

# India's Role in the Freedom of Bangladesh

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**Abstract:** The paper describes the role of India, Bangladesh's main neighbour and the Soviet Union's most significant support in the development of the independent state of Bangladesh. The document outlines the background to the 1971 Freedom War in Bangladesh. The political condition in East Pakistan right before the crisis, particularly the general election results held in December 1970, is recounted in depth. The involvement of India and the contribution of Indians, the Administration and the armed services are at the heart of the piece. Almost ten million men and women had to flee Bangladesh and were given refugees in various countries in India. Indira Gandhi's personal implications were quite high, and she went around the world to assist the cause in Bangladesh. India has spent lakhs of rupees on Bangladesh's independence war; it has also sacrificed the lives of its officials and militaries. Furthermore, in connection with Soviet American rivalry during the cold war, this study addresses the participation of the USSR in the Bangladesh Freedom War.

**Keywords:** Freedom, Army, Indian Government, Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh.

## Introduction:

The growth of a Bangladeshi nationalist, and independent movement in what then was eastern Pakistan through the 1971 Bangladesh Genocide also led to a revolution and armed battle. The liberation war in Bangladesh was called the war in Bangladesh, or only the liberation fight in Bangladesh. Bangladesh's People's Republic got independent. This battle began on the evening of 25 March 1971 following the beginning by the Pakistani military junta in Western Pakistan of Operation Searchlight of the people of East Pakistan [2]. The Bengali nationalists, students, intelligentsia, religious minorities and armed workers have been eliminating them systematically. Sheik Mujibur Rahman, Prime Minister-designate, was arrested by the Junta in 1970. The conflict ended on 16 December 1971 after the end of Western Pakistan.

In rural and urban regions of East Pakistan, a wide range of military and air strikes has been carried out to control the tide of civil disobedience that followed the 70s. The Pakistani Armed Forces have formed extremist religious militias with Islamist help during their local people operations. In Bangladesh, Urdu-speaking Biharis also supported the Pakistani military (an ethnic minority). Pakistani military and militia assist organisations involved in mass assassinations, deportation and rape of genocide. Dhaka capital was the location of multiple assassinations, including the Searchlight operation and the Dhaka University massacre. About 10 million Bengali migrants have migrated to neighbouring India and 30 million have been internally displaced. The immigrants from Bengal and Urdu spoke in violent confessional conduct. Academic consensus is universal that the acts of Pakistani army were a genocide.

The Bangladesh Declaration of Independence from Chittagong has been announced by members of the National Liberation Army (Mukti Bahini), which includes Bengali's activists, paramilitary groups and civilians. Eastern Bengal and Eastern Pakistan Guns played an important part in the resistance. A vast guerrilla war was launched by the Bangladesh forces under the direction of General M.A.G. Osmani and 11 regional commanders against Pakistani forces. They freed various cities in the opening months of the struggle. The Pakistan Army restored in the mountains. In addition to Pakistan Navy operations, Bengal guerrillas carried out a wide-ranging sabotage. Bangladesh's embryonic air force flew proceedings against Pakistan's military sites. By November, Pakistani soldiers were confined to their homes, while the Bangladeshi army was restricted to their homes. The majority of the land was secured[3].

On 17 April 1971 the interim government of Bangladesh had been formed and proceeded to exile in Calcutta at Mujibnagar. Bengali members of the Pakistani civilian, military and diplomatic forces defeated the Bangladeshi interim Government. In Western Pakistan, there have been thousands of Bengali families jailed and many fled to Afghanistan. The Free Bengal Radio Station was operated by cultural activists from Bengal. Millions of war-torn Bengali civilians have caused international disdain and anxiety. The nationalists from Bangladesh were supported by India, led by Indira Gandhi. In order to aid individuals from Bangladesh, British, Indian and American musicians organised the opening event in New York City. American Senator Ted Kennedy launched a fight in Congress to end Pakistan's military persecution. While US diplomats in eastern Pakistan fought vehemently about the tight links between the US government and Pakistan's military dictator Yahya Khan[4].

On 3 December 1971, the war began in India following the beginning of pre-emptive air strikes. In the ensuing Indo-Pakistan battle, there were two battle fronts. On 16 December 1971, Pakistan surrendered to Dacca with air domination in the Eastern Theater and the rapid progress of the Bangladesh-India allies.

