

# The early history of bangladesh politics essay



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In this short paper I try to demonstrate how and why Bangladesh is still a divided nation politically and socially after 40 years of independence; how this conflict slowing down country's development. My argument in some manner reflects Mag. Bert Preiss's lecture entitled 'Conflict Transformation/resolution' and ends finding some solutions.

## **Early History of Bangladesh**

The British had left Indian subcontinent and separated it into two new states by religion; Hindu state India and Muslim state Pakistan. And the Pakistan was geographically divided in two parts. The biggest and the administrative part was the west Pakistan and the eastern part was named East Pakistan which is now Bangladesh. (1) Central government was set in the west Pakistan.

## **Fighting against discrimination and Birth of Bangladesh.**

The reason East Pakistan wanted to be free was that West Pakistan treated East Pakistanis as slaves; put them to work in the agriculture and in the factories but all the revenues went to West Pakistan. Here in the east people got paid very little. The West also discouraged people in the east not to be educated.

West Pakistan was dominant and in the national budget west received much more bigger budget than the east and more infrastructural development had happened in the west whereas the east was neglected.

In the military and in other high administrative official positions filled up by the west Pakistanis. (2)

It was a total discrimination. And the revolution against West Pakistan was obvious. And so war began on March 26 1971 and ended 16 December 1971. 9 months war left Bangladesh in a mass destruction and It is not exactly clear how many people died, East Pakistan got independence and named as Bangladesh.

Soon after the independence of Bangladesh there were an uprising demand to punish those Pakistani soldiers who did the mass slaughtering, raping women. But India Bangladesh and Pakistan later on agreed not to pursue any war crimes tribunal against Pakistani military. (3)

1. Independence Day, 2009 Portal Seven.

<http://portalseven.com/static/holidays/Bangladesh/Independence-Day.jsp>

2. Bangladesh Liberation War, web portal January 27, 2011

<http://timtebowfacts.com/bangladesh-liberation-war/>

3. Bangladesh finally confronts war crimes 40 years on - Anbarasan Ethirajan for BBC-20 November 2011 - Dhaka

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-15794246>

## **Divided nation - Conflict continues**

In last two decades there has been a slower and steady demand growing in Bangladesh against those alleged Pakistani collaborators. Intellectual community gradually developed the platform by creating lots of literature, movies, showing that atrocities of 1971 and those of collaborators and their contribution in mass distraction, killing, raping and particularly the tortures.

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In last seven years it was a revolution if I may allowed to say, huge demand arose against them, demanding and protesting for the punishment of those alleged war criminals. lists of Pakistani collaborators were made up individually and by the civil society movements.

In 2010 Current government set up the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) and arrested seven people accusing of collaborating with Pakistani forces. However these arrested accused leaders of a big Islamist part call Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami , have been denying the charges.(4)

Jamat Islami Bangladesh is a big party and it has actively involved activists and supporters all over the country. This party also jointly works with another biggest party call Nationalist party. Youth uprising and the freedom fighters has been seeking punishment to those alleged war criminals who later involved in the politics got leading positions in the government. In response to a growing demand and anger, current government arrested some of the alleged collaborators and put into judicial process. On the other hand, the alleged party has been demonstrating against government's decision and creating lots of political turmoil. On the surface nation was divided in two groups and both demanding and creating unrest and conflict.

## **Conflict Analysis**

Two form of conflict happening right now; political and social.

Political conflict

Protests, political unrest, mass demonstration had been happening from both sides; those who demanding punishment of war criminals and alleged party

that are denying war-crimes. Political conflict often leads direct violence, causing poverty and unjust social-political stability and slowing down country's sustainable and economical development.

One of the biggest industry in Bangladesh is ready-made garments sector. It produces 80% of the export fashion clothing and employs about three million people according to The Wall Street Journal.(5) A Swedish based fashion retailer H&M concerns Bangladesh has been plagued by political turmoil, with street violence, although the company wanted to obtain more products from Bangladesh taking advantage of cheap labor, but political unrest and violent strikes halt the company from expanding. Many other foreign companies also wanted to do business in Bangladesh but country's political unrest stopped them. And that's how Bangladeshi economic growth stops.

