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**State, class and military rule in Bangladesh: 1972–1982**

Riaz, Ali, Ph.D.

University of Hawaii, 1993

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**STATE, CLASS AND MILITARY RULE  
IN BANGLADESH: 1972-1982**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**IN**

**POLITICAL SCIENCE**

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**By**

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**Dissertation Committee:**

**Farideh Farhi, Chairperson  
Harry J. Friedman  
Sankaran Krishna  
Syed A. Rahim  
Ravi A. Palat**

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Ali Riaz

Dedicated to  
my mother,  
Bilkis Ara

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## ABSTRACT

This study presents a structural-historical interpretation of the causes of military rule in Bangladesh during its first decade of independence: 1972-1982. This study argues that the military rule in Bangladesh is not an abrupt reaction to the failure of political regimes, but is an integral part of the capitalist development. It is further argued that there are three important factors contributed to the rise of military-bureaucratic oligarchy to the center of power-bloc. These are: 1) The dynamics of the relatively autonomous state; 2) the crises of hegemony of the ruling classes; and 3) the political and economic crises embedded in the peripheral status of the country. This study shows that the military regime that came to power in 1975 had a long-term economic and political project. The military rule that continued for remaining period of the first decade and beyond, either in the form of martial law or civilian guise, fundamentally altered the physiognomy of Bangladesh capitalism and integrated Bangladesh further with the world capitalist economy. The policies pursued by the military regimes consolidated the power and authority of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy as the central institution within the state and bred a class of 'lumpen capitalist'.

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The principal objective of this dissertation is to investigate the causes of military rule in Bangladesh. This dissertation is also about the state, social classes and their interactions that determined the methods of rule in the first decade of independent Bangladesh (1972-1982). I will analyze the structural and conjunctural factors that facilitated the emergence of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy as the power-bloc from a marginalized position in Bangladesh during the given period.

The basic contention of this study is that military intervention in Bangladesh is not simply an abrupt reaction to the failure of civilian regimes, but is an integral part of an ongoing process of capitalist development. It will be argued here that the important factors that contributed to the rise of military-bureaucratic oligarchy in Bangladesh are the political and economic crises embedded in the peripheral status of the country, the crisis of hegemony of the ruling classes, and the relative autonomy of the state.

It is a central tenet of the study that the mode of articulation of state power in a given country is determined by the material basis of the state and the class structure of the social formation. Since the state structure and class configuration in Bangladesh was shaped and reshaped by two consecutive colonial dominations (i.e. the British, 1757-1947; and Pakistani, 1947-1971) this study begins by recognizing the peripheral status of Bangladesh in world capitalism and explains the problem of military rule within the framework of peripheral capitalism in general and colonial/post-colonial peripheral capitalism in particular.

In this chapter I provide a brief historical background to the problem, clarify the basic concepts I have used, delineate the theoretical framework of the study, describe the methods employed and present an outline of the study.

### **Brief Background**

Since its independence twenty two years ago, Bangladesh has been dominated by either direct military rule and martial law or military rule in civilian guise for at least 15 years. It experienced four successful and at least 27 abortive coups d'etat.

The first coup d'etat was staged on August 15, 1975 within three a half years of independence. The military took over power assassinating Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, one of the founding leaders of the country and the President. In the same year two more coups took place, one on November 3 and another on November 7; the former was led by a small number of officers and the latter predominantly by non-commissioned soldiers with a vow to change the social structure. The leaders of the November 3 coup lasted in power for only three days. The latter coup finally failed to achieve its goals, as the initial organizers lost the leadership in just a few days. In the following five years, although there was no apparent change of power, a number of coup attempts were made. In May 1981, another abortive coup claimed the life of then-President and beneficiary of the November 7 coup d'etat, General Ziaur Rahman. Within less than a year of that attempt, in March 1982, the Chief of Army Staff, General H. M. Ershad, usurped power with the claim that the military should have a definite and constitutionally guaranteed role in national affairs (Ershad, 1979, 1981).

Thus within a decade since independence two of its heads of the state were assassinated in the process of military takeovers. Additionally, since the first coup d'etat of August 15, 1975 the military-bureaucratic oligarchy has emerged as the core of the power bloc that dominates Bangladesh society, the economic policies pursued by the state mark a radical break with the past and the high ideals of the state have been altered.

Now, after more than 15 years of consecutive military rule in Bangladesh, it can be said in retrospect that the armed forces came to power with a long-term economic and political project. The fundamental goal was to alter the character of Bangladesh capitalism and to further its integration with the world capitalist economy. Although the question as to why the military intervened in politics occupies a central position in the political discourse of Bangladesh, to date, very few scholarly studies have adequately examined the causes of and conditions for military intervention<sup>1</sup>.

### **Key Concepts**

The key concepts around which this study is built are: peripheral formations, state, relative autonomy of the state, social class, intermediate classes, prominent class, hegemony, and ruling bloc. These concepts and categories are used throughout the dissertation to explain different social conditions and phenomena. Considering that these concepts are the building blocs of the theoretical framework of this study some clarifications are provided before delineating the framework. I have, however, no intention of providing any final definitions of these concepts, because of their essentially contested nature, but only provide the meaning that is imparted in this study.

#### Peripheral Formations:

The countries that are not members of the advanced capitalist community and socialist bloc are referred to by various titles, such as the developing, less developed, underdeveloped, Third World etc. Although these titles have some validity, they are obviously identified with an ideological position. Additionally, the principal weakness of these concepts is their vagueness in

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<sup>1</sup>Among the book-length studies, the works of Ahamed, (1988) Khan (1984) and Uzzaman (1987, 1991) are worth mentioning. Jahan (1980), Franda (1982), and Maniruzzaman (1975a, 1975b) - keen observers of Bangladesh politics - have also addressed the issue of the military intervention on different occasions. Lifschultz (1979) and Mascaranhas (1986) deal with the two military coups of 1975 in detail in their books. A detailed review of relevant literature is presented in chapter II.



terms of the relations of production and exchange that characterize these countries. The concept of 'peripheral formations' used by the world-system analysts like Samir Amin and Immanuel Wallerstein cannot claim to be completely free from such limitations, yet, in my view, it helps us understand the production relations of the countries in question better than other terms.

In this study the concept is interpreted within the Marxian reproduction scheme. In the classical reproduction scheme, production is divided between two departments: the means of production (Department I) and the means of reproduction of the labor force (Department II). The former refers to the capital goods and joint inputs that are used by both Departments, while the latter refers to wage goods and wage services for the workers employed in them. In the case of a peripheral economy, Department I is either absent or incomplete. Thus the peripheral formations are characterized by the disarticulation between economic sectors. Additionally, full circuit of capital cannot take place within the countries themselves.

The concept of a peripheral formation also refers to a particular structure of unequal relationships on a global scale which emerge as a result of a process lasting in all some four centuries. The 'capitalist world-system' which had emerged in an almost complete form by 1914 and has continued to develop since then 'integrated' a large number of countries to the capitalist system in the name of 'developmentalist' ideology and produced the conditions now commonly termed 'underdevelopment'. The need of western capitalism to expand the scale of its accumulation and continuation of that accumulation changed the patterns of class formation, class relations and state forms in the peripheral societies.

#### The State:

The concept of the state is one of the most problematic concepts in politics. It has been variously conceptualized. These conceptualizations are based upon some combinations of its functions, purposes, activities, personnel, organizational contours, legitimacy, legal norms, rules and machinery, sovereignty, coercive monopoly, and territorial control.

In this study what is conveyed in speaking of the state is a differentiated set of institutions and personnel which has a legitimate monopoly on authoritative rule-making, backed up by a monopoly on the means of physical violence, within a territorially demarcated area (Mann, 1986:112; Rueschmeyer and Evans, 1985:45-6). The concept implicitly incorporates three aspects of the state: apparatus, power, and authority. What is meant by state apparatus is the complex set of institutions staffed by a professional bureaucracy and armed forces, specialized to some degree or other, which together ensure the formulation and execution of policies. Secondly, the state represents a concentration of economic and political power. In most cases, it is the biggest single such concentration in the particular social formation. Thirdly, it also represents a concentration of authority. Which means, in the ideological sense, it is able or at least claims to give legitimacy to the actions of those who act in its name.

In terms of the constitutive elements of the state, we can broadly categorize them into three sets: the regime (mostly armed with legislative power, and having limited capacity for implementation), the executives (or in other words, the bureaucracy and attendant organizations which have immense control over the implementation process) and the military (along with other para-military forces that have monopoly over legitimate coercion). However, the state, be it in the peripheral formation or in an advanced capitalist society, should not be viewed as only the conglomeration of these elements, but instead, should be understood as the balance between them. At a given moment of time and in a given social formation it is the relationship and balance between these elements that determines the nature of rule.

#### Relative Autonomy of the State:

Since the resurgence of interest in the 'state' which began in the early 1970s, the issue of the relative autonomy of the state occupies a central position in discussions about capitalist states. Those who took part in this debate and contributed immensely in reshaping the Marxist concept of state include Miliband (1969, 1973), Poulantzas (1973, 1973a, 1975, 1976, 1976a),

Anderson (1974), Therborn (1978), Offe (1975), Block (1987), and Skocpol (1985). Non-Marxist scholars like Krasner (1978), Stepan (1978), Trimbergcr (1978), Hamilton (1982) and Nordlinger (1981) have also examined the question of the state at length. These authors approach the issue from different perspectives and advance a number of definitions of 'relative autonomy' of the state. They are, however, primarily concerned with developed capitalist states and with formulating abstract theory. Their studies pay little attention to peripheral societies, although Skocpol studied countries like China. Alavi, in his seminal work on the post-colonial state, underscored the importance of the concept of relative autonomy in peripheral societies. Kohli (1987) and Bardhan (1984) utilized this concept in their studies on India, but in a different manner.

In this study 'relative autonomy of the state' will be used in the sense of an autonomous role played by the state executives in relation to the social classes of the society, particularly the prominent classes. The definition advanced by Skocpol (1985:9) approximates the situation I will describe as the state-autonomy: 'states conceived as organizations claiming control over territories and people may formulate and pursue goals that are not simply reflective of the demands or interests of social groups, classes, or society.' The degree of state-autonomy can vary from single-issue policies that affect a small group to an overall political-economic project that affects the entire dominant/prominent class or classes. In this study, the relative autonomy of the state is conceived in the latter sense.

#### Social Classes:

It is of no debate that class is one of the most widely used and thoroughly contested concepts in the social sciences. Broadly speaking, those who study class can be categorized into two camps: Weberian and Marxist. Although both these traditions conceptualize class in relational terms, they have substantial differences.

In the Weberian tradition class is seen in relational and not in oppositional terms. It is understood as the summation or some weighted combination of a variety of position effects, e.g., property, income, occupation, authority, education or prestige. Class is both objective and subjective and can be realized in the realm of consumption as well as in the realm of production. In the Weberian schema, production and property relations are important but by no means sole determinants. Weberians take the market as given, ignoring the class struggles that lead to the creation of a specific economic system.

In spite of the fact that classes are of critical importance in Marxist view of the history, neither Marx did himself offer any systematic analysis of the concept of class, nor have Marxist scholars been able to arrive at a consensus on the various aspects of the concept of the class. Nevertheless, some features of 'class' can be gleaned from Marxist analyses. Firstly, classes are defined in relationship to other classes within a given system of production. Secondly, in contrast to Weberian interpretation Marxists insist that the social relations of production form the material basis of classes. Thirdly, class is 'simultaneously a subjective and an objective phenomenon, both something independent of members' consciousness and something expressed in conscious thought and practice' (Therborn, 1983:39).

In this study class is understood as a relational category, i.e. classes are determined by their relationship to one another within a system of social production. Thus social relations of production are the key in understanding class. Here social relations of production primarily refer to (1) the relation to the means or forces of production, and (2) the form of surplus product (value) appropriation. These two elements essentially form the material basis of class and define, very broadly, class interests. Given that class is a historically contingent entity, the specific historical situation of the society need to be considered while contemporary class formations and class relations are discussed.

### Intermediate Classes:

The notion of 'intermediate class' is primarily advanced by Gramsci (1978)<sup>2</sup> and later developed by Kalecki (1972). According to Gramsci, in peripheral countries a broad spectrum of classes lies between the polar classes (i.e. proletariat and the bourgeoisie). Kalecki (1972) suggests that rich peasants, petty traders and businessmen, urban professionals and intellectuals all belong to intermediate class and share some common aspirations. Ahmad (1985:44), who explored the idea of intermediate classes further, defined them as follows:

Small landowners, rich and middle peasants, the merchants of rural and semi-rural townships, small-scale manufacturers, retailers, and so on, are included here among the intermediate and auxiliary classes. The professional petty bourgeoisie has arisen mainly from these classes and shares many of the same interests and attitudes.

Ahmad also argues that these intermediate classes have their own political projects and that they tend to establish their dominance over the state apparatuses, as well as over the proletariat and propertied classes.

### Prominent Classes:

Considering that the concept of class is based on the understanding that in a given society at a given time some classes have a disproportionate share of assets (ranging from income to wealth and social status) than other social classes, there exists a hierarchy among the classes. According to a Marxist interpretation, in a capitalist social formation one social class establishes its control over the means of production and by virtue of its economic position dominates and controls all aspects of social life. This class is referred to as the 'dominant class'. The 'dominant

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<sup>2</sup>Most of Gramsci's essays and notes are written between the year 1916 and 1935. But English translations were not available until the 'Selections from the Prison Notebooks' were published in 1971. For the purpose of this study four volumes of Gramsci's writings were consulted: Selections from the Prison Notebooks (Edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, 1971); Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920) (Selected and edited by Quintin Hoare, translated by John Mathews, 1977); Selections from Political Writings (1921-1926), (Translated and edited by Quintin Hoare, 1978) and Selections from Cultural Writings, (Edited by David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, translated by William Boelhower, 1985).

class' is, therefore, the class that has a disproportionate share of economic and political power and hence much freer access to the state and ability to direct the rules of power game in their favor.

The Marxist notion of class always suggests that in each mode of production there are two fundamental classes - the class of exploited producers and exploiting classes. Thus, in a capitalist society there exists two fundamental classes - the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This oversimplified and bipolar division of social classes may have some relevance to matured and advanced capitalist societies, but it has not proved very useful in understanding peripheral formations. As Roxborough (1982), referring to the Third World in general, noted 'the class structures of the Third World differ from those of the advanced nations in two principal ways: they are more complex, and classes themselves are usually much weaker' (Roxborough, 1982:72). Furthermore, 'not only are the class structures of the underdeveloped nations complex and weak, they are frequently "incomplete" (sic) in the sense that the dominant class, or one fraction of the dominant class, is absent' (ibid, p.73).

The Marxian notion of a dominant class is problematic and misleading in peripheral formation as it implies a direct relationship between the state apparatus and a specific class. In the capitalist periphery, where historical origins and the formation of the state and social classes are different, the relationship of the social classes is more nuanced and mediated by a power bloc which gives a particular shape to the relationship.

It is in this context the term 'dominant class' is avoided and the term 'prominent classes' is used to describe the classes that appear as important and significant in capitalist periphery. Thus the term refers to the class or classes who have gained prominence in politics, with or without the economic leverage commonly associated with dominant class.

Hegemony:

The term 'hegemony' is used in its Gramscian connotations. As defined by Gramsci it is characterized by "the 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; the consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production' (Gramsci, 1971:12). The question of hegemony, however, is not merely material stuff, it is also a politics of moral and intellectual leadership. To assert its hegemony, the ruling class must be able to defend its own corporate interests by universalizing them, by ensuring that these interests can at least apparently "become the interests of the ... subordinate groups" (ibid, p. 181). To this extent hegemony implies consent rather than domination, integration rather than exclusion, and cooptation rather than suppression.

From this point of view a ruling class is hegemonic when it establishes both its material dominance and intellectual and moral leadership over society and when it succeeds in persuading subaltern classes that positions of subordination and superordination are just, proper and legitimate. This requires that the ruling class be prepared to make certain concessions, which, while not fundamental, contribute to the political cooptation of popular sectors and the progressive expansion of the productive process. In this instance, as Gramsci points out, the ruling class "really cause(s) the entire society to move forward, not merely satisfying its own existential requirements, but continuously augmenting its cadres for the conquest of ever new spheres of economic and productive activity" (ibid, p.60). This is the moment of 'historic unity' when the ruling class has established its material, ethical, and political leadership over society and when relationships of superordination and subordination are accepted by all as organic and not contradictory, as legitimate and not exploitative. When such a situation crystallizes, the ruling class achieves what might be called paradigmatic hegemony.

### Ruling Bloc:

The term 'ruling bloc' refers to a bloc of elements selectively drawn from the prominent classes but also including others, such as senior bureaucrats, who have direct access to policy formulation and to the use of state resources. The exact composition of the ruling bloc in a given social formation at a given time varies depending upon the composition of the society. In the case of Bangladesh, for example, in the pre-1975 period the term refers to the political leadership and the members of the higher echelons of the state apparatus. The members of the military became included in the bloc after the coup d'état of 1975.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The interaction between the state and social classes of Bangladesh and its implications on the method of rule at a given point of time have to be understood within the framework of peripheral capitalism in general and colonial/post-colonial peripheral capitalism in particular. This context essentially prompts a number of critical theoretical questions about the state and social classes and the mode of articulating the state power in peripheral societies. Principal among these are:

- 1) What are the general characteristics of the social structure of the peripheral societies in general and colonial/post-colonial societies in particular?
- 2) What is the nature of the state and the relationship between the state and the social classes in the capitalist periphery?
- 3) Given an understanding of the above: (a) why is there an almost universal tendency of the state in peripheral capitalist societies to acquire an authoritarian character? (b) why does the military-bureaucratic oligarchy emerge as the power bloc in the capitalist periphery?

Marxist and neo-Marxist literature on state and class, provide useful insights in probing these questions. The explanatory frameworks of Alavi (1972), Kalecki (1976), Thomas (1984) and Ahmad (1985) help us understand the social structure and the material basis of the state in peripheral societies, while Gramsci's (1971) notion of 'hegemony' and 'organic crisis' provide the



tools to explore the method of rule and understand the crisis that opens up the possibility of military rule in the societies in question.

Capitalism in Peripheral Societies:

The present form of capitalism in peripheral social formations has not developed through an indigenous process of evolution. Essentially, it is the need of the western capitalism to expand the geographical sphere and scale of its accumulation that implanted capitalism in non-western social formations. An interpenetration and hybridization of non-capitalist forms of production, distribution and exchange within capitalist mode gave rise to new modes of production and thus changed the social relations.

The new mode of production, although capitalist in the ultimate analysis, is distinct from that of metropolitan capitalism. The new mode of production, of course, satisfies the basic structural conditions of the capitalist mode of production (CMP):

- "(1) 'Free' labor: (a) free of feudal obligations, (b) dispossessed -- separation of the producer from means of production.
  - (2) Economic 'coercion' of the dispossessed producer.
  - (3) Separation of economic (class) power from political (state) power; creation of bourgeois state and bourgeois law.
  - (4) Generalized commodity production (production primarily for sale; labor power itself a commodity).
  - (5) Extended reproduction of capital and rise in organic composition of capital"
- (Alavi, 1982:179).