This battle transformed the geopolitical environment of South Asia, wherein Bangladesh became the seventh largest nation in the world[9]. Given the numerous geographical connections, a significant incident in the battle was the Cold War Tension between the US, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. In 1972, the majority of UN Member States recognised Bangladesh as an independent country.

The civil, cultural, social and economic links between Bangladesh and India exist. Both countries share the same background in history, culture and language. In building multidimensional interactions this unity is reflected. In addition, India and Bangladesh complement each other's physical locations, providing them with the opportunity to expand relations and business partnerships. Bangladesh and India share 4096,7 km of frontiers, India having 1116,2 km of river border, and India's largest border with neighbouring countries.

India played an important role, as is commonly known, in the Bangladesh War of Liberation. India supported politics, the military and individuals. India supported political issues. India also provided help and asylum to Bangladeshi people. The Indian Government and the Indian people are an essential part of the independence war in Bangladesh.

### **The Bangladesh Crisis's Roots:**

Pakistan's 25th anniversary was marked by 'state breakdown,' Tepper said (1972:357). The dissolution of Pakistan gave birth to Bangladesh in 1971[5]. For almost four hundred years in Bangladesh, the experience of a union with Pakistan was terrible. The geographically unlogical border of Pakistan – divided into 1,000 miles of West Pakistan indigenous territory – was exacerbated by the economic exploitation and political dominance of the ruling élites in West Pakistan, which impregnated Bengali nationhood and eventually brought Pakistan to a halt. The division between the two sides was ethnically, linguistically, and culturally divisive. The Bengals have been always unlikely allies in the Pakistani Union - a monstrosity of geography and culture (New York Times, 1971). In Pakistan's formation phase, a move by the ruling elites to integrate Arabic and Persian in the Bengali language showed West Pakistan's cultural superiority. The Pakistani government's risky attempt to impose Urdu — a language of barely 3.5 percent of the population – was rejected and afterwards resisted by the bloodious 1952 Bengali linguistic struggle, which led to the commencement of a nationalist movement. This was the only nationalist language. On the one hand the demo-crazy rights of Bengalis, the majority of Pakistan's people, were denied; on the other hand, the governing elites of West Pakistan continued to abuse Bengalis economically. This whole political and financial exploitation culminated finally to the nationalist movement of "grave magnitude. In 1969 the overthrow of military dictator General Ayub Khan led to a brutal public rebellion perpetrated by the Bengals. Benjamin Bengali handed West Pakistan's governor elites luck in 1970, when sheikh Mujibur Rahman's party, the Awami League became the only party with majority voting power (PPP). Yet none were national. None of them. The results of the election clearly showed the polarisation between East and West Pakistan. The civilian-military elites in western Paquistan refused to give up their power after an overwhelming triumph under the leaders of Mujib to Bengal, the democratically chosen national leaders of the Bengalists, who had the right to represent the cause of Bengal. A systematic killing campaign was undertaken by the Pakistani military, and military action was pulled at the idea of Pakistan being together. On 26 March 1971 Bangladesh became an Independent and Supreme State.

In the wake of the military's awful cruelty and wretched genocide, the India intervened to overthrow Pakistan's army and on 16 December 1971 Bangladesh was brought into existence[8]. Bangladesh was uniquely different in nature and from other countries in South Asia as a state. The nationalist movements of the other countries of South Asia were largely based on nonviolent civil disobedience and a negotiated solution, but in the case of Bangladesh the nationalist movement was ultimately the armed battle for independence[6].

### **Indian role: Peoples' and Governance contribution**

The Indians, government and ultimately military contributions are indelible historic realities. When Pakistan's military assassinated Bangladeshi masses, India intervened and dispatched military forces to fight Pakistani army and helped liberation combatants. When the American navy reached Pakistan, the Soviet Union won full support for India.

The India Premier, Mrs Indira Gandhi, on 27 March 1971 expressed complete backing for her government in the battle for Bangladesh's independence. Bangladeshi-India borders have been opened in order to allow refugees from Bangladesh to be safe in India. The governments of West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura set up border refugee camps. Immediately in these camps Bangladeshi exiled military officers and Indian volunteers recruited and trained guerrilla fighters from the Mukti Bahini[7].