" The often-recurring strikes and demonstrations disrupt production and cause delays. We want to grow in Bangladesh. A stable market will benefit us buyers, the suppliers and the workers," said H&M's head of sustainability, Helena Helmersson.(6)

4. Bangladesh finally confronts war crimes 40 years on -Anbarasan Ethirajan for BBC-20 November 2011 - Dhaka

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-15794246>

5. 6. The Wall Street Journal - May 28, 2012 H&M Expresses Concern About Growth in Bangladesh.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303807404577431611142443338.html>

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## Social conflict

Other social conflict is that there has been huge gap and created after country's independent. Although this was a political issue but it came side by side in to the social and national life. People has been divided into two philosophy, freedom fighter and their fan friends supporter, on the other hand collaborators of Pakistani military their friends and supporters although now a days they do not claim themselves as Pakistani supporter, however history never ends. And the freedom fighter group openly hates them in the public meetings, on the news paper media etc, even do not share social life. People living in a same country, in a sovereign state but yet there are two groups with lots of hate and negligence. And often this hate divert into direct violence.

But they fact is Bangladeshis political parties play game with this issue. Whenever election comes some of the big parties put in their election agenda if they get elected they will punish these war criminals. After election they still play with it. And that's why this war crime issue never ends, besides divides Bangladeshis and conflict goes on.

## **Conflict transformation**

Upon my learning from Bert Preiss's case study about Kosovo conflict, International agencies like UN NATO EU playing a great role transforming Kosovo conflict. Whereas in Bangladesh there has not been any international endeavors right now to settle down current dispute.

However, Human Right Watch has been complaining about the transparency of the the trail.

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In a letter to the Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina regarding the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act and International Crimes (Tribunals) Act Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch says " We want these trials to succeed in bringing the people responsible for the horrific crimes of 1971 to justice. While the amendments are a significant improvement, key problems still need to be fixed to ensure fair trials and avoid unnecessarily lengthy appeals."(7)

As of my understanding of "Conflict Transformation/resolution: Case 1- Kosovo"(8) I try to find some solutions.

NGO's and the civil society should come forward and take action to resolve this issue. The ideal method in Bangladesh to transform conflict meaningfully would be apply Empathy and Medication method.

Empathy for social conflict

Mary Gordon, founder of Roots of Empathy defines that " For the social-life aspect empathy would the best way. Empathy has a profound ability to transform the way in which we resolve and understand conflicts. Empathy enables individuals to open their hearts and minds to not only see and understand the world from the perspective of others, but also to act in a way that is more likely to lead to a peaceful solution".(9)

7. Bangladesh: Guarantee Fair Trials for Independence-Era Crimes - HRW - New York - July 11, 2011

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/07/11/bangladesh-guarantee-fair-trials-independence-era-crimes>

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8. Mag. Bert Preiss's lecture entitled 'Conflict Transformation/resolution: Case 1- Kosovo' Tuesday 30. 10. 2012 at EPU

<http://moodle.md-websolutions.com/moodle/mod/folder/view.php?id=51>

9. The Power of Empathy in Conflict Resolution, Anna Titulaer - Washington D. C.- May 16, 2012

[http://www.monitor.upeace.org/innerpg.cfm?id\\_article=907](http://www.monitor.upeace.org/innerpg.cfm?id_article=907)

And so it is very important to teach empathy to new generations in Bangladesh. Make them aware that not to hate own fellow country man; unity and peaceful livelihood is needed for country's social economical development. In the Educational institutions like elementary school, collage and Universities should introduce courses and trainings about non violent approach. The point is whoever collaborated the Pakistani military but their sons and daughters are not responsible or guilty for it and that's why nobody should behave them with humiliation and hatred. News papers and TV Medias could play a vital role in that and the NGO's and civil society also could make people aware about it.

Medication for political conflict

Politically what can be done is to call into peace dialogue. Mediation is the open window, however mediator should be from outside Bangladesh, UN or other peacekeeping organization would be an option. It is because every party in Bangladesh has their own political motivations.

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Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado had explained the best method of Mediation like

" Other factors that determine the success of international mediation are the nature of the parties, the issues, and the mediator. The mediator must be highly skilled and respected. It often also helps if the mediator represents a powerful party who can reward cooperation and punish obstinance. When he mediated the Camp David Accords, Jimmy Carter was able to promise U. S. assistance as a reward for cooperation, while he could threaten a reduction of U. S. support if Egypt or Israel remained resistant to settlement".(10)

I wish to end up my argument here putting this comment of Aly Zaker, an eminent Bangladeshi writer and civil society leader how said how important is this war crime dispute settlement for Bangladeshis. He said to BBC " The trial will put an end to the culture of impunity, if not; the peace and harmony which the people of Bangladesh are trying to practice can be totally destroyed. So this trial is very important for our country and our people."(11)

10. Mediation, 2005, Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, USA

<http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/treatment/mediatn.htm>

11. Bangladesh finally confronts war crimes 40 years on -Anbarasan Ethirajan for BBC-20 November 2011 - Dhaka

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