But there remain remarkable structural differences between metropolitan capitalism and peripheral capitalism in last three conditions. The separation of economic and political powers in peripheral capitalism does not take the same course as of advanced metropolitan capitalist societies. The structural uniqueness and historical specificity charts a route distinct to peripheral capitalism.

As oppose to the integrated form of generalized commodity production present in metropolitan capitalism, peripheral capitalism experiences a disarticulated form of generalized commodity production. The circuit remains internally incomplete. Realization of this condition

occurs only by virtue of the links with the metropolis. The extended reproduction of capital, a crucial condition of capitalist mode of production, is also fulfilled in a manner different from metropolitan capitalism. The surplus value generated from the peripheral capitalist societies leads to the growth of productive power not in the peripheral societies but in the metropolis. Thus the condition of extended reproduction of capital is met, but without allowing the forces of production of peripheral societies to grow in a pace prevalent in classical capitalism.

These structural characteristics of peripheral capitalist societies not only make it distinctly different from advanced capitalist societies, but also mold the social classes and give rise to a state structure unique to peripheral societies.

#### Social Classes in Peripheral Societies:

The penetration of capitalism from its base in the advanced industrial countries and the integration of the periphery into the world capitalist system have consequential impacts on the social classes and emergence of the state structure in the periphery. The intervention of capitalism from outside, primarily through colonization, caused a massive discontinuity in the processes of indigenous class formation. Older classes were given new shapes and new classes were created.

What is of further significance is that owing to uneven development of capitalism, or in other words, due to the development of peripheral capitalism, a dominant class in the classical capitalist sense of control over the means of production often does not exist to any significant extent (Shanin, 1982:315). The development of a pair of fundamental classes (i.e. the proletariat and the bourgeoisie) remains incomplete. In the absence of powerful polar classes, Gramsci (1978:409) argues, 'a broad spectrum of intermediate classes stretches between the proletariat and capitalism (sic): classes which seek to carry on the policies of their own.'

The complexity of the class structure in peripheral formations that experienced direct colonial rule is much intense. In addition to the general conditions of peripheral societies some

specific dimension is being added to the class structure. The emergence and significance of a social strata whom Alavi (1973, 1982) called the 'salarariat' provides a good example. The expansion of the colonial state necessitates the creation of a social strata primarily dependent upon the state. By virtue of being employed in different state agencies they serve as the intermediary between the state and the (colonized) masses. Among them, those who acquire education find themselves in important positions and play important roles in political arena, during and after the colonial era. Nevertheless, they are indeed part of what Gramsci refers to as 'intermediate classes.'

The classes Gramsci refers to as 'intermediate classes' are completely different from what Marxism posited as 'auxiliary classes'. This is because the intermediate classes as opposed to the auxiliary classes tend to establish their dominance over the state apparatuses, as well as other social classes including the proletariat and propertied classes. The structural significance of these classes is not derived from their location vis-a-vis the dominant mode of production but mostly from their capacity to gain prominence in the political arena. It is indeed true that these classes can be economically dominant at a given point of time. But it is neither a necessary condition nor is it sufficient for them to emerge as the prominent class.

The potential of these classes to capture state power in the post-colonial situation and appear as the ruling class cannot be discounted, rather should be taken seriously despite the fact that no single class has the ability to take over state power. In such circumstances the classes form an alliance and entice support from other social classes. Kalecki (1976) firmly believes that in the absence of a well developed industrial capitalist class allied with big landlord class, the intermediate classes exercise state power to their advantage. He described such a regime as an 'intermediate regime'. In their exercise of state power, Kalecki posits, the intermediate classes develop an alliance with the wealthier sections of the peasantry and takes on an anti-feudal and anti-imperialist posture.

The anti-feudal and anti-imperialist posture does not necessarily mean that the regime would be anti-capitalist as well. Instead, as Alavi (1982:303) pointed out, state policies remain within the framework and logic of peripheral capitalism. It is the 'structural imperative' of the peripheral capitalism that determines the course of the action of the ruling class (Alavi, 1982a).

Having arrived at this point we can identify some of the characteristics of the social structure in a peripheral society:

(i) in spite of the fact that the capitalist mode of production is the dominant mode of production fundamental polar classes remain absent;

(ii) classes that may or may not be economically dominant can and do appear as prominent classes;

(iii) the intermediate classes tend to dominate other social classes including proletariat and propertied classes;

(iv) intermediate classes can capture the state power.

The last two characteristics mentioned above raise questions regarding the nature of the state and method of rule in peripheral societies. To begin with we should sketch some of the general characteristics of peripheral capitalist states.

#### States in Peripheral Societies:

The states in capitalist periphery were essentially imported entities. Their origins are either colonial, or where they are not (for example, Thailand, China, Russia or Turkey) they are to be found in the conscious attempt to modernize on a European model. Notwithstanding the fact that these states have their own local twist, "these states seemed to have been 'parachuted' by colonial rule and then taken over, lock, stock, and barrel, i.e. in their territorial claims, administration, and legal structures, by 'independence movements'" (Shanin, 1982:315). Given the fact that the states have not evolved organically through internal class struggle, but were injected into these contexts, a disjuncture between the state and the class remain a fundamental

feature. The state, in such circumstances, becomes 'overdeveloped' in relation to civil society (Alavi, 1972). This is one of the basic characteristics of the peripheral states that makes it different from the advanced capitalist state. The second structural feature is the potential autonomy of the state in relation to the dominant classes: that is to say, the state in peripheral societies acquires a life of its own, separated from civil society and freed from direct control of any class, and acts in the interests of the state itself.

#### Potential Autonomy of the State:

In order to explore the notion of relative autonomy of the state one must recapitulate Marxist and neo-Marxist theories of state. The primary view of the state reflected in the general theory of politics in Marx's writings (and especially in the elliptical pronouncements in the 'Communist Manifesto'), asserts that the form and functions of the state reflect and are largely determined by the economic base of the society. Given the fact that, in the capitalist mode of production, the ownership of material and mental production lies with the bourgeoisie, the state becomes the repressive machinery of the bourgeoisie<sup>3</sup>.

Marx (1973<sup>4</sup>), however, maintained that there are exceptions, one example being Louis Bonaparte's regime (1852-1870). In a special historical situation where no class had enough power to rule through the state, the state did not function as the direct instrument of any class. Engels holds the same opinion: in all but exceptional situations, the state acts in a fairly uncomplicated way as the direct spokesman and protector of the exploiting class. The state,

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<sup>3</sup>Marx, in his Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (Marx, 1968:182) writes, 'legal relations as well as forms of the state are to be grasped neither from themselves nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but rather have their roots in their material conditions of life. ... The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of the society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general.'

<sup>4</sup>The essay referred to here (i.e. 'the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte') was written and published in 1852. Here I have used the version reprinted in a collection of Marx's political writings edited and introduced by David Fernbach.

Engels writes, is 'normally the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which by its means becomes also the politically dominant class and so acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class' (Engels, 1975:231)<sup>5</sup>. Yet, Engels notes, 'exceptional periods occur when the warring classes are so nearly equal in forces that the state power, as apparent mediator, acquires for the moment a certain independence in relation to both' (Engels, 1975:231).

Marxists and neo-Marxists later further developed the concept of the relative autonomy of the state. Instead of viewing the autonomy as an exceptional situation or aberration, a number of scholars have suggested that the state can possess relative autonomy in a normal situation, and that the autonomy is not just a transitional phenomena as is hinted by Marx and Engels. Referring to the tensions and conflicts that arise between the capitalist state and the bourgeoisie, even on long-term basis, Marxist authors insist that an antagonistic relationship can and does exist between the bourgeoisie and the state. In making this claim, they quite explicitly draw a firm conceptual distinction between power as embodied in the state and power originating in social classes.

Antonio Gramsci first pointed to the distinction between class-power and state-power. He understood the state in capitalist societies as being essential to maintaining the dominance of the bourgeoisie, securing its long-term interests and unification. The state, according to Gramsci, embodies two modalities of class domination; the use of force and also the exercise of 'hegemony', that is the active consent of the ruled. Here 'hegemony' is not simply a matter of installing 'false consciousness'; rather it requires concessions to popular interests and an appeal to 'national' objectives which apparently transcend class interests. 'Hegemony, in Gramscian terms, meant the ideological predominance of bourgeois values and norms over the subordinate

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<sup>5</sup>Engels' 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State' was first published in 1884. Here I have used the edition edited and introduced by Eleanor Burke Leacock published in 1975.

classes' (Carnoy, 1984:66). From this interpretation, the question of state becomes a primary one in understanding capitalist society. According to Gramsci (1971),

... the State is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains the domination, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules.'

What is necessary for our understanding here is that Gramsci does not view the state as merely the coercive machinery of the bourgeoisie. Gramsci contends that, although the ultimate aim of the state is to ensure the domination of the bourgeoisie, it tends to incorporate the interests of all the classes and in doing so it sometimes transcends class interests.

The distinction between the state power the class power and the relative autonomy of the state was further emphasized by Miliband (1973:88):

One of the main reasons for stressing the notion of the relative autonomy of the state is that there is a basic distinction to be made between class power and state power, and that the analysis of the meaning and implications of that notion of relative autonomy must indeed focus on the forces which causes it to be greater or less, the circumstances in which is exercised, and so on,. The blurring of the distinction between class power and state power .. makes any such analysis impossible. (emphasis added)

It is indeed true that the notion of the relative autonomy of the state discussed so far is primarily conceived in the context of the advanced capitalist states, but its importance in understanding the peripheral capitalist state is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it emphasizes the need for a distinction between the state power and the class power. Secondly, it recognizes that the state do act on its own in many different situations. The state in peripheral societies is not an epiphenomenal entity, rather it is a factor of great influence and has immense determinative capacity in terms of shaping and reshaping the society. Such capabilities at times can be used for the interests of the state itself as has happened, according to Alavi, in the case of Pakistan. The question then is, what are the sources of the autonomy of the peripheral state?

### Sources of State Autonomy:

The specific conditions for autonomy of the state is determined by the historical specificity and structural uniqueness of a given country. However, we can examine some general features of the peripheral societies that fosters its growth. Alavi (1973, 1982), based upon his reading of the history of Pakistan, points to three sources of state autonomy in post-colonial societies: absence of a powerful bourgeois class; inheritance of the 'overdeveloped state'; and the centrality of the state in economy and society. Alavi contends that, in post-colonial societies, no single class has the capacity to emerge as the dominant class and the state frees itself from the influence of any single class. The second source of such autonomy is the 'overdeveloped' state structure inherited from the colonial past. Alavi argues that 'at the time of independence the post-colonial society inherits that overdeveloped apparatus of state and its institutionalized practices through which the operations of indigenous social classes are regulated and controlled', and that the post-colonial state is 'equipped with a powerful bureaucratic-military apparatus' (Alavi, 1973:147). Alavi considers the central role of the state in the economy as the 'material base' of its autonomy. The principal argument of Alavi is that the underdevelopment of peripheral societies necessitates that the state be an interventionist state. This bestows upon the state ample opportunity to appropriate economic surplus and deploy these surpluses in bureaucratically directed activities, which provides the basis of an autonomous role for the executive.

Petras (1982:416) delineated this aspect further. According to Petras, the main features of peripheral states are as follows: 1) extensive and prolonged intervention in the economy; 2) growing public sector activity; 3) expanding and deepening of external ties; 4) the creation and, in varying degrees, elaboration of planning institutes and mechanisms; and 5) the promotion of industrialization. All of these are indeed intended to establish the firm grip of the state on



economic surplus, which can be utilized for the perpetuation of the dominant mode of production (i.e. capitalism).

Thomas (1984:67-81) essentially agrees with Alavi's interpretation, but feels that some other factors should be included. According to Thomas there are six sources of autonomy of peripheral state. These are:

- 1) three consequential disjunctures prevalent in peripheral societies -- the nonequivalence of state power and the power of the ruling classes, the lack of identity between political and class relations, and separation between political and class relations;
- 2) fractionalization within the dominant economic interests;
- 3) formation and rapid growth of the bureaucracy that leads to the dominance of the executive within the state structure;
- 4) the 'political ineptitude' of the capitalist class;
- 5) the mode of insertion of the state into the system of material production and reproduction and 'economic functions' to be performed;
- 6) absence of the tradition of 'separation of power' among the judicial, executive and parliamentary organs of the state.

Taken together, these conditions point to one critical aspect much more strongly than Alavi did. That is the centrality of the state, not only in terms of its economic activity (measured by state's share of GNP, employment, national investment, consumption, savings etc. etc.) but beyond that to those functions that are essential to the economic process (such as determining and upholding the legal and statutory forms necessary for commodity exchange, stabilizing the growth of national product, determining the choice of development model etc. etc.). It is this aspect of the centrality of the state that contributes more to its relative autonomy.

There is another aspect of the centrality of the state that deserves special attention. That is the utilization of the state as an agency of hegemony/ domination. It is nothing new to say that the capitalist state produces and reproduces capitalist social relations not only at the economic level but also at the political and ideological level. Gramsci (1971:258) quite aptly noted that the capitalist state is the 'organizer of the consent' in the bourgeois hegemonic system. But in case of peripheral societies, as I have mentioned before, they lack a hegemonic bourgeoisie. In such circumstances, the state is utilized by the ruling classes, whoever they may be, as the agency of hegemony/domination. A new ideology/value system, assumed to be superior to all others, is imposed through it. That accords the state apparatuses a newer significance and situates it in a position relatively autonomous in relation to the ruling classes.

There is another factor which is instrumental in according autonomy to the state vis-a-vis the dominant classes, i.e; the availability of foreign capital. Stallings (1985:261) argues that, 'in certain types of Third World countries, it may be possible for the state to obtain a significant amount of autonomy from the domestic ruling class by relying on foreign capital.' She insists that 'in practice, one kind of foreign capital has been especially important - private bank loans'. In certain situations foreign resources coming from international financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank provides ample opportunity to a given state to act in opposition to the immediate interests of the economically dominant classes. Occasionally, peripheral countries are compelled to accept conditions attached to loans, aid and grants that may adversely affect the economically dominant classes in the short-term. A state relying on external resources can and indeed does act as a relatively autonomous entity.

In sum, there are four major factors conducive to state autonomy in peripheral formations. These are: 1) absence of a single dominant class; 2) the centrality of the state in the

economy as well as in society; 3) perpetuation of the capitalist mode of production<sup>6</sup>, and 4) dependence on external resources or resources owned by the state (e.g., oil).

The foregoing discussion on peripheral societies and the states introduces us to some general characteristics of class structure and the peripheral state. The first of these is that due to the historical specificities of capitalist development in peripheral societies the class structure is complex: there is a multiplicity of classes and heterogeneity of ruling classes. Second, due to the absence of fundamental polar classes, intermediate classes appear as prominent classes, play significant roles on political and ideological plane and elevate themselves to the position of 'ruling class'. Third, the state in peripheral society is qualitatively different from the state in advanced capitalist societies and 'overdeveloped' in relation to the social classes. Fourth, the state occupies a central position in the economy and society. Finally, due to the disjuncture between the social classes and the state and the centrality of the state, the state has the potential of being autonomous. Among these points the fourth one, the centrality of the state needs some further elaboration, for it has direct relevance to the study of the method of rule.

Centrality of the State  
Strengths and Weaknesses:

The notion of the 'centrality of the state' quite appropriately presupposes that the state in peripheral societies in general and post-colonial societies in particular is highly centralized, overbearing, restrictive and predatory. The post-colonial state is also noted for its attempt at social penetration. As an interventionist state it strives to restrict the social life of citizens by using draconian as well as petty means to assure its dominance. It also strives to exercise total control over all economic activities, using many different means. In the political sphere, it is the

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<sup>6</sup>Despite differences on some issues, there is a consensus among scholars that the main objective of the state in peripheral capitalist societies is to preserve the existing capitalist relations and to also to preserve, as Alavi (1973:148 ) puts it, 'the social order based on the institution of private property.' Saul (1983:457-474), insists that the main objective of the post-colonial state is to create a capitalist hegemony.

most intolerant to open public discourse and dissenting views. This description definitely conveys a picture that the post-colonial state is strong. Furthermore, if one uses the four parameters advanced by Migdal (1988:4) in determining the strength of state, that is 'the capacities to penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in determined ways' (emphasis in original), the conclusion would be the same. Because, the capacity of the state to regulate social relationship, for example, is immense. As a matter of fact, the peripheral state is an instrument of class creation. By virtue of its command over the internal and external resources and access to external resources, the state gains enough strength to produce, transform, even eliminate social classes (Thomas, 1974:87, Farhi, 1985:52).

In spite of this strong posture, the post-colonial peripheral state is also weak and subject to permanent crises. There are two sources of weakness: political and economic. It is continually beset by political instability, regional disintegration and restricted effectiveness of government resources. The political instability of peripheral states is manifested through frequent changes in state forms, in the constitution, and in the interchangeability of political institutions and personnel. With particular interests being realized via the state, the growth of a state clientele and of corruption leads to its becoming the private preserve and instrument of ever-changing partial interests, and this political instability often takes the form of a permanent political crisis (Ziemann and Lanzendorfer, 1977). The economic weakness of the peripheral state arises from the mode of its integration with the world capitalist system. As we all because the accumulation based on realization of surplus value generated from the raw materials and by the labor powers of periphery primarily accrues to the advanced industrial countries, the peripheral countries faces a shortage of investment funds. The result is that they cannot produce what they need for themselves and therefore have to import both commodities and capital. This in turn means that the price inflation is passed back to them whenever they buy indispensable food, machinery and oil. In order to buy imports and pay other rising costs, the peripheral state must find funds in the

situation of low levels of local accumulation, and hence runs into a variant of 'fiscal crisis of the state'. This forces the peripheral state to borrow from abroad -- from governments, international agencies, private banks. This eventually leads to a 'debt trap'. Additionally, what surplus can be realized locally is used to maintain the dominant class and the state apparatuses. All this adds up to a condition of permanent economic crisis. Thus the states in most peripheral societies are both weak and strong and above all they are in permanent crises.

Having delineated the principal characteristics of the social structure and the state in peripheral societies, we can now address the third set of questions involving methods of rule in capitalist periphery: a) why is there an almost universal tendency of the state in peripheral capitalist societies to acquire an authoritarian character? (b) why does the military-bureaucratic oligarchy emerge as the power bloc in the capitalist periphery?

