continuance in that form. The Bengalis saw this under-representation as a critical determinant in colonising the eastern wing. The politics of exclusion and exploitation aimed at broadening the Punjabi dominance over state apparatus through supreme position in the military (and also bureaucracy) have aggravated conflicts between the structures of governance and the aspirations of the governed. East Pakistan's union with West Pakistan led to the development of a particular type of socio-economic and politico-military system, which was harmful to East Pakistan. This phenomenon paved the way for growth of militant Bengali nationalism.

Furthermore, the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war made it absolutely clear that the compulsions of economic development and national security were too strong to be sidetracked anymore by the slogan of Islamic solidarity and brotherhood. The Bengalis were never impressed with the view that they were less qualified for service in the military and were unable to undertake the responsibility of national defence. In this context, militarily the Six-point Programme strove to make East Pakistan self-sufficient. Finally, unable to meet the objectives of its own ideational justification as the homeland for "India's Muslim minority" 'Pakistan' lost her claim to survivability as one nation.

⁵⁵. See Jahan (1980), *op. cit.* p. 3.