Almost 10 million men and women have come to various Indian countries, including West Bengal, Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya, M.P, Bihar and U. P., where they have lived as refugees, but far from leaving their own nation for our sake. For nine months India voluntarily looked after unhappy men, women and children. India also provided training, weapons and ammo for liberation fighters. The then Indian Prime Secretary, Mt. Indira Gandhi, is travelling the globe to collect support not just for the free of Bangladesh, but for the release from

Pakistan of Bangabandhu Sheik Mujibur Rahman. Indeed, not only was a battle of seven-thousand-rupee crores in Bangladesh, but there were also sacrifices of the lives of 3,630 leaders and men. Officers and troops have suffered around 9856 injuries, with about 213 of them now missing. The Indians also took spontaneous steps to provide shelter and food to refugees in East Pakistan.

**Role of indian forces:**

The BSF was largely responsible for providing assistance to the Mukti Bahini battalions prior to the Indian military's intervention. They also helped with Mukti Bahini's training (Freedom fighters). They also depicted 69 militant training camps, which were supported by India, around the eastern borders of Pakistan. The BSF has founded camps in which ten thousand Bengalis are allegedly being trained in guerilla tactics and sabotage. The Bengali protesters and some Indian armies have smuggled into East Bengal in a restricted amount of weapons and weapons to aid and train separatists. In September[1], the Indian Army began directly participating in the Liberation War. At first, the aid for Mukti Bahini soldiers was only supported by indirect fire (artillery). The Indian army was entitled to operate in Bangladesh from November up to 10 kilometres. The Indian military united soldiers on the Eastern side to form the Mitro ('Ally Forces') and the Mukti Bahini (Freedom Fighters). India's military, Navy and Air Force are praised for their role in eliminating genocide and creating a new country.

**Indira Gandhi's role:**

Former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi played an indivisible personal, political and diplomatic role in the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971. From 24 October 1971 Indira Gandhi began to travel to the USA and the countries of Western Europe to create and assist the public in the world. American President Richard Nixon named Indian aggressors and ordered the US soldiers deployed in Vietnam to back Pakistan. Indira Gandhi signed the twenty-year agreement of friendship and cooperation with Soviet Union on 9 August 1971. It was quite distressing for the USA, and the opportunity to enlist China in the fight was shrinking. Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet leader, warned us that the Soviet Union would take serious counter action in the event the US and China attacked India. China, Pakistan's ally, provided Pakistan with moral assistance, but did not provide military support and advanced its soldiers to the Indian border.

In the early fall of 1971 she began a diplomatic offensive to safeguard the interests of Bengalis and succeeded in breaking with the United Kingdom and France and blocking pro-Pakistan guidelines in the Security Council of the United Nations. Indira Gandhi addressed the Indian League on 31 October 1971, showing that she strongly supported the people of Bangladesh and was concerned about their independence. The fighting people of Eastern Pakistan in Bangladesh during the liberation war were provided all support by India under Indira Gandhi's leadership.

**Refugee and India:**

In the early days of the Pakistani army's brutal atrocities, followed by millions of innocent Bengalis, the Bangladeshi leaders and resistance groups crossed Indian borders. In some neighbouring nations, such as Tibet in 1959 and the Royal Coup in December of 1960, India took asylum. The people of East Bengal received shelter from India. Following the refugee flight, the Indian Parliament enacted a resolution on Eastern Bengal urging governments and the people of the globe to take prompt measures and build up measures to stop an organised East Bengal genocide. In the beginning of April 1971, the policy of East Pakistani political exiles in New Delhi was given significant form, and the Indian Government allowed its headquarters in Indian soil to be established. The project was formally founded in Badyanatt Tala in Calcutta on 17 April 1971 across the eastern edge of the Bengali border. AL leaders declared the Independence Declaration and established a government in Bangladesh in exile. Bangladesh Liberation Forces training camps with Indian backing are being created in several areas in Indian territory bordering Pakistan's eastern borders. India was so careful to establish Bangladesh Liberation Forces Training Centers (BLF). India tried, instead of radical political elements within the opposition, to get controlled by trustworthy AL commanders, weapons and police officials from Eastern Pakistan.