#### Methods of Rule; The Material Basis:

Given the fact that the intermediate classes are the prominent classes in peripheral societies and that they tend to dominate other social classes, capturing state power becomes their ultimate goal. The power to dominate other social classes is inextricably tied to the control of the state. Capturing the state is the best and perhaps exclusive means for becoming the ruling class. But no single class is powerful enough to capture the state power by itself. In such circumstances, it is very common that the intermediate classes form an alliance against the colonial rulers. In their quest for state power they evolve a counter-hegemonic nationalist ideology and bring together other social classes. But the hegemony of the intermediate classes that arises out of their nationalist project is limited to the political and ideological leadership and lacks an adequate material basis. Thus it remains incomplete and fragile. Nevertheless, this fragile and incomplete hegemony does not preclude them from capturing state power. That is why it is not very uncommon to find the intermediate classes as ruling class in post-colonial societies.

When the intermediate classes appear as the ruling class in a peripheral society their methods of rule differ dramatically from that of bourgeoisie in an advanced capitalist society. The former rely more on the state apparatuses than the latter because of the fact that the intermediate classes emerge as the ruling class not by virtue of their class-power, but rather because they succeeded in capturing state-power. The state they capture has some traits that plays influential role in determining the methods of rule. The state in peripheral societies, as we have seen, is interventionist, overbearing, centralized, predatory, and overdeveloped in relation to the social structure and is potentially autonomous. Hence, we can see a paradoxical situation here: the classes that apparently capture the state apparatuses are less powerful than the apparatuses themselves. Additionally the latter have the potential to free itself from the dictates of the former. What happens then is on the one hand a cooperation between the ruling classes and the state apparatuses, while on the other hand there remains a continual confrontation; confrontation between the regime and the bureaucracy: one tries to control the other. But in the long-run there is a progressive attenuation of power of the ruling class because of their reliance on the state apparatuses to rule the masses and the augmentation of the power of the bureaucracy to control resources. The expansion of the bureaucracy's control over the resources takes place through the expansion of the state itself.

In post-colonial societies there is a tendency to favor a growth of the state through nationalization and extended intervention of the state in the economy. These actions are sometimes rationalized on 'socialist' principles, at other times said to be 'nonideological', the result of 'pragmatic' necessity. Whatever may be the rationale behind the enhanced role of the state, it reinforces the capacity of the state to shape and reshape the social structure, provides the material basis of relative autonomy and makes the ruling class further dependent upon the state apparatuses.

There is another factor that contributes to the attenuation of power of the ruling class, that is the heterogeneity of the ruling class. It is a heterogeneous entity: an alliance. The alliance, by virtue of being an alliance, consists of different interests which often come into conflict. The conflict of interests between the components of the alliance gradually plunge them in internal feuds and let the state appear as the mediator of their conflict, which in turn further strengthens the state's relative autonomy and empowers the state apparatuses to contain the conflict within the power-bloc. Which means that the power of the executives enhances over the period of time.

The enhanced role of the state and the gradual preeminence of the executive by itself does not mean there will be a rise of an authoritarian state and military rule, though these are the material bases upon which the specific method of rule rests. In other words, these are essentially the first steps. The probability of the rise of an authoritarian state depends on the success/failure of the ruling class to maintain their 'authority' and contain the political/economic crises associated with peripheral societies.

#### Crisis of Authority & Authoritarianism:

There are at least two factors that bring the intermediate classes to power: firstly, the absence of powerful polar classes; secondly, their success in evolving a counter-hegemonic ideology. But, by the time the alliance of the intermediate classes emerges as the ruling class their hegemony over other social classes faces serious rupture for several reasons. Firstly, the fundamental basis of the ideological hegemony of the intermediate classes -- nationalism -- lose much of its immediate relevance. Secondly, the alliance plunges into internal conflict and contradiction and the members of the alliance begin to vie for further power. Thirdly, as we know the organizing consent of the subordinate masses (i.e. hegemony) is based on the ability of a social group to represent the universal interests of whole society. Representing universal interests cannot be achieved by ideological inculcation but by the realization of the interests of the subordinate masses 'concretely' (Gramsci, 1971:182). That is where the ruling class begin to

falter. Thus emerges the crisis of hegemony. Hegemonic crisis of the ruling class is also a 'crisis of authority'. Due to its inability to obtain the consent of the broad masses the ruling class fails in its major political undertaking: perpetuation of the dominant mode of production. This, needless to say, invokes economic crisis. This is the situation that Gramsci called an 'organic crisis', a conflict between the represented and the representative, a rift between the popular masses and the ruling class.

As the ability of the ruling class to organize the consent of the masses weakens, the coercive elements inherent in a hegemonic system are gradually laid bare through the curtailment of fundamental human rights, legislation and enactment of repressive laws, and if necessary through introduction of a one-party system. The use of police-administrative restraints on freedom, and administrative manipulation of the electoral and legal process and constitutionality in general becomes commonplace. The political apparatuses are subsumed by the coercive apparatuses. A radical change in the relationship between the ideological state apparatuses and the repressive apparatuses marked by a resurgence of organized physical repression takes place. Those who have monopoly over coercion assume a preeminent position. Thus emerges an authoritarian state.

#### Economic and Political Crises & Authoritarianism:

Owing to the general nature of peripheral capitalism the peripheral society and the state is beset by permanent crises, both economic and political. A variant of the 'fiscal crisis of the state' is rampant in these social formations and the state is always dependent upon the metropolitan countries and the international agencies for support. Yet there is tendency on the part of the ruling intermediate classes in peripheral societies to take a socialist posture. Though their policies do not challenge the larger framework of capital-labor relations and ultimately promote a mixed economy, they sometimes appear to be anticapitalist. This endeavor commonly

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referred to as 'non-capitalist path of development' (Ulanovsky, 1969, 1974; Thomas, 1974, 1978; Slovo, 1974). It attempts to frustrate the development of a large fledgling bourgeoisie, but the conditions of the capitalism remains in place and state policies favor the intermediate classes in becoming capitalist class. The pursuance of such policies accentuate both political and economic crises.

The socialist posture subjects the state to the pressure of international capitalism and different varieties of sanctions -- overt and covert. This, in consonance with the structural economic crises of peripheral states, serve as a source of continuous economic crisis. The pursuance of such policies also impede the development of the society's productive forces, a necessary condition for the perpetuation of a capitalist economy.

It also serves as the source of political crisis because the ideology of the 'non-capitalist path of development' strips off the class content from the so-called socialism the intermediate classes pursue. By doing so they clearly distance themselves from the radical left and are subject to the opposition of the latter while their socialist posture place them in a position antagonistic to the right.

A combination of these crises threatens the fundamental undertaking of the ruling class: perpetuation of the dominant mode of production and maintaining the social order necessary for social reproduction. In the face of these crises the ruling class opts for further coercion. Thus the other source of authoritarianism lies in the economic and political crises. This leads us to the final crucial question: why does the military-bureaucratic oligarchy emerge as the power bloc in capitalist periphery?

#### Military-Bureaucratic Oligarchy as Power Bloc & Military Rule:

It is indeed true that the preeminence of repressive apparatuses and rise of authoritarian state do not necessarily mean that a military-bureaucratic oligarchy will overtly seize power and

that the mode of articulating state power will be military rule. States can resort to coercive measures without stripping off their civilian facade. As a matter of fact, in the event of crisis that would be the preferred solution of the prominent classes. Yet we notice that in a large number of peripheral societies military rule has become the norm rather than exception.

The likelihood of military rule in a given country at a given point in time is predicated by the extent and intensity of the crises I have referred to earlier. If authoritarianism fails to provide a solution to the crises faced by the ruling class and enhance the ability of the state to promote stable and expanded reproduction, then it is highly probable that the military will overtly seize state power. The military comes into action 'publicly' only when reorganization of the power-bloc and economy becomes necessary to maintain the dominant mode of production. The need for reorganization of 'vast state bureaucracies', 'organs of political order, i.e. political parties, trade union and other civil organizations' (Gramsci, 1971:221) and capitalist economy as a whole prompt the promulgation of martial law.

### **Method**

Studies that venture to see the past from the vantage point of the present can be of two types: 'some present fresh evidence; others make arguments that urge the readers to see old problems in new light' (Skocpol, 1979:xi). This study attempts to be one of the latter kind. The principal objective of the study is to analyze the causes of military intervention in Bangladesh. The basic contention of this study is that the rise of a military-bureaucratic oligarchy to power is an outcome of a conflict between a somewhat strong autonomous state and a weak and fragile civil society. It is also posited that the composition of the power-bloc (i.e. a loose alliance of intermediate classes led by a petty-bourgeoisie instead of a single dominant class subordinating other social classes) in the early days of independent Bangladesh constitutes a major factor in the emergence of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy as the principal component of the power-

bloc. It was this composition of the ruling bloc that created a crisis of authority and hence paved the way for military rule.

The primary task of this study is, therefore, to analyze the class configuration of Bangladesh society, the nature and structure of the Bangladesh state, and their mode of interactions. All of these inevitably draw us to the social history of Bangladesh. The method employed throughout the dissertation is historical, descriptive, and analytical. The problem of the intervention of the military in Bangladesh politics is viewed here in its totality, with two principal, closely-connected elements: the underlying structural causes and conjunctural events.

Given that this study focuses on the interactions between the state and classes, especially the intermediate classes in Bangladesh, a necessary and useful place to begin is with an investigation of the processes of class formation and class relations. The emergence of the intermediate classes as the prominent classes in the social arena, the principal contenders for state power and the ruling power-bloc, should be highlighted. Since it has been argued that the position of a military-bureaucratic oligarchy within the state structure is determined by the state-formation processes, it is also necessary to explore how the Bangladesh state came into being. Following the analysis of state and class formation processes, the mode of articulation of power of the ruling-bloc in the post-independence period and the gradual erosion of the ruling bloc's hegemony facilitating the preeminence of coercive apparatuses of the state will be explored. In addition, the state-policies reflecting the autonomy of the state and the implications of state autonomy will be examined.

This study is based primarily on archival research using primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of information are government publications, documents, newspapers, military periodicals, UN documents, and IMF and World Bank Reports. Books, articles, papers and other publications are used as secondary sources. In addition to these primary and secondary sources,

a series of interviews were conducted with select military personnel, political leaders, government officials, intellectuals and journalists.

#### **Outline of the Dissertation**

This dissertation consists of eight chapters. The second chapter presents a brief review of literature relevant to this study. The present class composition of Bangladesh society is a historical legacy of almost two centuries and was shaped by two consecutive colonial dominations (British and Pakistani). Hence, it is essential that an analysis of class formation and class relations in Bangladesh begins with the account of these colonial eras. Keeping this in view, the third chapter traces the genesis of the intermediate classes in the region that is now Bangladesh in first colonial-era (British colonial domination, 1757-1947). The fourth chapter focuses on the emergence of intermediate classes as prominent political actors and their relationship with the colonial state under the second colonial domination (1947-1971). The fifth chapter examines the nature of the Bangladesh state during the period 1972-1975. The main objective of this chapter is to find the location of the state within the class-matrix of Bangladesh society as well as in the global context. The sixth chapter analyzes how and why the consensual basis of the Bangladesh state faced a serious rupture and the ruling-bloc moved towards forcible subjugation of the other classes of society. The seventh chapter contains an analysis of the nature and structure of the state during the period of 1975-1981. This chapter will demonstrate the changes that military rule brought about in the power-bloc and state apparatus. In the final chapter, the conclusions of the study and possible theoretical contribution to the general literature are presented.

## CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of literature on the intervention of the military in the politics of Bangladesh. It should, however, be borne in mind that the chapter does not provide a complete survey of these bodies of writing. What I shall do in this chapter, instead, is summarize the main themes relevant to the present study and point to some of the strengths and weaknesses of these studies.

As I have noted before, there is a paucity of literature regarding the causes of, and conditions for, military intervention in Bangladesh politics. Nonetheless, a scrutiny of the literature reveals two broad, yet distinct, strands: corporatist and structuralist. In the first are included those studies that refer to military factors as the principal reasons for military intervention, with political elements as the secondary ones. The second strand, very weak to date, points to political and social factors as the paramount reasons for military's rise to power. Not only is the former trend the predominant one; studies specifically addressing the issue of military intervention have also come from this trend, thus making it more visible and influential. The latter trend is represented by a small number of authors, who primarily address the issue as a peripheral one, mostly as a passing reference in their analysis of the contemporary political situation. The corporatists strand is represented by authors like Ahamed (1988), Khan (1981, 1984), Jahan (1980), Franda (1982), Maniruzzman (1975a, 1975b) and Lifschultz (1979). The structuralist interpretation can be gleaned from the works of Umar (1989), Jahangir (1986) and Lindquist (1977). The works of Uzzaman (1987, 1991) and Bertocci (1982) can be placed somewhere in the middle of the continuum.

### **Corporatist Interpretation of Military Intervention:**

The prominent characteristic of the studies pertaining to the corporatist strand is, as noted previously, their a priori assumption that military intervention is an abrupt reaction to the failure of the civilian regime. Furthermore, these studies have put more emphasis on the interests, outlooks, or ideologies of particular actors in military coups d'etat, than on the structural factors that created conditions conducive to military intervention. The explanations presented in the works of the authors belonging to the corporatist strand do not ignore the political factors, but rather relegate them to secondary status. They recognize the fact that there is a close relationship between politics and military intervention, yet they define that relationship narrowly and fail to comprehend its deep structural aspects. The work of Ahamed (1988) is a prime example of this weakness. He tacitly accepts that the phenomenon of military intervention has its roots entrenched in the system of Bangladesh politics when he posits that 'systemic weaknesses' of Bangladesh society has had a key role in bringing the military to power. But to him the 'systemic weaknesses' are the absence of consensus among the politically relevant sections of the population regarding the nature of political power, mode of its exercise, the procedure for transferring it and the nature of incumbents. The flaw persists as he even fails to draw the direct relationship between the 'systemic weakness' he is referring to and military intervention. His study falls short of answering the question as to why such weaknesses arises in the first place and, secondly, why this should require the military to seize state power. Uzzaman (1987) and Bertocci (1982) also refer to some important aspects of structural problems. Uzzaman asserts that the military intervened in Bangladesh politics to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie, while Bertocci insists that it was the lack of political institutionalization and the failure of the 'intermediate regime' that brought the military to power. But these factors are cited as subsidiary

to other factors which are primarily connected to the nature of the military. This is equally true for the works of Ahamed (1988), Khan (1981, 1984), Uzzaman (1987), Jahan (1980), Franda (1982), Maniruzzman (1975a, 1975b) and Lifschultz (1979).

Notwithstanding their differences, these analysts have ascribed some common factors to the rise of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy to power. These factors include, the nature of the military, perceived threats to the corporate interests of the military, the failure of civilian government, cleavages in the political parties and a lack of political institutionalization. Their interpretation of the Bangladesh situation largely draws on the theories on military intervention advanced from the late 1950s through the mid 1970s.

The literature on military intervention, which grew together with the proliferation of military governments in developing countries in that period, primarily emphasized the unique characteristics of the military establishment as the prime cause of military intervention. However, some authors, for example Huntington (1968), contend that military explanations are not sufficient to explain the propensity of military coups d'état. Nonetheless, there is a predominant tendency to overemphasize the organizational aspect of the military.

Three sub-factors related to military establishment - the nature of the military, the corporate interests of the military, and the motives of coup-makers - are heavily emphasized by Ahamed, Khan, Franda and Maniruzzaman.

#### Nature of Military:

Regarding the nature of the Bangladesh military, Ahamed and Khan operate with the assumption that the colonial legacy of the British and Indian armies - both in terms of institutional framework and ethos - imparted the idea that the military is an apolitical institution which functions as the guardian of society. And the military was quite content with that

understanding<sup>1</sup> However, the gradual politicization process (the army's participation in the liberation struggle in 1971, its assistance to the civilian administration during the Mujib regime, and the deteriorating economic conditions of the country) made them aware of their power. Eventually, the military exerted that power and took over.

The most serious flaw in this kind of interpretation remains the basic assumption that the military is an apolitical organization and that it operates beyond the purview of politics. Furthermore, this line of argument disregards the fact that the military is an arm of the state. These weaknesses, however, has been inherited by Ahamed and Khan from the general line of arguments they followed from the works of Pauker (1959), Pye (1962), Janowitz (1964), and Feit (1968). They have advanced the idea that military organization can be treated as an independent variable.

#### Corporate Interest of Military:

The corporate interests of the military, in terms of demand for larger budgetary support, autonomy in managing their internal affairs, safeguarding of their interests in the face of encroachment from rival institutions, and the continuity and strengthening of the institution, have been identified by Ahamed and Khan as another factor in military coups d'etat. Ahamed (1988:49) writes, 'the corporate interests of the military have always been the chief motivating factor for intervention' (emphasis added). According to him, the purposive neglect of the military by the Mujib-regime (reflected through a decline in military spending and the rise of a parallel para-military organization<sup>2</sup>) 'made the military conscious of their corporate interests' (Ahamed, 1988:141). This consciousness was further increased in subsequent years and, whenever the

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<sup>1</sup>Ahamed (1988:49) claims that the Bangladesh military inherited the anti-political orientation of their predecessor and maintained it.

<sup>2</sup>The Awami League Government had established a para-military force named Jatiyo Rakhi Bahini (National Security Force) in 1973. The JRB was predominantly composed of freedom fighters loyal to AL.



military perceived that their interests were at stake, they intervened in politics. Khan (1984:133), referring to the coup d'etat of August 15, 1975, remarks that 'the most important factor that led to the coup was the distrust and unhappiness among young officers of the Bangladesh Army' (emphasis added).

In attributing corporate interest as a prominent factor in the coup, Khan and Ahamed follow the arguments of Finer (1962), Nordlinger (1970, 1977), Dowse (1969), and Gutteridge (1962). It should be noted here, however, that coups can not be attributed to corporate interests alone. Gutteridge also acknowledges this. According to him, civil discontent is a precondition for a military coup d'etat. In his view, a coup is most likely to take place when military grievances and serious civil discontent converge or coincide (Gutteridge, 1975:2-3). Nonetheless, these analysts cite a number of cases where the military intervened in politics when they perceived that their corporate interests were at stake. The series of military interventions that took place between 1912 and 1964 in Peru, the overthrow of the Egyptian monarchy in 1952, the overthrow of Brazil's President Goulart in 1964 and the overthrow of President Nkrumah of Ghana have been cited as examples.

Although the findings of cross-national studies in recent years have clearly put a question mark on the validity of any claim that there exists a correlation between defense expenditures and military intervention<sup>3</sup>, Ahamed claims that a gradual reduction of defense expenditures by the Mujib-regime constituted a major cause of the coup d'etat of 1975 in Bangladesh. Had that been a prime cause, subsequent regimes, especially the Zia-regime, should not have faced any opposition from the military, as they increased the budgetary allocation for the defense forces.

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<sup>3</sup>Vanhanen (1982), for example, in a study of six countries (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Burma, Sri Lanka and Nepal) concludes that 'a high level of military expenditure is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition of military coups' (Vanhanen, 1982:100). This finding runs counter to the one asserted by Putnam (1967). According to Putnam, military expenditure (as a percentage of GNP) has a strong correlation with military intervention.

But instead, the Zia-regime was the most coup-prone regime. It experienced at least 26 abortive coups in only five years.

Ahamed mentions two other factors perceived by the military as a threat to their corporate interest prior to the August 1975 coup. These are: the establishments of the Jatiyo Rakhhi Bahini (National Security Force) and the regime's inclination towards the members of military who took an active part in the liberation war. Khan holds the same opinion. Not only did both these causes cease to exist after August 1975, but the situation was almost reversed. Yet, the interventionist trend of the military continued. This obviously raises doubts as to whether these apparent factors were genuine causes or were used as causes to legitimize the actions of military.

#### Personal Motives of Coup-Makers:

Both Franda (1982) and Maniruzzaman (1975a, 1975b) rely heavily on the hypothesis that the personal motives of coup makers are important factors. Referring to the 1975 coup, Franda (1982:50) writes, 'The Bangladesh coup provides a classic example of the way in which the most significant changes in government can be brought about by a very small group of people.' According to Franda, it was disgruntled young majors in the military who conspired the 1975 coup. Maniruzzaman concurs with this interpretation. According to both writers, one of the prominent coup-makers of the August 1975 coup, Major Sharful Islam Dalim, plotted the coup for personal vengeance.

The theoretical ground for their general conclusion that the personal motives of coup-makers can be the precipitating factor in coups d'etat is essentially derived from Lieuwen (1964), Finer (1962), and Decalo (1976), who feel that the personal motives of coup-makers are important factors and need to be taken into account.<sup>4</sup> Finer (1962), for example, asserts that in

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<sup>4</sup>While explaining the causes of military intervention in Latin American countries Lieuwen (1960) touched upon some other factors as well. The factors emphasized by him include the decadence of the oligarchy, the political immaturity of groups aspiring for power and lack of

addition to the organizational capacity and corporate interests of the military, the most common motives inducing the military to intervene were that of individual self-interest. Decalo (1976:239-40), in the context of African countries, comments that the motives of 'ambitious or discontented officers, who have a great deal of freedom and scope for action in fragmented, unstructured and unstable political system', constitute a more important variable than any other. Decalo also insists that personal interests of the military such as the desire for promotion, political ambition and fear of dismissal were also important motivating factors in a significant number of coups. The theory of personal motives may have some relevance to some other countries, especially to those countries which have had a single coup attempt, but the theory in general is not adequate to explain repeated military coups d'etat. The case of Bangladesh, which experienced a number of coups within a short period of time, cannot be explained with such a limited determinant. If personal vengeance on the part of a few military officers was the cause of the coup d'etat of August 15, 1975, the recurrent coups d'etat in the following years should not have taken place, especially after the massive restructuring of the military that was undertaken by Ziaur Rahman. Furthermore, it is notable that the coup-makers of one coup or their followers made several later attempts after failing in their initial bid. For example, the engineers of the August 15 coup, who lost their ground on November 3, 1975, staged an abortive coup d'etat on April 20, 1976 (Zaman: 1984:98). The followers of the original planners of the November 7, 1975 coup made several attempts to regain power, the most important of which were 30 September and October 2, 1977 coups d'etat. These examples clearly indicate that the personal motives theory is inadequate to reveal the hidden cause of military interventionism in Bangladesh. Instead, a definite political goal prompted the coups staged over the years.

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other cohesive competing forces.

Conspiracy against the Regime:

Lifschultz (1979), in his detailed description of two of the coups of 1975 -- the August 15 coup and the November 7 coup -- refers to a number of issues that have not been discussed or emphasized by other analysts. According to him, the August coup was the outcome of a year-long conspiracy hatched by a number of right wing Awami league leaders and some military officers, with the knowledge of the CIA<sup>5</sup>. Rise of repatriated civil and military bureaucrats as well as political figures commonly known as 'pro-American' supports Lifschultz's contention. Furthermore, the August coup is indeed the turning point in the development of warm Bangladesh-US relations. Yet this theory lacks conclusive evidence. The November 7 coup, which was masterminded by a left-wing political party, has been described by Lifschultz as a 'revolution', for it was intended to change the social structure of the society. Ahamed shares the same opinion. According to Ahamed (1988:80),

"...it was a revolution though pre-mature and shortlived, with all the characteristics of a revolution: 'entirely new story, a story never known or told before' about the proposed organizational framework of the armed forces in Bangladesh, an ideologically oriented leadership and the cadre backing this proposal, revolutionary slogans, a program of action intended to bring about revolutionary changes not only in the armed forces but also in polity."

However, whatever the intention was, the failure of the planners of the November 7 uprising turned it into another ordinary coup d'etat: seizure of power by Army.

Although factors relating to the military establishment individually or together fail to point to the underlying causes of military intervention in Bangladesh, they do remind us that the organizational aspect of the military cannot be ignored. There is no question that the military as an organization has a monopoly over the means of coercion.

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<sup>5</sup>Lifschultz's assertion that the CIA was involved in this coup was rejected as 'farfetched' by Khan (1984:147, n.12), while Ahamed (1988:65) feels that it is 'credible'. Khatib (1981) suggests that the August Coup was a larger conspiracy in which Bhutto, the CIA, and British Intelligence all had a hand.

Political Issues in  
Corporatists Interpretation:

Besides the military's organizational aspects, the available literature addresses some pertinent political issues. These are: the failure of civilian government, cleavages in political parties, and a lack of political institutionalization. A situation of failure on the part of the civilian government, reflected in the economic performance as well as in inability to maintain law and order, has been described by Ahamed, Jahan and Bertocci as a precipitating factor for coups d'etat. According to Ahamed, the poor performance of the ruling elites prior to the coup d'etat of August 15, 1975 isolated them from the masses and thus made them vulnerable to a coup. Although Jahan feels that such failure is the secondary factor in a coup, it helped the coup-makers to legitimize their actions. Bertocci argues that both the coups of August 15, 1975 and March 24, 1982 are consequences of the failure of the civilian regime to ensure a steady economic performance. Whether these claims are true or not is yet to be determined<sup>6</sup>; but, even if we accept that they are true, there are a few questions that remains unanswered. For example, what caused the failure of the civilian government? Or, one can raise the more fundamental question of whether economic performance alone should be the index of judging a government.

It is true that after every coup d'etat in Bangladesh, the coup-makers alleged that the preceding government was 'corrupt' and incompetent. There are obviously some elements of truth

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<sup>6</sup>The most glaring proof of the Mujib regime's failure, (according to those who consider it a failure) is the famine of 1974 that took lives of, according to government estimate, 27,500 people (Bangladesh Observer, November 23, 1974, Statement of Minister for Food and Relief in the Parliament). But it became clear in the late-1970s that there were a number of factors, some man-made and some beyond the control of Mujib regime, which contributed to the severe famine. These included inflation resulting from the sudden price-hike of oil in 1973, devaluation of Bangladesh currency under severe pressure from the World Bank and the IMF, and the deliberate delay in shipment of food grains from the US under PL-480 due to Bangladesh's decision to export jute to Cuba (McHenry and Bird, 1977:82; Crow, 1987; for a detailed discussion see Chapter V of this dissertation).

in those allegations, but the validity of these claim that those were the causes for intervention is questionable<sup>7</sup>.

Under such circumstances, an overemphasis on domestic crises or the failure of civilian government might lead analysts to a wrong conclusion. It should be noted here that I do not want to rule out the possibility of these factors being among the causes of intervention. As a matter of fact, the central proposition of this study also underscores the failure of the Mujib-regime in maintaining the social order and attain economic growth being one of the factors precipitating the military intervention, but what needs to be observed here is that these studies do not point to the source of the failure of the 'civilian' government. Neither do they attempt to establish the relationship between the failure of a particular regime and other social forces. One must not forget the basic questions pertaining to such claim: is it the failure of a class or that of elites? What factors lead to that failure? Those who term the failure of the civilian regime the 'crisis' also either deliberately or inadvertently fail to point to the source(s) of this crisis: class composition of the ruling elites, nature of the state, or the position of the state in the global economic system.

Those who seek to explain the demise of the Mujib regime as well as of the Sattar regime<sup>8</sup> in terms of a failure of civilian government inherit these deficiencies of the general theory. Among the prominent reasons cited by Ahamed, Jahan, and Khan for the failure of the regime, factionalism and cleavages within the ruling party is the prime one. Bertocci goes further

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<sup>7</sup>Such claim is not unique in Bangladesh but rather a very common one for almost all military coup d'etat. But, it is interesting to note that despite such a claim very few military regime attempts to change the course of the government. A cross-national study by Thompson (1973) shows that only 8 percent of the 229 coups or coup-attempts between 1946 and 1970 were undertaken to correct the misdeeds of the preceding civilian government.

<sup>8</sup>Justice Abdus Sattar was elected as the President of Bangladesh in November 1981, following the assassination of Ziaur Rahman on May 30, 1981. Mr. Sattar was the former Vice-President in the Zia government.

and asserts that it is not only the ruling party that was factionalized, but that almost all parties were continually beset by factionalism. Bertocci (1982:993) writes,

"One is tempted to envision the party process as a plethora of groups organized along patron-client lines, or what one might call in the Bangladesh context dada-dal relationships, in which a leader (dada, a term for different types of senior male kinship) and his followers (has dal, 'party' in the sense of 'faction') compete for power in a constant shift of alliances, splitting off from one formalized party grouping to seek alliance with another, be it one actually in power or another in opposition. The result is persistent party and subgroup realignment so salient a feature in Bangladesh politics, the perennial emergence of innumerable splinter groups and their eventual withering away in most cases."

This proposition is somewhat similar to that of Germani and Silvert (1961), who suggest that there is a direct relationship between cleavages within the government and military intervention. They assert that the greater the cleavages and the less the consensus in a society, the greater the likelihood of military intervention. As mentioned before, those who seek to explain the Bangladesh situation by this means, do not identify the underlying social forces that are represented through these cleavages.

#### Lack of Political Institutionalization:

Lack of political institutionalization has been emphasized as a precipitating factor in military coups by a number of scholars including Ahamed, Khan, Jahan, and Bertocci. Ahamed refers to the question of institutionalization as a systemic weakness. To him, systemic weaknesses are the absence of consensus among the politically relevant sections of the population regarding the nature of political power, mode of its exercise, procedure of transferring it, nature of incumbents. He feels that these factors along with other things led to military intervention. He writes that

"...in all fairness it is not right to put the blame either on the military or civilian politicians for a prolonged military rule in the country. On one count, however, both the military elite and political leaders are to be blamed in that preaching and activities of both these groups have miserably failed to generate or help generate a broad based consensus and strengthen organizational bases in the society" (Ahamed, 1988:140).

According to Khan, the rise of the military to power was due to the vacuum created by the absence of institutionalized political leadership in Bangladesh. To him, it was the charisma of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, which initially 'provided badly needed unity and direction for the country,' but which also eventually weakened the party because it was not routinized. Thus factionalism within the party surfaced and paved the way for the bureaucracy and military to take over.

Khan's interpretation is much like that of Huntington (1966). Huntington strongly contends that military explanations are insufficient to account for interventions. Instead, he attempts to explain the propensity of military interventionism in terms of the socio-political structure of a given country. In support of this approach Huntington writes, "the most important causes of military intervention in politics are not military but political and institutional structure of the society." In his view the reason for intervention "lie in the absence or weakness of effective political institutions" (Huntington, 1966:194)<sup>9</sup>.

Jahan (1980) agrees with some of the points raised by Khan. In her opinion, after Bangladesh became independent, although the Awami League successfully completed the task of constitution-making, they failed to institutionalize the charismatic leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and thus in post-independence Bangladesh 'the emerging political system ... depend(ed) more on an individual than institutions' (Jahan, 1980:115). In the long run, the concentration of power in the hand of an individual restricted the possibility of institution building and created an authoritarian trend. Although Ahamed cites the authoritarian trend of the Mujib regime as one of the factors, he clearly disagrees with Jahan that Mujib regime lacked political institutionalization. Instead, Ahamed (1988:51) asserts, 'an important trend of the

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<sup>9</sup>It should be, however, noted here that Huntington's hypothesis is not unique. His proposition can be traced back to the modernization theory. The modernization theory, as we all know, 'explains that the various dictatorships of the Third World are products of the *lack* of capitalist development and the social and political modernization that are presumed to be associated with development' (Johnson, 1985:167).



Awami league regime was the gradual strengthening of the political infrastructure at the administrative level.' Jahan (1980) also contends that the Bangladesh polity lacked a dominant power group, and that the party was weak and factionalized, as were the civil bureaucracy and the armed forces. Yet, more and more power was vested in the party, and this antagonized the bureaucracy and the military. In combination with the dismal economic performance of the regime, these factors created conditions for the military take-over. After the intervention in 1975, Jahan maintains, the civil and military bureaucratic elite consolidated their position and perpetuated their rule. She writes,

"The civil military bureaucratic elite, who ruled Bangladesh during the Pakistan period, and who were relegated to a secondary position during the three years of Sheikh Mujib's rule, again gained ascendance ... (and)... continued to consolidate its position and decision-making" (Jahan, 1980:201).

It is difficult to disagree with Jahan's assertion that the civil-military bureaucratic elite strengthened their position and perpetuated their rule in Bangladesh in the post-1975 period, but what processes led to their unity in the pre-1975 period and why other classes (e.g. the bourgeoisie) failed to consolidate power are questions yet to be answered.

Islam (1986) attempts to answer the question how the civil-military bureaucrats resurfaced in the state apparatus in 1975. Islam refutes Alavi's argument that the military-bureaucratic oligarchy usurps power in post-colonial societies, as it becomes overdeveloped in comparison to other social classes. Islam, in contrary argues that, the rise of a military-bureaucratic oligarchy in Bangladesh was due to the 'socio-political dynamics' following the independence of Bangladesh. He asserts,

"The political and economic crises of the Mujib regime, the Islamic heritage of Bangladesh society, and the grievances of military - all of which reflected the praetorianism of the Bangladesh polity - were the factors responsible for the fall of a regime of politicians and rise of the civil-military bureaucracy" (Islam, 1986:35).

Bertocci (1982) also insists that the recurrent return of military rule in Bangladesh is primarily due to the praetorian nature of its polity. Following Huntington's assertion that political systems with low levels of institutionalization and a high level of participation confront situations in which 'social forces using their own methods act directly in the political sphere' (Huntington, 1966:80), Bertocci contends that in Bangladesh, the institutionalization of the (political) party process is remarkably weak. Bertocci, like Huntington, defines political institutionalization as 'the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability.' And using that criterion, he concludes that,

"... the country's civil and military bureaucratic establishments do reflect a high degree of autonomy and complexity - two of Huntington's criteria of institutionalization. They might, however, score less well in measures of adaptability and coherence - Huntington's other two criteria - since both might be seen to have features of rigidity and to have displayed disunity at critical points during Bangladesh's first decade" (Bertocci, 1982: 992).

Bertocci cites two other characteristics of Bangladesh polity as indices of a lack of political institutionalization; first, the political parties are not well-developed electioneering organizations with well-articulated and long-standing 'grass roots', and second, all parties in Bangladesh are continually beset by factionalism. On the other hand, according to Bertocci, Bangladesh 'has a long tradition of high political participation.'<sup>10</sup> The lack of institutionalization and the high political participation counterweigh each other and pave the way for social forces to act directly in the political sphere.

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<sup>10</sup>Bertocci (1982), in support of his assertion that there is a long tradition of high political participation, writes, 'Bangladeshis vote in numbers comparable to those of the American electorate in recent years, with an average of 54% in every national election held between 1946 and 1979.' He continues, 'Similarly, they enroll as candidates and vote in goodly numbers in local government elections throughout the countryside. That the urban elites are conscious of their political interests and readily act to defend them is assumed by observers of the Bangladesh political scene, and that student activism, allied to political party involvement, has figured importantly in the country's history is well known' (Bertocci, 1982:993). Jahan (1980:169-170) also noted that there is high degree of political participation in Bangladesh.

Bertocci's most important contribution is the identification of the ruling class and characterization of the regime. He contends that the 'intermediate classes' of Bangladesh seized the state in 1972 and began to exercise state power for their own advantage. This situation is called the rise of an 'intermediate regime.' In explaining the 'intermediate regime', Bertocci uses the framework of Kalecki (1972) and Raj (1973).<sup>11</sup>

Referring to the first decade of Bangladesh's nationhood, Bertocci (1982:993) writes,

"the results of this praetorian political dynamics operating in the structural context of an intermediate regime have been a decade of fluidity, a fluctuation between civilian and military rule, and a mixture of relative democracy and relative dictatorship".

What Bertocci (1982) fails to recognize is that the lack of what he calls 'political institutionalization' has originated from the lack of a dominant class. Yet, it should be recognized that Bertocci, quite appropriately distances himself from the mainstream explanation of military intervention in Bangladesh politics.

Uzzaman's (1987:20) proposition has some different elements along with the factors underscored by other analysts. In his view, military in Pakistan (1958 and 1969) and Bangladesh (1975 - 1982) intervenes in politics:

1. to preserve the interests of the bourgeoisie, the bourgeois production relations and property system, and their hegemony in the albeit shaken state structure;
2. to preserve all interests of imperialism as a coercive apparatus of the state while depending on the neo-colonial structure of the international capital;

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<sup>11</sup>According to Kalecki (1972) an intermediate regime is characterized by the domination of the polity by an alliance of the lower middle class or petty bourgeoisie and the rich peasants. He asserts that in the absence of a well developed industrial capitalist establishment allied with a big landlord class, what he calls the 'intermediate classes' tend to exercise state power for their own advantage. By intermediate classes he means the middle class and educated groups associated with the professions or with small-scale entrepreneurship - i.e. petty bourgeoisie.

Kalecki (1972) suggests that the fundamental contradictions in intermediate regimes lie on the one hand between the intermediate classes and a small 'big business' or 'upper middle class' (which allies increasingly with foreign capital), and on the other hand, between the intermediate classes with their 'rich peasant' allies and the small land holders and landless peasants. To shore themselves up against both, the intermediate classes rely on some form of 'state capitalism' - i.e. public sector enterprise, supported liberally with foreign aid.

3. to preserve the group and corporate interests of the military; To safeguard their institutional structure, base, earthly interest, lion share of the budget, their access to money-property-license-contracts-opportunities etc.
4. to establish, preserve, and expand narrow personal interest of a coterie within the military."

He also asserts that weaknesses in the political system, cleavages within political parties, the disintegration of political parties, a lack of consensus regarding the basic principles of the state and the absence of civic culture paves the way for praetorianism.

Uzzaman's interpretation, though it offers a broader socio-economic perspective, fails to show how the 'bourgeois' state structure evolved in Bangladesh and whether or not the weakness of the state lies in the formation processes. Furthermore, his analysis does not answer the question as to why the bourgeoisie, as a political force, fails to subordinate other classes through moral leadership, and why is it resorting to coercion?