State	Number of camps	In camps	Outside camps	Total
W.B.	493	4,849,776	2,386,140	7,235,916
Tripura	279	843,097	557,552	1,400,649
Meghalaya	19	591,518	76,466	667,984
Assam	27	225,641	91,914	317,557
Bihar	11	36,735	0	36,735
M.P.	5	219,297	0	219,297

U.P.	3	10,164	0	10,164
Total	837	6,776,2 28	3,112,072	9,888,300

Table 1: Distribution to refugee camps of Bengali refugees, as of 15 December 1971

Nevertheless, the army's continuous repression and fight led to a wave of East Pakistani refugees. Over the nine-month liberation war some 10 million Bengals escaped to India, causing India to be very concerned (Table 1). In the small hills of Tripura by the end of May 1971, the leading source says 9 million refugees arrived, while only 1.5 millions were indigenous. The Indian Authority has expressed great concern in this regard at the ongoing settlement in Bengalis in India. In an agreement between the central Pakistan and Mujibur Rehman that would allow refugees to return home, the government of India reiterated its importance. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi threatened Pakistan publicly in the House on 24 May 1971.

She also underlined that Pakistan's crisis solution in its East Province was not a military solution, but a political solution in which the major powers had a role to play. In order to accommodate refugees, Ms Gandhi took two decisions and returned homes to understand the seriousness of the situation. Firstly, during a number of public meetings, Mrs Gandhi made it quite clear that refugees were not allowed to stay in India as permanent residents in 1971. Second, Mrs. Gandhi has founded a special organisation for the setting up and maintenance of temporary camps for these refugees with the Union's Aid and Rehabilitation Ministries. The world community was requested by India to provide help through continued refugee influx. The refugees problem was so serious that the large number of refugees could not be made to supply the central government and the provincial government of West Bengal with minimal necessities without international assistance. On 15 June 1971, when Mrs. Gandhi answered the question, "We have to go through hell to deal with this situation (the refugee problem)" in Rajya Sabha.

**India role as independent state recognition of Bangladesh**

The topic of recognition complemented a nation's birth. At first it was India's shoulder that was responsible for recognition. "Recognition of Bangladesh" has become a fundamental element of the domestic policy of India. The Indian political parties, several professional organisations, cultural institutions and the Indian common man wanted India first. The ruling Congress Party also supported recognising Bangladesh as a country but had to be held in due course. The current scenario in practise requires India to be very careful with the subject of recognition. In Indian policy and international law and their effects, the Indian Government has taken vigilance.

In accordance with International law de jure, Bangladesh achieved all the conditions to be recognised. But it had to wait until 6 December 1971 in order to get recognition. Although the issue of recognition was legal, it was a political decision in general. Since the end of March until December, Bangladesh's request for recognition has become a national question in Indian politics for nine long months.

It can be said that Bangladesh was implicitly acknowledged before 6 December in view of international law and the series of incidents in Bangladesh during the war of liberation. The Bangladesh Mission first formally directed work programmes in Kolkata and later in Delhi, and these could be accepted as de facto recognition by the Indian Government. In addition, the countries of Eastern Europe took a positive position with regard to Bangladesh after the Indo-Soviet friendship treaty. Bangladesh was recognised as representing the Mujibnagar Government by the participating in the Budapest International Seminar by Abdus Samad Azad (Former Foreign Minister) in East Europe. The Bangladesh International Conference was held in Delhi for three days, and was attended by 150 representatives from 24 nations. On 20 September, all governments throughout the globe were called on to recognise Bangladesh as an independent nation and to stop supporting Western Pakistan with all kind of military assistance. On the occasion of the summit. In a Conference Resolution, the international community should acknowledge the political fight of the Bangladeshi people as a national fight for freedom. The Mujibnagar administration was active from the outset, thanks to India. Together with private agencies from diverse levels the Indian Government and different endeavours to influence public opinion in favour of Bangladesh were formally or unofficially connected with the Mujibnagar Government Policy Body. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi stated on the Sabha locomotive on 6 December that "Pakistan had declared war on India. The peaceful solution is irrelevant. The people of Bangladesh are battling for their lives and India is opposing aggression. Like us, they battle an enemy together. We are pleased to inform the House that we have carefully decided to give reconnaissance to the People's Republic of Bangladesh in the present scenario and because of the Government's persistent requests. In Bangladesh, the quest to achieve national recognition has been difficult since Zulfikar Ali Bhutto has plainly stated that Pakistan will terminate all diplomatic connections with that country if any nation recognises Bangladesh. Pakistan has indeed suspended diplomatic relations with a few countries in recognition of Bangladesh. In the Indian Parliament the Prime Minister, Mt. Indira Gandhi, declared the Government of India to acknowledge 'GanaPraya Tantri Bangladesh' government' which essentially highlighted the Bangali country's effort and work. On the other side, the Soviet Union was the first major

country to criticise Pakistan's military repression of Bengalis publicly. It was also the first large power to acknowledge the State of Bangladesh as it had officially liberated the Pakistani army within thirty-eight days (26 January 1972).