In sum, it can be noted that these analyses largely inherit the limitations of the mainstream literature. The most serious limitation of this line of analysis is their neglect of the fact that the military organization is not independent of social relations. Furthermore, they do not recognize that the military is a part of the state structure. The historical context of the military as a component of the total history of the society and the state in which it functions is usually disregarded. The influence of class upon the military as a social force receives scant attention. These shortcomings make the available interpretations somewhat incomplete. The inadequacy of these frameworks is further accentuated by the fact the authors do not give the deserved attention to the historical context of how the Bangladesh state came into being. The process of state formation in Bangladesh has had enormous influence on the subsequent course of politics. The popular struggle for independence of Bangladesh, provided the basis for the distinctive form of the state's participation in the economy. Since the available literature on military intervention ignores these crucial relationships between the state, class and economy, they end up examining superficial factors; hence they cannot go beyond simple assertions about

lack of political institutionalization causing military interventions. In a similar vein they conclude that economic failure of a regime has caused the coup d'état.

### **Structuralist Interpretation of Military Intervention**

The structuralist analyses presented by Umar (1986, 1989), Jahangir (1986) and Lindquist (1977) are partially free from the limitations discussed above. The central proposition of Umar is that without a proper understanding of the state and society of 'developing countries' it is impossible to delineate the causes of military rule. The nature of the state needs to be determined both from the mode of production of the given country as well as the location of the state within the global context.

Umar asserts that in developing societies both pre-capitalist and capitalist economic systems are prevalent. The latter, however, plays a prominent role and it is through the penetration of finance capital that the developing countries are exploited by the imperialism. Furthermore, the imperialist power is bound to export arms in order to capitalize the surplus concentrated in the hands of the state. In neo-colonial states, the surplus value appropriated by the state through an indirect tax is usually spent for buying arms because otherwise the imperialist countries would discontinue aid, military and economic. The aid, grant and loans from imperialist powers are necessary for neo-colonial states because the simultaneous presence of pre-capitalist and underdeveloped capitalist production systems inhibits the accumulation of capital necessary for capitalist development. Thus, the neo-colonial states face an inescapable dependency relationship with the imperialism, where the imperialist countries establish their firm control over the economy and force the neo-colonial state to pursue policies geared towards the interest of the former. The primary objective of the state then becomes maintaining a system in favor of capital and drain internal surplus value to the imperialist countries. Such a situation creates a perpetual crisis within the neo-colonial country and perpetual dependence on the

imperialism. The crisis gradually reaches a level where the indigenous comprador bourgeoisie fail to provide any solution and hence they resort to coercion to preserve the production relations. Thus, according to Umar (1989:15), seizure of power by the military in any 'neo-colonial state' means that bourgeois rule based on the society and productive forces (or, in other words internal capacity) of that country has become impossible owing to the innate crisis. In Umar's view, military rule in a given country indicates that bourgeois rule has reached its last stage in that country (Umar, 1989:17). Referring to the Bangladesh situation, Umar (1986:41) writes,

"The Army in Bangladesh, as in any other country, seized power because of a certain crisis within the ruling classes, particularly bourgeoisie. The Army continues to remain in power because in Bangladesh, as in any other country, it is the last stabilising factor in a situation in which the political parties of the ruling classes have disintegrated and become unable to form a stable government for one reason or another."

In his understanding, insofar as the class character of the ruling classes is concerned, there is no difference between the Mujib regime and the subsequent regimes of Zia and Ershad, in spite of the fact the latter two were military regimes while the first one was a civilian one. Instead, it was to preserve and strengthen the class interests of the very classes which the Mujib regime represented that the Mujib regime was ousted and military rule was introduced (Umar, 1989:24-25).

It is, indeed, difficult to disagree with Umar that without a proper appreciation of the nature of the state and the class character of the ruling classes one can not analyze the causes of military rule in Bangladesh, or any given country. As a matter of fact, it is one of the basic premises upon which this study is built. But what seems to be problematic is Umar's uncritical acceptance of the idea that external dynamics (i.e. dependency on imperialism) play a pivotal role in shaping whatever the ruling class(es) does in a peripheral state. In addition, it is evident that Umar's analysis is based upon the classical Marxist position that in a capitalist society there are two fundamental classes, the bourgeoisie and the working class. I have tried to show in the

previous chapter and will demonstrate in the following chapters that the two consecutive colonial dominations along with other factors impeded the development of a bourgeois class in Bangladesh. The problem with Umar's analysis lies in his point of departure, not in his method.

Lindquist (1977) and Jahangir (1986) have one point in common. Both of them assert that through the liberation struggle it is the petit-bourgeois class that emerged as the ruling class of Bangladesh. Lindquist (1977:14) writes,

"Bangladesh is perhaps unique for having in effect deported its 'feudal' landed class - which was mostly Hindu - to India in 1947, and then for having deported its bourgeoisie - mostly from West Pakistan - to Pakistan at Independence in 1971. The 'leading' (but not actually 'dominant') classes that remained can be roughly termed petit-bourgeois, and nearly all of them was represented in the Awami League. These included: traders and merchants of all sizes, the bureaucracy, military officers, professionals, contractors and rich peasants."

In Jahangir's (1986:20) view 'in the formative years, in the post-liberation period the state (was) dominated by petty-bourgeois elements'. And 'the petty-bourgeoisie (were) composed of two elements: a) the small-scale producers and small traders (small property) and b) the non-productive salaried employees: civil servants employed by the state and its various apparatuses' (Jahangir, 1986:24)<sup>12</sup>. Despite such agreement, they have pointed to two different sets of factors for military rule in Bangladesh.

According to Lindquist (1977), though the ruling class was primarily composed of petit-bourgeoisie, 'there was also a small productive bourgeoisie that Ayub Khan had begun to foster as part of state policy in the 1960s' (emphasis added). And according to him, the principal cause of military takeover of 1975 was result of confrontation between 'the petit-bourgeois and the nascent bourgeois elements with roots in production rather than trade or the plunder of state resources. The army, bureaucracy and international capital seem to have swung behind the latter.' Fundamental problem of Lindquist's (1977) essay is that it paid more attention to the description of situation than explanation of situation. Hence, the question as to why the these three forces

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<sup>12</sup>This definition of petty-bourgeoisie is drawn from Poulantzas (1974).

(army, bureaucracy and international capital) swung behind the nascent bourgeoisie remained unanswered.

Jahangir (1986), in contrast to Lindquist (1977), attempts to explain the situation and brought in the question of state. He contends that the non-capitalist path of development pursued by the ruling petty-bourgeoisie as well as the nature of the petty-bourgeois politics, including its weak economic base, made the state central and strong. These, in turn, strengthened the bureaucratic processes in Bangladesh. According to Jahangir (1986:29),

"In the post-liberation period the emergence of the bureaucracy is the result of an internal class struggle and external circumstantial factors. The internal factors are: a rise in the level of national consciousness due to the armed liberation struggle, growth of labour organizations and their increasing militancy and proliferation of political parties. The most important external factor is: given the economic dependence of the country, the bureaucracy itself is a dependent group, and its origin as an instrument of global capitalist interest continues to influence its development. In this conjuncture the only people able to take responsibility and command power are those who are literate, with administrative and managerial capacities. They are necessary to handle a political party or to govern a state or to organise a military".

Insofar as the entry of the military into politics is concerned, Jahangir (1986:51) unequivocally states that there is a 'close and complex connection between authoritarianism and the petty-bourgeoisie' and that it is the political aspect that determines the role of military. There is hardly any point to contradict the above interpretation, but when he comes to address the specific situation of Bangladesh, it seems that Jahangir falls in the trap of 'corporate interest theory'. He notes,

"The entry of the military represents a crisis of petty-bourgeois politics. In a situation of scarcity, civilian and military grievances tend to coincide, and in reality this has sparked the coup of 15th August 1975. Top military officers were primarily concerned with group and personal interests. Other elites: politicians, trade unionists, student leaders were also concerned for the same rewards and spoils. The pre-August 1975 situation was riddled with intra-civil, intra-military, and civil-military conflicts. These conflicts were enough to sharpen corporate and/or personal ambitions of military officers to spark off a coup. In this way the army as an institutionally based fraction has entered into the competitive terrain of petty-bourgeois politics" (Jahangir, 1986:53, emphasis added).



It is, however, encouraging to note that Jahangir does not completely rely on this corporate interest issue. Instead, he maintains that 'the staging of the coup (i.e. the August 15, 1975 coup) was an indication of the army's desire to dismantle the coalition which comprised the Awami League and paved the way for army officers to enter into the public and private sectors.' (emphasis added) It is this 'desire' that brought the civil bureaucracy and the military closer together. The emergence of military-bureaucratic rule should therefore be viewed as twin elements in the same process, not as separate from each other. The army's close relationship with the bureaucracy, their search for a populist ideology and the massive militarization of administration and society in the subsequent years can be interpreted by that 'desire' only, not by emphasizing corporate grievances. Here again this desire is a product of the underlying social structure; conjunctural events only facilitated them to act at a given moment. Thus, this strand of literature on military interventionism points to some of the vital factors; and above all the most important contribution of this strand is its emphasis on the nexus of state and class, which serves as the point of departure of this study.

### CHAPTER III GENESIS OF INTERMEDIATE CLASSES IN BANGLADESH: 1793 - 1947

The evolution of middle classes in the region that is now Bangladesh is directly tied up with the colonial domination of the country, both British and Pakistani, that stretched over a period of more than two and a half centuries. The processes of class formation and consequent transformations in class relations Bangladesh underwent over this period brought crucial changes in social structure, leading to the preeminence of intermediate classes. Such a change under colonial domination is not unusual. Because, colonialism does not simply mean expansion of an empire, it means the transformation of the economy, polity, and social structure of the colony in accordance with the needs and demands of the imperialist economy which had already established the class structure of imperialist expansion.

Notwithstanding the fact that Bengal economy and hence Bengal society, were undergoing a gradual change since 14th century, especially following the decline of Mughul Empire<sup>1</sup> (circa 1707), the British colonial rule brought a radical transformation in the social fabric prevalent in Bengal. During the British colonial rule the potential of an indigenous

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<sup>1</sup>The changes I am referring to is primarily the decay of feudalism. In pre-colonial Bengal, forces of disintegration began to operate in economy and society. In the sphere of agriculture the disintegrating elements were the introduction of money rent and the increasing pressure on the peasants producers for land revenue, while in artisanal production it was the penetration of merchant capital into the process of the production that was facilitating the disintegration and thus new sets of relations were about to emerge. The process accentuated with decline of Mughul power. According to Karim (1976:91): 'With the decline of the centralized Mughul power, the small but extremely rich and extravagant upper class dwindled, and a new aristocracy composed of the city merchants and traders emerged.' The situation Karim refers to in Bengal approximates the one Mukherjee (1974:211) draws for entire Mughul India: '[T]he picture one gets (of India) in this period is a composition of several features which in a total perspective tend to indicate that although feudal forces still dominated the scene their specific features ... were in the process of disintegration; new socio-economic-ideological forces headed mainly by the mercantile class were coming forward in society; and the ruling powers also were aligning themselves with this new class.'

capitalist development in Bengal had been destroyed, followed by private loot and organized spoilation of commerce, agriculture and industry in the interests of the capitalist development in the metropole. Additionally, far-reaching administrative changes and educational reforms were introduced with a deliberate intent to bring changes in the socio-economic structure of the colony. Consequently a broad spectrum of the middle classes, subservient to the interests of the mercantile capitalism of England and allied with the colonial state, emerged. It is the growth of these classes and their preeminence in Bengal politics - during and after the British colonial era, during the Pakistan period and after the independence of Bangladesh that have bearing on present-day developments. The way social relations of production were altered in the course of the colonial transformation have had immense impacts on the subsequent class structures and class relations in Bangladesh. The contemporary class structure and the complexities in relations among the different classes are very much rooted in the manner and extent to which these relations were altered by the penetration of colonial force, and the system of capitalist production.

Two significant aspects of the historical situation prevalent during the conquest of Bengal by the British East India Company deserve to be mentioned; first, the conquest of Bengal coincided with the strengthening of commercialism and agrarian capitalism in England. Thus, Bengal was integrated to a world economy by capitalist mode of production. Secondly, while incorporating the internal economy of the colonized country to a dominant capitalist mode of production, the colonial state neither wanted the preservation of all elements of a non-capitalist mode of production, nor did they want the development of full-fledged capitalism in the colony. Because neither the pre-existing mode of production nor the full-fledged capitalism in its place was compatible with imperialist interest. It is for this reasons, that British imperialism created and reinforced the 'feudal relations of production in colonial agriculture' (Alavi, 1975:176) but

within a dominant capitalist mode of production. In order to do so it was necessary for them to destroy the potential of indigenous capitalist development in India as a whole.

Although this chapter provides the historical background of class formation in Bangladesh during the entire first colonial era (1757 through 1947), we begin our discussion from 1793 for it is the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 that initiated the most dramatic change in Bengal society. Given that the chapter covers a broad period of history, I have divided these into four sub-periods following the milestone events and trends in social transformation: Permanent Settlement and its consequences (1793 - 1858); the emergence of middle classes (1858 - 1905); partition of Bengal and consolidation of Bengali Muslim middle classes (1905 - 1920s); Bengali Muslim middle classes' quest for power and emergence of Pakistan (1930s - 1947).

#### **Permanent Settlement and Its Consequences: 1793-1858**

The most influential measure taken by the Company, in terms of class formation and class relations, during their reign in Bengal was the promulgation of Permanent Settlement<sup>2</sup>. The

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<sup>2</sup>Promulgation of Permanent Settlement Act is culmination of two processes. First, is the process that began soon after the conquest of Bengal. The basic characteristics of this process are the ruination of artisans, liquidation of traders, and squeezing the agrarian sector through vigorous land-revenue. It is through sheer force that the ruling Company destroyed the artisans and traders, and drove the peasants to utter destitution. Hence, by 1793, the classes based upon the previous modes of production were completely uprooted and the entire framework of Bengal society had been broken down, necessitating formation of new classes based on the prevailing mode of production. The second process that culminated in the Act began in 1772. A method of land settlement for five years adopted in 1772. Under this new policy, settlement were made by auction instead of asking the previous revenue-farmers to continue. This gave an excellent opportunity to those who over the years had accumulated money by serving the Company as gomastas or in some other capacities to bid the land. Baniyas connected with the trade of the Company also availed themselves this opportunity to grab lands. The company was sure that these unscrupulous agents would do the utmost to increase the profit in their interests as well in the interests of the Company. Following the first five years of the system, in 1777, the system was modified and henceforth the estates were let out annually to the revenue-farmers. But in 1781, the Committee of Revenue decided to grant the collector a percentage of their collection as an incentive. This encouraged the collectors, both native and Company officials, to extort the utmost for their own benefit. By 1793, this class of native agents had accumulated enough money and earned enough confidence of the Company. The Act was, in fact, an expression of gratitude to this class.

Act, which Marx (Original 1853a, reprint 1974:317) called 'a caricature of English landlordism', was formally announced on March 22, 1793. This measure drastically transformed the relations of production in Bengal and provided the legal and administrative framework within which agrarian relations were determined in Bengal until the zamindari abolition acts of the 1950. The central point of the Act is described in a single paragraph:

"The governor general in council accordingly declares to the zamindars, independent talukdars and other actual proprietors of land, with or in behalf of whom a settlement has been concluded under the regulations above-mentioned, that at the expiration of the terms of the settlement, no alterations will be made in the assessment which they have engaged to pay, but that they and their heirs and lawful successors will be allowed to hold their estates for ever" (Quoted by Guha, 1963:11).

Significant aspects of the Act were: (a) proprietary rights over land was established; (b) land was transformed into a commodity; (c) a secure and tractable revenue base for the Company was established; (d) attempt to transform the zamindars to a purely economic force was made.

Contrary to the prevailing situation wherein it was unclear who owns land, the Act concentrated propriety rights in the hands of the state revenue collectors. Hence, zamindars became the new legal owners of land in Bengal. Furthermore, the old customary law requiring prior permission of the Government for transferring land was abolished and thus, zamindars were made free to alienate lands by sale or gift. If a zamindar defaulted in paying the revenue, his land was to be sold in liquidation of arrears. The land was, therefore, made a marketable commodity, and paved the way for the infiltration of new capital and enterprise in the agrarian Bengal. The permanent tax agreement between the zamindars and the government made it easier for the Company rulers to be sure of continuous flow of taxes without being involved in assessment every year<sup>3</sup>. The Act took away the judicial and police powers which the zamindars had been enjoying

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<sup>3</sup>Although the Act ensured a increase in the total revenue amount (3,400,000 pounds sterling), whether the agreement was enacted with such an intention is debatable. It is generally argued that the intention was obviously so, while McLane (1977) suggests that the Act put a stop on escalating assessment.

till then<sup>4</sup>. For free flow of trade and commerce zamindars were deprived of their right to levy sairs on merchandise passing through their territories.

The immediate consequence of the Settlement Act was the emergence of zamindars. But they were already there. But as the proprietor of land they earned more power and status. Two other slightly delayed, yet profoundly significant, impact of the Act were proliferation of litigation and subinfeudation of lands.

#### Proliferation of Litigation:

With the changed circumstances establishing ownership on land, a large number of litigations regarding the ownership began in courts. The government's insistence for punctual realization of revenue, forced the zamindars to dismemberment in each succeeding years. Within twenty years after the Permanent Settlement more than one third of the landed property was sold for arrears of revenue (Sinha, 1962: 153-161).

The increasing number of law suits paved the way for the emergence of a new class of educated lawyers. According to one account, the total number of cases in the Indian courts in 1881 was 16 lacs. Five lacs were in Bengal alone. Out of the total court fee (taidad) of 16.54 crore taka realized in India, 5.18 crore taka came from Bengal. In 1901 this amount soared to 28.71 crore taka and 38 percent came from Bengal. The number was increasing at an spectacular

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<sup>4</sup>Ideally, the method of using physical coercions for realizing arrears were abolished. The Government reserved the right to enact, whenever necessary, regulations for protecting the rights of ryots and dependent talukdars. By regulation VIII of 1793, the zamindars were directed to prepare patta (a lease, deed or document recording the terms by which a cultivator or under-tenant holds his land) by consolidating all the abwabs (regular exactions of different kinds) and rents heretofore levied into one jumma (total sum demandable) and deliver them to their ryots so that ryots could know the exact sum payable by them. No fresh abwabs over and above the jumma could be imposed under any pretence whatsoever. The situation, however, changed in subsequent years. The zamindars began to press the government for the judicial and police powers, especially to distrain the ryots, in order to realize their rents. In 1795, government yielded to the pressure of the zamindars and they were given some restricted power of enforcing law. In 1799 the notorious Regulation VII (Qanun Haftam) was enacted 'for enabling proprietors and farmers of land to realize their rents with greater punctuality' so that public revenue can be paid without unnecessary delay. The regulation gave the landlords practically unrestricted right of distrain.

rate. In 1933, total number of cases reached as high as 27 lacs (Moudud, 1969: 160). By 1862, a High Court was established in Calcutta. During the decade of 1864-73, 704 students graduated in law from the Calcutta University, whereas the corresponding number from Madras was 78 and 33 from Bombay. During 1879-1888, the number was further increased to 934. Moudud (1969:161) reckoned that until the end of the nineteenth century, ratio of BA and BL students graduated from Calcutta University was 2:1. The development corresponding to the proliferation of law suits was the subinfeudation of lands.

#### Sub-infeudation of Lands:

As the land was commodified and large estates were up for sale formerly revenue collectors, merchants or native agents of the Company began to buy lands and became landlords. Scope for the new Calcutta parvenus to swoop down upon the lands further broadened as the process of subinfeudation of lands began in Bengal. The process of subinfeudation actually began in the province of Burdawan. The Raja of Burdawan to save himself from total ruin started leasing portions of his zamindari to those persons who agreed to pay him a fixed sum of money. These leaseholders again divided their lots in smaller portions and leased them to others. Marx aptly described the situation:

"The original class of Zamindars, notwithstanding their unmitigated and uncontrolled rapacity against the dispossessed mass of the ex-hereditary landlords, soon melted away under the pressure of the Company, in order to be replaced by mercantile speculators who now hold all the lands of Bengal, with exception of estates returned under the direct management of the government. The speculators have introduced a variety of zamindari tenure called *patni*. Not content to be placed with regard to the British Government in the situation of middle-men, they have created in their turn a class of 'hereditary' middlemen called *patnidars*, who created gain their sub-patnidars etc., so that a perfect scale of hierarchy of middlemen has sprung up, which presses with its entire weight on the unfortunate cultivators" (Marx, original 1853a, reprint 1974:317).

Mukherjee (1933:90) shares the opinion. He writes,

"The zamindar need not part with his estate by an absolute sale but can raise money by allowing his proprietary right to be subdivided into smaller units and receive an annuity that leaves enough margin for his payment of government

revenue. Inferior tenure holders follow the same practice, with the result that middlemen after middlemen spring up who have no interest in the improvement of land."

The extent of the subinfeudation can be understood from the fact that "in Bengal the total 'number of landlords which did not exceed 100 in the beginning of Hastings administration in 1772, rose in the course of the century to 154,200'" (Maddison, 1971:46). According to Field's (1885) study, there were at least eleven interests between zamindar and cultivator. Simon Commission reports: 'in some districts sub-infeudations, as many as 50 or more intermediary interests, having been created between the zamindars at the top and the actual cultivators'(Simon Commission Report, Vol 1, p.340 Quoted by Desai, 1966:68-69). It is, indeed clear that during these convulsions in the land market, the older aristocracy of zamindars have been destroyed. A new class of 'shark and rapacious businessmen,' 'a shrewd, opportunist and self-seeking commercialized group of interests invested their capital in the purchase of land' (Misra, 1961:133).

In the economic arena, the class of former revenue collectors, merchants, brokers, agents, and creditors were influential even before they began to buy the lands and emerge as the new breed of landlords, but socially they were not a respected class, because in Bengal society, and may be throughout India, social prestige as well as power was closely attached with the ownership of land. The Permanent Settlement and the subinfeudation of lands provided them the opportunity to acquire the social status<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup>One interesting point deserves to be noted here. Although the class of merchants and agents were dissatisfied with their position and power, the Company merchants and the British mercantile bourgeoisie were concerned that the local merchants may eventually emerge as their rival. Because, it was quite evident that this class had accumulated such large amounts of money that they could spend hundreds and thousands of taka in nuptial entertainments, funeral obsequies and religious ceremonies. In order to ensure that this class does not appear as the competitor of the Company merchants, discriminatory trade and tax policies were promulgated against the native traders. Finally, with the intention that this class will invest their capital in land, the land was commercialized. Cornwallis made it very clear in his letter to the Directors of the East India Company written in 1793: 'As soon as the ownership in land is declared permanent, the vast surplus in the hands of the natives will be used in purchasing lands instead of being



Communal Aspect of the Changes:

One communal aspect of these changes, especially the emergence of new breed of landlord, warrants attention. The merchants who captured the zamindari were largely urban rich Hindu Brahmans and Kayasthas. Despite the fact that the rise of these classes are directly linked with the downturn of the Muslim community of India, it did not happen because the Muslim landlords lost the zamindaris. Instead, these classes were in an ascending trend since the beginning of the Company rule.

From the very beginning of the Company rule, Muslims of Bengal did not welcome the English. East India Company was also skeptical about the Muslims. Yet, Muslims held important positions in different administrative departments. This was due to the fact that in pre-British period the official language of the court was Persian. This continued for a long time even after Company took over the power of Bengal. For the Muslim aristocracy the official language was the last shelter. Large numbers of Muslim students graduated from the different Madrasas in Calcutta joined the courts. This, however, began to change gradually and after 1823, when the official language was changed to English. Muslims began to drop out of these jobs. In Theodore Morrison's words, 'Persi (sic) ceased, and with it the service of the state which had been for generations the hereditary occupation of the middle and upper class of Muslim society passed into other hands' (Akhanda, 1981:124). The educational institutes of the Muslims in Bengal faced a severe blow in 1828 when government confiscated the lakheraj (rent-free) lands from the Muslims. Most of the educational institutes for the Muslims were dependent upon the income from the rent-free lands (Nehru, 1988:318). While the Muslims were gradually displaced from the government positions they held before and their educational institutes faced extreme crisis, Hindu Brahmans and Kayasthas consolidated their position as a powerful social class. Hunter

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invested in industries.' Company's attempt to divert the merchant capital from commerce to land in order to discourage the indigenous industrial growth succeeded to a great extent.

(original 1871, reprint 1969) presents a vivid description quoting James O'Kinely, who according to Hunter studied Permanent Settlement most minutely, in following way:

"(Permanent Settlement) elevated the Hindu collectors, who up to that time had held but unimportant posts, to the position of landholders, gave them a proprietary right in the soil, and allowed them to accumulate wealth which would have gone to the Musalmans under their own rule" (Hunter, 1969:155).

Available statistics also support the comments. The annual Directory of Calcutta of 1805-06 listed native businessmen, comprador and shroffs. This list contains the 12 influential agents of the Company. All of them were Hindu. The situation did not change in subsequent fifty years. According to an account of 1858, among the large business company's 9 were owned by Bengalis. The total number of shareholders were 18. All of them came from the higher caste Hindu community. Some 65 merchants were rich enough to be accounted for. Not surprisingly, all were Hindus. This clearly shows that during the Company rule Hindus had a prominence within the newly emerging comprador class -- zamindars, merchants, agents. The common Muslims families, even the earlier zamindars and government servants, gradually became ryots under the newly created Hindu landlords. In fact, during the earlier stage of the British rule in Bengal the non-farmer class that arose were primarily from Hindu upper caste.

Thus, it is evident that the Permanent Settlement of 1793 and subsequent developments not only displaced the old zamindars and replaced them with the new one, it worked in favor of the upper caste Hindu community, who collaborated with the Company in preceding years of the Company rule. The growth of the tenure holder strata that began after 1793 was further accentuated after the landlords were armed with the draconian legal powers (1799, 1799). Since now the landlords became sure that a fixed income after payment of revenues will reach their hands they increasingly become isolated from the land and preferred to live in cities like Calcutta. As I have already mentioned, interest of the newly emergent landlords in land was primarily to acquire social prestige. Now that such status was guaranteed, they opted to go back to their

earlier positions and enjoy a conspicuous life style. Their unfamiliarity with management of zamindari also forced them to leave the estates to other people. This accelerated further subinfeudations and rise of intermediary interests. But in terms of prominence, there were three social classes in rural Bengal.

#### Three Distinct Classes in Rural Bengal:

By the beginning of the nineteenth century three distinct classes were obvious in rural Bengal: zamindars, intermediate tenure holders, and ryots. The intermediate tenure holders, however, gradually started to emerge as small zamindars. By 1872, the number of zamindaris exceeded 1.5 lacs. Among these, 533 were large zamindaris with more than 20 thousand acres of land; middle-range zamindaris with land between 500 and 20,000 acres were 15,747; and the remaining were small zamindaris with land of 500 acres or less. The increase of the third categories of zamindari shows how fast the differentiation as well as polarization was taking place. In subsequent years the numbers soared in a dramatic manner. According to Ghosh's (1930:58) calculation based on the census report, number of zamindaris increased by 23 percent between 1901 and 1911. In the following decade there was a further increase of 9 percent. The proliferation of small zamindaris proves that though the British rulers intended to create a new landed class subservient to the interests of the foreign mercantile bourgeoisie, the ramification of Permanent Settlement was not confined to that only. Instead, a number of sub-classes within the new zamindar class begin to appear. A large number of these rich zamindars were living in urban areas like Calcutta, but zamindars who owned smaller estates had to live in the rural areas to manage their estates. Additionally, in order to maintain their social status they had to spend a large sum on nuptial entertainments, funeral obsequies and especially religious ceremonies. Which, in some cases, were not compatible with their income. These forced them to borrow money from usurers.

Usurers, Company Agents and Traders:

Usury was not an unusual phenomenon in rural economy. The practice was there for a long time, but it surfaced as a major socio-economic problem after massive subinfeudation and growth of small zamindaris. Small zamindars, as well as ryots, were relying increasingly on money-lenders. Ryots' opportunity to borrow money from the money lenders, however, came after their partial rights on land was recognized by the government through the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885. The Act made it possible for cultivators to mortgage their lands to the money lenders and transfer it to the lenders in the event of default. As a matter of fact, usury as a business spread after the individual ownership of land was recognized through the Permanent Settlement. As the rights of the cultivators on land were recognized, a system of rural credit pawning land thus quickly developed and, inevitably, land began to pass from debtors to creditors. Within a short span of time a new social strata of usurers appeared in Bengal.

The East India Company and other European trading companies used to buy commodities through their agents and when the Company took charge of Bengal these agents appeared as the tyrant gomastas. Although a large number of them transformed themselves into a new landed class after the Permanent Settlement, a good section, continued to function as agents or middlemen between the market and the producers. Within the first decade of the Company rule entire artisanal production was annihilated. And thus, the necessity of middlemen to market the products disappeared. But the Permanent Settlement again paved the way for the emergence of middlemen. Soon after the Permanent Settlement a complex rent-collecting structure with many grades of intermediary tenure-holders between the landlords and tenants emerged. Taxes of a fixed and inflexible amount had now to be paid in cash (which substituted payments in kind) and thus tenants needed hard cash more than ever before. This necessitated the commercialization of agriculture (Gadgil, 1971), and a class of traders in rural Bengal began to appear as the middlemen between the producers and the market -- both local and national.

It is quite evident that the worst sufferers of Permanent Settlement were the ryots. With the destruction of existing agrarian structure ryots became the victim of two-fold oppression -- feudal and colonial. They, however, did not accept it quietly. In addition to individual resistance, millennial peasant rising spread over different parts of Bengal.

#### Ryots and the Millennial Movement:

During the period between 1793 and 1857, a number of protracted but local, isolated, sporadic and spontaneous rebellions took place in Bengal. Though most of these uprisings began as localized resistance against the landlords, they eventually turned into anti-British movements as the state machinery attempted to suppress these armed insurrections violently. It is in this context the revolt of 1857 took place. In fact, it is the merging of these two factors - anti-feudal and anti-colonial, that made the revolt of 1857 so formidable. After the suppression of the revolt, Crown of England assumed the government of India. This was a watershed in Indian history. Since then there were definite changes in the policy of the British Government. In all spheres - political, economic and agrarian - India was fastened more fully to the band wagon of the British Empire.

There were some more developments between 1793 and 1858 those warrant attention, for they also contributed in the transformation of social structure of Bengal, especially emergence of intermediate classes. The Charter Act of 1833 is a case in point.

#### The Charter Act of 1833:

The Charter Act paved the way for penetration of capital from England. Prior to this act, two necessary conditions for an indigenous capitalist development in India was fulfilled -- presence of a relatively large number of proletariat which emerged through the Permanent Settlement and accumulation of capital in the hands of local traders and businessmen that could be invested to establish local industries. But as the way for penetration of merchant capital from Britain was opened wide, potential for any indigenous capitalist development was completely

ruined. The penetration was intensified and the process of developing India as an agrarian and material appendage of the British industries was speeded up in the years after British Crown took over. The other development that had far-reaching impact was the decision to introduce English education in India.

Introduction of English Education:

In the early nineteenth century the Company felt the necessity of an English-educated middle class to act as the interpreter. In 1813, the Company expressed its willingness to spread European language, culture and science, and requested the British Parliament to let the Company spend yearly 10,000 pounds sterling for this purpose (Rahman and Azad, 1990:31). In 1835, Macaulay unequivocally stated the intention behind the move to introduce English education in India:

"We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect ('Macaulay's Minutes on Education In India' drafted in 1862, quoted by Moudud, 1969:97).

It is further substantiated in the educational despatch of Sir Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control, on July 19, 1854. Wood wrote:

"The advance of higher education will teach the natives of India the marvelous results of the employment of labour and capital, rouse them to emulate us in the development of vast resources of their country, guide them in their efforts, and gradually but certainly confer upon them all the advantages which accompany the healthy increases of wealth and commerce; and at the same time, secure to us a large and a more certain supply of many articles necessary for our manufacturers and extensively consumed by all classes of our population as well as an almost inexhaustible demand for the produce of British labour."

Following the recommendations of Charles Wood three universities were established in 1857-58 in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras to promote higher education in India. The introduction of English education also contributed to the growth of different social organizations.

### Middle Classes and Social Organizations:

As the middle classes in Bengal began to appear as distinct classes, so was the organizations representing their interests. In the first half of nineteenth century at least three organizations were established those directly represented the interests of the new landlords and the middle classes. These were, the Zamindars Association of Calcutta, established in 1837; the Bengal British Indian Society, established in 1839; and the British Indian Association established in 1851. Additionally, some academic organizations formed by students also reflected the signs of change in Bengal society. Two of them are worth mentioning: Academic Association, later known as Young Bengal, organized by the students of Hindu College in 1828, eleven years after the college was established, and Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge formed in Calcutta in 1838. The former one 'galvanized Calcutta in the late 1820s' (Majumdar, 1934:81-91) and played a pivotal role in the so-called Bengal Renaissance of late 19th Century, while the latter helped nourished leaders like Ram Gopal Ghosh, Peary Chand Mitra, and Debendranath Tagore who played a key role in Bengal politics in the late 19th Century.

Thus, it is evident from the discussions about the socio-economic developments taken place between 1793 and 1858 that with the introduction of Permanent Settlement the entire social structure of Bengal was shaken up. Although its immediate effect was felt in the agrarian society and a new landed class was formed, gradually the impact of the changes transcend the boundary and paved the way for the emergence of other new classes. Massive subinfeudations made it possible for the emergence of an array of intermediary agencies mediating the relations between the tenants and the landlords. Additionally, other classes like money-lenders began to reappear. Necessity of commercialization of agriculture, a direct effect of the changes brought in the revenue system, helped to rise the middlemen. A large number of law suits following the Permanent Settlement helped the rise of a class of lawyers. As the rulers of India moved towards introducing English education in the beginning of 19th Century, a new class of educated

middlemen to represent the interests of the colonial power was on its way to appear in Bengal social structure. On the other hand pauperization began in a spectacular rate. A large number of peasants and small land owner cultivators turned into agricultural proletariat.

The process of destruction of the possibilities of the growth of a new capitalistic class that began after the Company usurped political control of India was completed by 1858. Shahidullah (1985:143) appropriately pointed out,

"The net effect of the political control by the British mercantile bourgeoisie, in addition to the amount of wealth that was drained off, was the destruction of the possibilities of the growth of a new capitalistic class structure and the development possibilities resulting from the gradual erosion of the mode of production indigenous to the area. Instead the British formed a new landed class subservient to the foreign mercantile bourgeoisie, they pauperized and firmly subordinated the peasantry to pre-capitalist forms of class oppression, and they subordinated and restructured artisanal production toward the ends of export, destroying part of the indigenous mercantile bourgeoisie and converting others into landlords."

It is in this context the British Crown took direct control of India in 1858.

#### **Consolidation of the Middle Classes: 1858 - 1905**

The deliberate attempt of the Company rulers to create a class of middlemen to represent the interests of the colonial power began to reap results when the British Crown took over the control of India. The task of 'new' rulers was to consolidate the gain and continue the policies of gearing up of the Indian economy in the interest of British trade and industry, and creating a class of collaborators to buttress the Empire<sup>6</sup>. What affected the socio-economic structure of Bengal most during the first fifty years of the rule of British Crown were introduction of cash crop cultivation, massive inflow of British merchant capital, and spread of English education. In terms of class formation, most significant developments were growth of a 'new' class

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<sup>6</sup>As a matter of fact, following the revolt of 1858 government recognized that India could never be effectively held if it was not supported by at least some sections of the Indian public. (For Canning's comment in this regard see Gopal, 1965:7).



of educated salaried middle strata dependent upon the colonial state and rise of a muslim middle strata in East Bengal from within the small peasants.

Cash Crop Cultivation  
and Capital Inflow:

Introduction of cash crop cultivation and inflow of British merchant capital are essentially two aspects of the same phenomenon: further incorporation of Bengal economy with the global economy and making Bengal more responsive to the demands of the burgeoning industrial capitalism in England. These were matched by other complementary steps such as infrastructural development<sup>7</sup> and legal reforms<sup>8</sup>.

The extent of capital-inflow and pattern of investment are good indications of some of the upcoming changes. According to one estimate, in 1858-59, British capital of 24.30 crore Rupees was invested in India. In the following year, the comparable figure was 41.20 crore Rupees. In 1895-96, the total was 73.0 crore Rupees. In 1913-14, the figure stands 191.0 crore Rupees. While the outflow of capital from India was, in 1859-60, 28.90 crore Rupees; in 1879-80, 69.20 crore Rupees; 1895-96, 118.60 crore Rupees; and in 1913-14, 249.0 crore Rupees (Rahman and Azad, 1991: 30). The cumulative figures show that by 1871, a total of 76.36 crore pounds

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<sup>7</sup>Growth and development of the railways and postal system during this period is noteworthy. Railroads were built at a spectacular rate in the late 19th century especially after the British Crown took over India from the Company. On the eve of the revolt of 1858 there were 200 miles of railway track in India; in 1869, there were 4255 miles of track which by 1880 had doubled to 8494. In the next twenty-five years the rail network expanded more than three times so that by 1905 there were 28,054 miles of track (Chandra, 1966: 172-77). The effect of the railroad construction was three-fold. First, the railroads integrated the hinterlands more closely with the seaports. And thus, primary goods could be transported at lower costs to the world market. Secondly, with railroad construction and operation subsidized, a market was created for steel and engineering output which benefitted the English industry more than relatively greater investment in irrigation would have. Thirdly, railroads encouraged the raising of commercialized raw materials at the expense of food grains. This, to a great extent, contributed to the famines India, including Bengal, experienced in the later years. During the great famine from 1876-1878 'while there was an all-round scarcity in the country and prices were four times the normal price ... the exports (of food grains) not only continued but even showed an expansion' (Bhatia, 1963:39).