**USSR's innovation: India Collaborates**

The USSR's commitment to the Bangladesh freedom struggle has mostly been a response to US help to Pakistan. The United States sympathised Pakistan for several reasons: firstly, Pakistan belongs to the CENTO and SEATO American Military Pact; secondly, the United States is persuaded that any victory in India would be considered an expansion of the influence of the Soviet forces on the victory parts of India as a pro-Soviet nation although pursued in politics of non-alignment. In 1971 the Soviet reaction to the East Pakistan conflict was shaped by an energetic interactions between the Soviet Union and the India (Bangladesh). There has been a good relationship between the two countries since Bulganin and Khrushchev visited New Delhi in December 1955. In 1962, the Indo-Soviet links were further cemented during the Chinese-Indian frontier war. Indeed, Moscow's bond with India was ultimately given additional importance by India's 1962 default and deterioration from Sino-Soviet relations.

On 9 December 1971, Nixon elected to send the USS Enterprise aeroplane carrier to Bay of Bengal. East Pakistan should surround India on all four sides. In order to combat the Indian Navy, the United States sent its seventh Carrier Group. The USSR sent nuclear-armed flotilla on 13 December 1971 from Vladivostok on 13 December 1971 under overall command by Admiral Vladimir Kruglyakov, commander of the tenth operative group. Although the Soviet fleet comprised nuclear weapons vessels and nuclear submarines, their scope was limited. The Russian commander therefore had to run the risk of surrounding him to fight successfully against the British and American fleets.

The Soviet Union despatched the current Soviet navy to the Bay of Bengal a group of destructors and a nuclear submarine as well. Soviet cruisers, destroyers and nuclear submarines had an anti-ships raid and were driven from the Indian Ocean by the U.S. Navy. The Russians have blocked the progress of the US fleet to India<sup>10</sup>. The Soviet policymakers prioritise Bangladesh in 1971 relatively highly because of their worry for the globe today and Asia. Moscow concerns the preservation of its partner, India's stability and safety. It intended to ensure India's place as South Asia's leading power. The authorities of the Soviet Union might have regarded Bangladesh as "a violation of its Indian interests." In 1971, the test of their political and diplomatic skills in a developing "triangular world" was of major importance to them.

Peace, friendship and cooperation' agreement between India and Russia committed itself, should foreign aggression take place, to the defence of India. This was a shock to America because the Soviet influence in South Asia was widespread. The Soviet Union participation was a stalemate for its strategy for expanding influence in East and South Asia. United Nations Ambassador George H W. Bush introduced a UN Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of the Indian armed forces, which could lead to war if they knew that, with Pakistan and the equipment Pakistan gave Pakistan a lot of destruction. The Soviet Union has vetoed the resolution, enabling India to fight for that cause, believing that India could win the war and that India Gandhi was determined to protect the interests of Bengalism. The Soviet Union, however, has been strongly pressure by Nixon and Kissinger, but failed.

**Conclusions:**

India helped the Bangladeshi Liberation War with troops and supplies, weaponry and munitions, and finally, with open and covert help from the Indian army, the Bengali liberation warriors released Bangladesh. The Indian engagement in the Bangladesh Liberation War is scarcely a gesture of humanitarian aid or a backing for the legitimate cause of the individuals of Bangladesh. Its true political or political-economic, and strategic concerns have led to the support of Indian people.

Finally, India's part in Bangladesh's independence has been a unique one. He was a facilitator rather than a creator of his effort. India and East Pakistan together won the war (Bangladesh). The administration and all the people of India have made unparalleled sacrifices for the people of Bangladesh, under Indira Gandhi.

Three million were bloodied and 300,000 were forced by Pakistani army and employees to forfeit their innocence. Bangladeshi's people must not forget that they were fully supported by the Government and the people of India. India's cooperation and assistance is unparalleled in world history. With Indian cooperation and friendly USSR supervision, the creation of Bangladesh came into being.

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