<sup>8</sup>The Indian Succession Act (1851) and the Indian Contract Act (1872) are two significant legal measures introduced during this period those ensured the non-agricultural private property.

sterling was invested in India. But after 30 years, in 1900, the total reached 239.66 crore pounds sterling. In 1910, the amount was 337.13 crore pounds sterling and in 1913 the amount reached as high as 398.90 crore pounds sterling (Imlah, 1958:72-75). Above statements show that in the years after 1858 significant British investments in, as well as unrequited flow of capital from India took place. What is of particular significance is the pattern of investments. The British investments were made primarily in plantations and extractive industries. Thus the massive investments in India, and for that matter in Bengal, were not intended for the development of indigenous industries. Rather they were aimed at shaping a colonial economy where economic activities geared towards the interests of the colonial power. This unequal exchange not only benefitted the mercantile capital in the sense that it drained most of the resources out of India, it also made impossible for the indigenous capital to flourish. In such circumstances those Bengali families that survived the initial blow of the East India Company and continued to flourish in business and industry were driven out from the field of industry and commerce by the second half of the 19th Century. Either they became zamindars or moved to other professions after being educated (Umar, 1987:19).

The inflow of British capital and hence incorporation within a global economy entailed commercialization of Bengal agriculture and introduction of cash crop in Bengal. Most glaring example of such commercialization of Bengal agriculture is the introduction of tea and indigo cultivation. Indigo plantations were initially set up in Bengal in 1799 by the Company in order to meet American and Spanish competition; by 1850 it was among the most important exports from India. West Indian planters with an intimate knowledge of slavery first organized production along the conventional system of advances but once indigo had a hold in the community, relied increasingly on physical coercion and legal manipulation to grow the plant at a loss. The foundations of tea plantations were laid in the second half of the 1850s. And despite the fact that

the 'coolies' who worked in tea plantations were 'virtual serfs for the time of their employment contract' (Gadgil, 1971: 52), the tea plantations were organized in capitalist pattern.

The shaping of Bengal economy as a typical colonial economy obviously benefitted the locally resident metropolitan bourgeoisie for the economic power had been gradually consolidated and concentrated in their hands. But it also helped in developing a class of agro-commercial entrepreneurs, and traders. The agro-commercial entrepreneurs initially came from the landed class. But eventually in East Bengal a section of farmers also elevated themselves to this burgeoning class. 'The increasing trading activities in Bengal by the colonial bourgeoisie', according to Shahidullah (1985:144) 'provided also the basis for the formation of a petty bourgeois class.'

Nonetheless, as I have noted before, in terms of class formation, emergence of new English educated salaried middle class, or in other words, an administrative class<sup>9</sup>; and rise of a Muslim middle class from within the peasants of East Bengal are two important developments of this period. The advent of the salaried middle class was made possible by the introduction of English education.

#### Spread of English Education:

The English education was introduced in Bengal in the second decade 19th Century and according to Education Report of 1853 Government's average annual expenditure in education sector ranged between 10 and 21 lacs (Moudud, 1969:105). By 1858, in addition to the Calcutta University, reputed colleges like Hindu College (established in 1816), Srirampur College (established in 1818), Mohammedan College (established in 1823), Calcutta Medical College

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<sup>9</sup>In words of Alavi, this is the salariat class. He describes them in following way: "A new class of 'Western-educated' Indians appeared on the scene, the new professionals and those whom we may label the salariat, namely those who sought formal qualifications required to entitle them to government jobs, at various levels, and who either occupied or aspired to such jobs." Alavi goes further and says, 'This class has played a far more important role in the politics of South Asia, before and after independence, than is generally recognized' (Alavi, 1989:17).

(established in 1835) and Hughli College (established in 1836) were already in place. In Bengal, at least 25 colleges were established (McCully, 1940). These institutions served as the breeding ground of a new class who later joined the service of the colonial state. There remained, however, a fractionalization within the new class. The dominant fraction was comprised of Hindus, while the weaker fraction was the Muslim.

It is interesting to note how this salaried administrative class was formed. Though the Company officials were apparently interested in spreading English education in order to create a class of people to serve in the administration primarily as an intermediary, they were essentially in favor of regulating the expansion. Their reluctance was due to two reasons. Firstly, those who were enlightened with English education were demanding certain political reforms. A batch of students of the Hindu College, for example, as early as in 1830 asked for restrictions on the political power of the Company and provision for free and compulsory education. Secondly, the Company was interested in people who would serve as subordinate in the administration without being rival for the positions in the higher echelons of the administration. As such, though a large number of students were graduating from different colleges and universities, mostly they remained underemployed.

The situation, however, gradually began to change after 1858. Yet, two features deserve special attention. First, availability of jobs to the native people. Secondly, patterns of distribution of Hindus and Muslims in various profession.

#### Availability and Pattern of Job Distribution among Natives:

Statistics provided by Hunter (1969, first published 1871) show that the rate of increase of Bengalis employed in clerical jobs was much higher than the rate of Bengalis in professions like barristers, judges, wakil, munsif, teachers, doctors, engineers etc. The picture presented in the census indicates that the higher echelon of the administration was almost an exclusive

preserve of the English. The census also reveals that among the very few positions that were given to the native people a larger number went to the Hindu population in comparison to the Muslims. Statistics presented by Hunter demonstrates that Hindu population had larger share than the Muslims (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1**

Patterns of distribution of Hindus  
and Muslims in various professions

Positions	Hindu	Muslim
Deputy Magistrates and Deputy Collectors	113	30
Income Tax Assessors	43	6
Registration Department	25	2
Judge of Small Cause Court and Subordinate Judges	25	8
Munsifs	178	37
Public Works Dept., Account Establishment	54	6
Public Works Dept., Subordinate Establishment	125	4

Source: Hunter (1969)

The statistics provided by Seal (1971:362) shows that the share of local Hindus in the government services of Bengal was increasingly at a remarkable rate: from 44 percent in 1867 to 60 percent in 1887 (Table 3.2).

Another aspect of Hindu predominance that warrants attention is the preponderance of upper caste Hindus. It is not only true for Bengal alone, but more so for the whole India. According to the Indian Public Service Commission Report of 1887-9, the total number of Indian

employees in the Judiciary and Administrative departments were 1866. Out of this, 904 were Brahmin and 454 were Kayasthas (Indian Public Service Commission Report 1887-89, p.33 Quoted by Moudud, 1969:158). The 1901 Census of India also documents this feature. According to the Census, Brahmin, Baidya and Kayasthas constituted only 5.2 percent of total population whereas 80.2 percent of high government appointments were made to them. Muslims were 51.2 percent of the population, while their share was 10.3 percent, and lower caste Hindus received 9.5 percent share, despite the fact that they constituted 41.8 percent of population (Quoted by Broomfield, 1968:5-12). Despite governments exclusionary attitudes towards the Muslims and consequently fractionalization within the burgeoning class, the total number was increasing.

This salaried middle class, as I have noted before, came from the educational institutes established with that intention. According to one account, a total of 1978 students graduated from Calcutta University between 1857 and 1882, and 526 of them joined the public service (Seal, 1971:357). In another account, 30.6 percent of students who graduated from Calcutta University during the period of 1858-81 joined the public service, 35.8 percent joined the law profession, and 9.2 percent took up the teaching profession (Seal, 1971: 358). Over a period of 20 years beginning 1867, there was a dramatic rise in the number of natives employed in government services in Bengal with monthly salary of rupees 75 or above (Table 3.2). By the beginning of the 20th Century, a distinct salaried middle class predominantly drawn from upper caste Hindu was developed by the colonial state.

Corresponding to this salaried class emerged the bhadrolok class in Calcutta, a segment of the middle classes who later played the role of the harbinger of so-called Bengal Renaissance in the nineteenth and early twentieth Century Bengal.

**Table 3.2**  
Growth of Native Appointees in the  
Government Services in Bengal 1867-1887

	1867	1877	1887
<b>Europeans</b>			
Number	1080	1212	968
Percentage	35	33	25
<b>Eurasians</b>			
Number	457	449	387
Percentage	15	12	10
<b>Hindus</b>			
Number	1334	1868	2286
Percentage	44	50	60
<b>Muslims</b>			
Number	177	183	166
Percentage	6	5	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3048</b>	<b>3712</b>	<b>3807</b>

Source: Seal (1971:362).

The Bhadrolok Class of Bengal:

The bhadroloks, literally respectable people or gentlemen, are

"... a socially privileged and consequently superior group, economically dependent upon landed rents and professional and clerical employment; keeping its distance from the masses by the acceptance of high caste proscriptions and command of education" (Broomfield, 1968:213).

Addy and Azad (1973:77) quite eloquently described the socio-economic position and nature of this social group. They write:

"The *bhadralok* were drawn from the dominant Hindu castes who had served in the military and administrative offices of the Moghuls. Collaborations with foreign rule, secured mainly through the mastery of alien languages, formed part of their social and cultural heritage. Thus if one foot of the *bhadralok* was deeply implanted in the Permanent Settlement land system, the other stepped into the offices, judiciary, schools and professions opened up by the new colonial administration in Calcutta - the commercial and political center of British rule

in South Asia. Mastery of English and a fastidious concern over education became their hall mark. Thus garnished with the culture of their new rulers, the *bhadralok* performed the bureaucratic and professional functions necessary to mediate British rule to the native population."

The rise of this class was accompanied by growth in the cultivation of science, art, literature, philosophy, and history, which is commonly referred to as the Bengal Renaissance. Unlike the European Renaissance this one did not challenge the authority of the landed class, for the class was deeply rooted in the landed interest. Although in their writings and speeches they were staunch supporters and claimed to be the loyal followers of liberal western tradition, their position on the peasant uprisings (such as Indigo rebellion, 1860 and Pabna Rent agitation, 1873) clearly reflects a big gap between the theories they preached and practical solution they proposed. Despite the recognition that Permanent Settlement is utterly repressive to the ryots, they demanded a reform for the agrarian question, a reform within the framework of the Permanent Settlement. It is, however, true that the rise of the bhadralok class facilitated the advancement of Bengali literature and culture, especially newspapers. It is this bhadralok class along with the administrative class who gradually built clout in Bengal politics.

While urban Bengal, especially Calcutta, was watching the rise of the bhadralok class, the administrative class was spreading all over the country as the colonial administration was expanding<sup>10</sup>. In East and North Bengal, the region that now constitutes Bangladesh, the situation was completely different. Though these areas were largely Muslim inhabited,<sup>11</sup> most

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<sup>10</sup>The spreading of the administrative class can be understood by looking into the statistics that graduates of Calcutta University were seeking career outside Calcutta. Seal (1971:205) reports that 19.2 percent of students who graduated from the Calcutta University during the period of 1858-81 were employed in Calcutta. 23.5 percent of them were employed in Bengal proper, 6.0 percent in Bihar, 1 percent in Orissa. Total graduates who were employed in the lower provinces were 63.4 percent of total. Remaining graduates went to other places including England.

<sup>11</sup>According to 1881 Census, 50.16 percent of Bengal proper (i.e. Burdawan, Presidency, Rajshahi, Dacca, and Chittagong) were Muslims. In Rajshahi 63.16 percent, in Dacca 63.57, and in Chittagong 67.86 percent of the population were Muslim (Seal, 1971:37, Table 6).



of the landlords were Hindus. In Mymensingh, for example, just under 16 percent of the proprietors of land were Muslims, paying just over 10 percent of district's land revenue. Whereas one Baidya in three lived on rents from the land, and one in ten was an agent or manager of landed estates (Bengal Census, 1911, Quoted by Seal, 1971:40). With the promulgation of Permanent Settlement and deliberate exclusionary policy of the rulers towards Muslim community, Hindu baniyas gradually took over the large estates. It was matched by the emergence of new Hindus middle classes.

I have pointed out before that, with the introduction of English as official language, the situation of Muslims deteriorated further. It is commonly argued that the reason behind the backwardness of the Muslims in India is their unwillingness to accept British rule and their bid to cling on to their lost status. It is also argued that Muslims of India were reluctant to equip themselves with English education and thus plunged themselves into a backward condition. Though there are some elements of truth in such assertions, it was not the only reason for the absence of significant Muslim population in administration and commerce. Instead, one of the significant reasons was government's conscious attempt to exclude the Muslim. For the Company rulers had the belief that the Muslims were hostile to the British rule. The other prominent reason was the lack of financial means. Nevertheless, Muslims of India, in general, after the revolt of 1857 inclined towards the English education far more than before. In 1863, Abdul Latif, a leading public servant and one of the first Bengali Muslims proficient in English, organized 'the Muhammadan Literary and Scientific Society of Calcutta', to represent those 'Bengal Mussulmans who wish to adopt English education and European customs .. without contravening the essential principles of Islam, or ruffling the traditional prejudices of their Mohamedan fellow-countrymen' (Memo from Private Secretary of Viceroy to Private Secretary of Secretary of State, December 28, 1886, quoted by Seal, 1971:309) Fifteen years later Amir Ali established 'National Mohammedan Association' which also favored western education for the emancipation of

Muslims in India. Nonetheless, in eastern Bengal, where the peasantry was predominantly Muslim<sup>12</sup>, the rent question became the most important issue<sup>13</sup>. Several peasants uprisings in the eastern Bengal including the Pabna rent agitation bears that Muslim peasants were more concerned with the agrarian issues, to be more precise, rent question than anything else. That is why the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 had far-reaching impact on Bengal society.

The Tenancy Act of 1885  
and the Ryots of Bengal:

The Tenancy Act of 1885 recognized the ownership rights of the ryots on land. Though all ryots could not become owners of land, this Act provided the opportunity to become so. This is for the first time since the Permanent Settlement that someone other than zamindars could possess land. It is also important to note the exceptionality of this phenomenon that previously those who owned land, for example patnidars, had no direct relations with the agricultural production. Such a move was not intended to improve the lot of the ryots who were being exploited for such a long time, but was commensurate with the commercialization of agriculture.

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<sup>12</sup>The predominance of Muslim population in eastern Bengal is well documented in all Census reports. The Census of Bengal 1872 reports that 48.2 percent of Bengal Presidency was Muslim, 67.4 percent of Chittagong, 59.1 percent of Dhaka, 56.0 percent of Rajshahi were Muslim community (Census of Bengal 1872, General Statement 1B, p. xxxii-xxxiii). The Census reports also record that the wherever the Muslims formed the bulk of the population they belonged to the cultivating class. According to the 1881 Census, for example, more than 90 percent Muslims belonged to agricultural or lowly service group. Of the agricultural population only a handful could be classified as non-cultivating land-owners; the vast majority were actual tillers of the soil (Hunter, 1885: 294). According to the Census Report of 1901, in every 10,000 Muslims no less than 7,316 were cultivators. Number of land owners was 170 in every 10,000 (Report on the Census of India, Vol VI, p.484).

<sup>13</sup>This, however, does not mean that the question of Muslim backwardness was totally absent in eastern Bengal. Rather the question surfaced in a different manner, for there was a predominance of upper caste Hindus as zamindars even in areas where Muslim constituted the majority of population. As such, the question in eastern Bengal was not of comparison between the Hindus and Muslims, let alone competition. Rather, a question of repression of Muslim tenants by Hindu zamindars. This aspect of the confrontation between the two prominent class in Bengal contributed to the course of Bengal politics in the early twentieth century.

Massive British capital was injected into Bengal for cheap raw materials for the burgeoning British industries in England. The motive behind the Act was to develop an owner class from within the small peasants who would supply raw materials to the British merchant and be loyal to the British rulers. While explaining the reasons behind the Tenancy Act, Chowdhury (1967:305) writes:

"... a faith in the capacity of small peasants ... to evolve the most efficient organization of production, given a security of tenure and a reasonably moderate rent."

Thus, the drive for the Act came from the increasing demands of raw materials and the necessity to boost the production. That is why peasants were forced to produce certain kinds of products, such as indigo. Such mandatory agricultural production not only impeded the improvement of peasants livelihood, but worsened the prevailing conditions despite the fact that they possessed some land. As the peasants were coerced to produce cash crops their condition further worsened. And thus a large number of cultivators became indebted to the money-lenders. This reflects the incongruity of the agrarian policy of the government. For on the one hand private property in land was established and commercialization of agriculture was greatly intensified, while on the other hand, peasants' conditions were steadily deteriorating. Chatterjee (1982:115) noted this inconsistency:

"This peculiar contradiction in the land policy pursued by a colonial power ... formal establishment of private property in land and commercialization of agriculture, on the one hand, and the legal and bureaucratic protection of small-peasant production on the other ... was of crucial importance in shaping the processes of change operating in Bengali society. For instead of acting as transforming force in the agrarian economy, increased production of commercial crops further pushed down the levels of subsistence in an economy that remain fundamentally stagnant."

Thus, despite commercialization of Bengal agriculture, the organization of production remained unchanged while the exploitation of peasants' land and their labor increased. In the face of such

oppression more fallow lands were brought under cultivation by the peasants<sup>14</sup> and a growing number of the population became dependent on land. Furthermore, in line with the government's policy of commercialization of agriculture, peasants were coerced to plant indigo. But since all lands were not suitable for indigo plantation, another major cash crop that began to be cultivated was jute. With the rise of demand for jute in international markets, a growing number of cultivators began to involve themselves in jute cultivation. Another reason for the increase of jute cultivation was comparatively less governmental control over the production. Fluctuation of prices in international markets had direct effect on the price of jute in local markets, and thus there were certain elements of uncertainty. Yet, increasing number of peasants eventually began to shift to jute cultivation. As the Indigo uprising of 1860 succeeded in bringing an end to indigo cultivation, peasants became more interested in jute cultivation. Due to a number of internal and international factors jute cultivation was profitable until the second decade of the twentieth century. Such profitability had some obvious impacts on the social structure of Bengal to which Panandikar (1926:34) refers to:

"With the rise of the price of jute in the world market in the yearly years of the 20th century, not only the standard of comfort of the owner-cultivators had improved, but it also tended to make them gentlemen of the leisure."

Along with jute, price of rice also increased, especially in the western part of Bengal for a number of reasons. First, the intensive indigo plantation. Secondly, rapid growth of population. Thirdly, adverse ecological effect of railway construction. In order to increase indigo production, peasants were forced to shift from rice to indigo. Thus total amount of land for rice cultivation decreased substantially resulting in a drop in rice production. It is at the same time, western Bengal experienced a rapid growth in population. The situation further deteriorated due to expansion of railroad, for it had detrimental effect on the irrigation system. In a large area of

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<sup>14</sup>That is why by 1930s 92 percent of arable land were brought under cultivation (Chatterjee, 1984:116).

western Bengal embankments were erected on canals and some small rivers, to construct railroads, making the irrigation difficult.

Ecology of East Bengal and  
Jute as a Cash Crop:

In the eastern part of Bengal, however, circumstances were considerably different. Soils of different districts of East Bengal such as Dhaka, Faridpur, Barisal, and parts of north Bengal were highly fertile and better for cultivation of rice. Natural irrigation system was comparatively better. Moreover, East Bengal rivers were much less subject to the hazards of railways and embankments. New lands in the Sunderban area also attracted migrants all through the second half of the century. All these factors together abetted the growth of new localities in different parts of Bengal and increased the pressure on lands. This gave the zamindars an opportunity to raise their rents. The prevailing situation was succinctly put in *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1909:127-9):

"The price of rice is continuously rising owing to the rapid growth of population, the extension of non-food crops, such as jute, and the inflation of currency caused by the export of jute from East Bengal. The profits of agriculture are therefore steadily increasing, while at the same time the practice of granting perpetual leases has stereotyped rent rates" (Quoted by Sen, 1986:14).

Despite intensification of zamindari exploitation and an increase in land revenue, production of rice and jute rose steadily in East Bengal<sup>15</sup>. This attracted peasants from the West Bengal in

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<sup>15</sup>Few statistics would help understand the extent of production and consequent increase of rice and jute cultivation in East Bengal. An account of 1944-45 reveals that most of the districts of the East Bengal was producing surplus rice. Thirty-five percent of total rice cultivation of Bengal came from five districts - Mymensingh, Barisal, Tripura, Dinajpur and Rangpur. In jute production East Bengal had almost monopoly. 92 percent of total jute used to be cultivated in the districts of East Bengal. 62 percent of total production used to come from five districts of East Bengal: Dhaka, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Tripura, and Rangpur (Chatterjee, 1984:117). Between 1872-73 and 1899-1900, jute cultivation in different districts of East Bengal grew dramatically. In Rangpur, the increase was 177 percent; in Faridpur, 525 percent; in Mymensingh, 517 percent; in Rajshahi, 514 percent (N.C. Choudhury quoted by Sen, 1982:55). In 1872-73, total area under jute cultivation in Bengal according to the Report of the Bengal Jute Enquiry Committee (Vol I, p.7) was, about a million acres. By 1907-08 the acreage under jute had reached the figure of 3.88 million (Ahmed, 1974:119).

large numbers. Massive migration from the western Bengal gradually made the East Bengal a densely populated area compelling the peasants to bring large tracts of new lands under cultivation. As the East Bengal eventually became the major producer of rice and jute, it began to have an impact on the socio-economic structure of the region. Private property in land and the autonomy to produce commodities according to the demands of the market paved the way for a differentiation among the peasantry in Bengal. Since rice was mostly produced as cash crop in East Bengal, a class of rice merchants started to act as middlemen between the producer and the markets in the West Bengal. This was equally true for the jute merchants. It is interesting to note that this merchant class evolved from within the peasantry, for trading as occupation had always been treated as socially demeaning activity by the wealthier sections of the society. Thus, the production of jute as commercial crop which replaced the cultivation of indigo in the nineteenth century in Bengal introduced certain changes, especially in the social structure of the Muslim majority region of East Bengal. As a matter of fact, the increasing demands of jute, and the consequential rise in production transformed the agriculture of East Bengal from the level of self sufficiency to the commercial stage of agriculture.

Such a transformation entailed social consequences. On the one hand, a class of rich peasants began to emerge while massive pauperization and growth of landless peasants became obvious on the other. The burgeoning rich Muslim small peasants began to appear as competitors of Hindu zamindars in East Bengal. This is what served as the mid-wife for the Muslim middle class of East Bengal. Though the class had its origin in jute cultivation, slowly they moved into

jute trading, bailing, supplying jute to the mills and entering in jute mill jobs<sup>16</sup>. This was accompanied with the growth in Muslim education in East Bengal (Basu, 1974:112-14).

Thus, it is obvious from the above description that unlike West Bengal, where the middle classes grew from the parasitic landlords devoid of any direct connection with land, middle classes in East Bengal primarily emerged from within the small peasantry as the beneficiary of massive commercialization of agriculture and the private ownership of land recognized through the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885. It is these burgeoning Muslim middle classes who served as the main force for the divisive policy of the British government in the twentieth century, especially after the declaration of partition of Bengal in 1905.

#### **Partition of Bengal and its Consequences (1905 - 1920s)**

The processes of the emergence of the middle classes from within the Muslim peasants of East Bengal was accelerated by the partition of Bengal in 1905. The decision of partition was taken on administrative and political grounds. The administrative justification for the partition of Bengal was that Bengal was unmanageably big for the administrators. The political reason behind the decision was that the prevalent deep division within the Muslims and Hindus needed to be used for continued colonial exploitation. In the face of growing nationalist movement and Hindu militant revivalism following the creation of the All India Congress (1885), British rulers decided to switch patronage to the Muslims with the same intention and effect as over a century ago when supreme favor was directed to the Hindu. As a matter of fact, the process of such patronage began with the publication of the oft-quoted book by William Hunter, 'The Indian Musalmans' in 1871. In the words of H. H. Risely, Home Secretary to the Government of India,

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<sup>16</sup>At least four levels of intermediaries between the jute cultivators and the traders and spinners can be found at that time: Faria, Bepari, Aratdar, and baler. These middlemen usually took a large slice from the produce. Yet, compare to their earlier conditions, they were better.

"one of our main objects is to split up and thereby to weaken a solid body of opponents to our rule" (Quoted by Tripathi, 1969:95). The Curzonian plan of partition was implemented at a time when the dominant fraction of landed and administrative classes of the eastern Bengal were increasingly demanding political power. As such the partition had been overwhelmingly supported by the Muslims in eastern Bengal. Cronin (1975:101) aptly pointed out:

"The partition and the opportunities which it suggested, served to unite the Muslim population against a common enemy. The small educated and professional class saw the opportunity for patronage and the support of the government in the competition with the Hindu bhadralok, while the peasantry saw a new chance to assert themselves against their Hindu landlords."

But the partition was opposed by the Hindu landed and the administrative classes as this went against their interests. In 1911, with the increasing growth of radicalism among the Hindus expressed in the Swadeshi movement and terrorist activities, the partition was annulled by the government.

The period of existence of eastern Bengal as a separate province was brief, momentous, and significant in the history of Bengal. The immediate impact of the partition was the regeneration of Muslim politics not only in Bengal but all over the India. The Muslim landed aristocracy found a ground to fight the Hindu landed class in particular and Hindus in general. Their aspirations for political power was expressed in the Muslim Deputation to the Viceroy at Simla for separate electorate followed by the organization of the Muslim League (1906).

#### Economy of Partitioned Bengal:

Within the brief period of six years, new vigor and enthusiasm was visible in almost every sphere of economic activity. During the first year of its existence as a separate province trade in eastern Bengal grew substantially. The Report on the Administration of Eastern Bengal and Assam (1905-06) reckoned that the value of the foreign trade, both import and export combined, rose from rupees 2.98 crore to 3.17 crore (i.e. by rupees 19 lacs) (Ahmed, 1974:284). The sea-borne foreign trade conducted through Chittagong in 1905-06 was 'more than four times what



it was before 1901-02'. Massive plan for construction of infrastructure including roads and buildings were undertaken. The first Lieutenant-Governor of the province, Bampfylde Fuller finding that only a very small proportion of ministerial posts in the government offices were held by Muslims, issued instructions in May 1906 for an increase in Muslim appointments to the level which represented a fair division between the communities.

#### Education in Partitioned Bengal:

Change was most easily visible in the field of education. In all the different stages - primary, secondary and higher education, reforms were undertaken. Number of college students increased from 1698 (in 1906) to 2560 (in 1912), expenditure was raised from rupees 154,358 to rupees 383,619. "From 1905-1911 the number of pupils in public institutions rose from 699,051 to 936,653 and the expenditure from provincial revenues rose from rupees 1106,051 (i.e., 11.06 lacs) to rupees 2205,339 (i.e., 22.05 lacs) while the local expenditure both direct and indirect combined rose from rupees 4781,883 (i.e., 47.81 lacs) to rupees 7305,260 (i.e., 73.05 lacs)"<sup>17</sup> Female education was emphasized and increased in a remarkable rate. By 1908-09, 819 new girls schools had been opened. By 1910-11, there were about 4550 girls school<sup>18</sup>. Additional scholarship for Muslim students were increased and 82 college hostels were built for the Muslim students<sup>19</sup>. All these together point to the fact that a new breed of middle classes were in the process of growing. Karim (1964:257) notes:

"The Bengali Muslim Middle Class, like its Hindu counterpart, began to be recruited from various Muslim social classes as the 19th century was to be a close

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<sup>17</sup>Reply of Lord Harding to the Deputation which waited upon him regarding the Dhaka University on February 16, 1912. The Pioneer Mail, February 23, 1912 Quoted by Ahmed (1974:288).

<sup>18</sup>Report on the Administration of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1908-09, p.X; Report on the Administration of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1909-10, p.48; Report on the Administration of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1910-11, p.55.

<sup>19</sup>Quinquennial Review of the Education in Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-08 to 1911-12, Vol I, p.118-19.

and this feature began to get more opportunities in jobs, etc. with the first partition of Bengal (1905) and introduction of reserved quota for Muslims in Government service."

Equally important and significant is the fact these newly educated population and traders were coming from the surplus farmers, not from the Muslim landed class<sup>20</sup>.

Two developments, completely unrelated to the partition, further accelerated the new class formation process. The sudden rise in the demand and consequently price of jute<sup>21</sup>, and expansion of 'Barga'/ 'Adhiyari' (i.e. sharecropping) system.

#### Price Hike of Jute and Its Consequences:

In the year 1905-06, total demand for jute was about 4 crore maunds, of which 1.5 crore maunds was for the jute mills primarily situated in western Bengal (Wallace, 1928:103). In that year alone deficit between the supply and demand was about 9.5 lac maunds in favor of the former. The heightened demand persisted in the subsequent years (Mukherjee, 1982:294), and

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<sup>20</sup>The point is well documented in Wakil Ahmed's study of the trends of Muslim thought in 19th century. Tracing the genealogy of 24 highly educated influential and representative Muslim personalities of 19th century, Ahmed reveals that only three of them came from landed zamindar class. Furthermore, Ahmed looked into 64 other Muslim writers of the century and found that none of them came from landed class (Ahmed, 1983, Vol I, p.89, 259).

Not only that the landed aristocrats were absent in the burgeoning class, they were against the expansion of education even for the Muslims. An interesting example is a letter written by Nawab Abdul Ghani of Dhaka to his son Ahsanullah. He requested his son not to impart modern education to the common people of Dhaka, for, he apprehended, this would pose threat to the leadership of the Nawab family (Ahmed, 1382/ Bengali year/ Vol I, p.34)

<sup>21</sup>This proposition completely contrasts with the one Chatterjee (1984) advances. Chatterjee asserts that the adoption of jute as principal commercial crop 'did not result in any dynamic resurgence of the agrarian economy as a whole, nor did it lead to any general improvement of the economic position of the mass of the peasantry' (p.9), even though 'the specific advantages of the adoption of jute as a commercial crop gave the small peasantry a relatively viable economic status' (p.61). Furthermore, he points to two other factors in this regard. First, fluctuation in the jute market, resulting in unfavorable conditions for the jute growers. Secondly, the limits of jute production, for it was set by the demand by the world market and can not be extended indefinitely. Chatterjee, however, recognizes that jute growing had some other attractions. Availability of advances, for example, is one of them. Though Chatterjee's analysis may hold truth as broad generalization, particular situation in Bengal seems to be different where jute cultivation helped emerge a class of surplus farmers.

the price went up as much as double of the year 1904 (Iftikhar-ul-Awwal, 1983:164). The change was so sudden and remarkable that one newspaper in 1906 commented:

"In the sphere of commerce it would be difficult to find anything more remarkable than the recent expansion of the jute trade. Price have risen to an unprecedented height, and the demand has continued. Jute has not been made dearer by any diminution in the supply, for on the contrary, the products of fibre has increased; it is solely the other great factor in price, an enhanced demand, that has sent up this cheapest of raw materials to a figure which almost suggest dearness ... in spite of everything the producers of raw materials throughout other world clamor for sacks and cloth. Everywhere stocks seem to be bare" (Iftikhar-ul-Awwal, 1983:164).

It is during this period that jute mills were being built around the world and taxes on imports of jute had been imposed in all most all countries.<sup>22</sup> In Bengal, mostly in western part, new jute mills were set up. According to a report published in Statesman in 1913 total number of looms increased from 9481 in 1895 to 37,316 in 1912 and total production increased by about 300 percent (Quoted by Iftiker-ul-Awwal, 1983:163). Such a sudden surge in the demands for jute and jute goods in world market paved the way for a large number of jute cultivators to elevate themselves to the surplus farmers. This is indeed true that the benefit of such price hikes could not be enjoyed by all cultivators, for the fluctuation of price in world market was effecting the domestic market almost instantaneously and thus sometimes compelling the peasants to sell at a price lower than expected. But those who could hoard it for a while, or in other words were not dependent upon market on daily basis, could cash in the advantages of such price hike. Furthermore, there were a number of intermediaries between the cultivators' and the market who were appropriating the shares of the profit making the cultivators share a meager one. Yet, this trend was strong enough to have impact on the social structure of eastern Bengal.

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<sup>22</sup>Iftikhar-ul-Awwal (1983: 165) reports that before the World War I at least 202 jute mills were functioning in Europe and American continents. He further reports that Italy, France and Russia imposed tax on jute import.

Barga and Adhiyari System:

A second significant development originated from the changes in the land tenure system in 1885, but the consequences began to be felt in the beginning of the 20th century. The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 gave the ryots an opportunity to possess a piece of land and whenever necessary they could transfer it to others. On the one hand a number of ryots were benefitted from this Act, while a massive pauperization began on the other. A large number of landless peasants began to appear in rural scene. It is this landless peasants who also began to take lease land from the others on stringent conditions. The system commonly known as 'Barga' / 'Adhiyari'- sharecropping. Though the arrangements between the 'bargadar' (sharecropper) and the owner varies in different areas, the harshness of the arrangements and extent of exploitation were almost the same. Under this agreement sharecroppers would till the land on the condition that they will receive the 50 percent of the crop while the remaining 50 percent goes to the landowner. At the turn of the century, this system spread all over the Bengal quite rapidly and differentiation among the peasants became quite imminent. In 1919, the Jalpaiguri Survey and Settlement Report comments on the situation:

"It was felt to be intolerable that an agricultural system, which was extending and establishing itself with such remarkable rapidity as the adhiari system has done during the last quarter of a century, should deny all rights in the land to the class which forms the basis and backbone of any community carrying on agriculture under its auspices. It was resolved that this settlement must at least make a beginning in the eradication of this gross injustice" (Chatterjee, 1982:168).

Although some ryots were benefitting from the barga system, it was the zamindars who were gaining the most. The khas or demesne land retained by the zamindars were used for sharecropping. Expansion of barga system in an alarming rate began to pose a threat to the productivity of the agriculture and thus forced the government to review the situation and bring some changes to restrict the barga system and give right to the sharecroppers. Initially, in Dhaka

districts, on an experiment basis began to record the bargadars on khas lands as tenants<sup>23</sup>. In later years some other measures, for example the introduction of Tenancy Act Amendment Bill in Bengal Legislative Council in 1925 recognizing sharecroppers as tenants<sup>24</sup>, was taken. But the pilot project was conducted sometime close to the partition which gave the impression that this was another benefit from the partition itself. Nonetheless, it gave some bargadars some form of tenancy rights while ejection of bargadars from lands was also enormous. The rights the bargadars achieved from this move were further strengthened in 1928 when the reformed version of the Bill was enacted.

Thus, by the second decade of the 20th century, in rural east Bengal four broad classes became prominent - zamindars, ryots, under-ryots, and bargadars. Zamindars, however, can be divided into three sub-divisions, big, middle, and petty. The big zamindars, very few in number, were those who had large estates and responsible to the government for paying government revenue. Peasants used to work in their estates on different conditions. This predominantly Hindu strata of the society used to live in the cities and maintain a conspicuous lifestyle, while their managers administered their estates. Inheritance as well as delinquency in paying revenue was gradually fragmenting the big zamindaris. In order to ensure the regular payment of revenues a number of zamindars were either bringing in more intermediaries between them and the ryots

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<sup>23</sup>In Dhaka districts some 77 thousand bargadars listed themselves as the tenants of the khas lands.

<sup>24</sup>The Amendment Act drew largely on the recommendations of John Carr's committee of 1923 which decided on the principle that produce-paying cultivators who supplied their own seeds and cattle and themselves chose their crops should be treated as tenants. The bill failed to pass through due to resistance from the land owners, including the newly emerged middle classes who had been employing sharecroppers and were benefitting from that practices. The reformed version of the Bill enacted in 1928, however, regarded those as tenants who paid a fixed quantity of produce as rent. And bargadars and adhiars who had been admitted in a document by their landlords, or had been held by a civil court, to be tenants would also be similarly recognized as ryots or under-ryots. These measures, nonetheless, could not stop the landowners to appoint sharecroppers in their lands.

or were selling off parts of their estates. These, in essence, were creating middle-sized zamindaris with small estates.

Middle range zamindars, either an owner of small estate or an intermediary, treated the zamindaris mostly as a business enterprise, in a very crude form though. Their goal was to reap as much revenue possible from the ryots. Petty zamindars were not zamindars in real sense of the term. Most of them were in a poor condition and actually owner-cultivator, for they use to cultivate the small pieces of land they possess. Although their right over land was, in legal terms, proprietorship, they were under perpetual pressure of the zamindars. Some of them were nothing more than intermediary with very small pieces of land. It is very significant to note that it is this category of zamindars who were the largest numbers in Bengal. About ninety five percent of the 47 lac zamindari estates listed in the memorandum of zamindars to the government in 1928 belonged to this category (Chatterjee 1984:4).

The peasants who obtained a right of occupation from the zamindars in exchange for a stipulated amount of rent were the ryots. Legally, they did not possess the ultimate right of a proprietor, but only the right of occupancy. Nonetheless, they had the right to employ bargadars on their land. An array of intermediaries, including the jotedars, farias (middlemen) can be classified under this category. It is from within this class that the educated and subsequently urban Muslim middle classes emerged and later consolidated their position. Following the enactment of the Amendment of the Tenancy Act of 1928, which accorded the right to transfer land, remarkable differentiation within them took place. Significant increase in mortgages, leases and transfers of lands in the 1920s bear the fact that the process of pauperization of poor peasantry intensified as land was concentrating on few hands<sup>25</sup>. And in contrast to this

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<sup>25</sup>The process of land transfer escalated during the 1920s in general. However, after passing of the 1928 Amendment that prescribed a 20 percent transfer fee to the landlord, the process slowed down for brief period in 1930. Nonetheless, the process again gained momentum and between 1930 and 1938 in one district of eastern Bengal 36 percent of land were transferred from one hand to another.

pauperization process, a strata of Muslim cultivators 'often officially designated as tenure-holders, but ... socially and culturally part of peasant community' (Chatterjee, 1984:127) consolidated their position with an eventual conflict with the middle ranged zamindars. Of particular significance is the fact that this new class in general and jotedars in particular came from the Muslim community and posed a threat to the middle range zamindars who were predominantly Hindus. Given the extent of exploitation by the zamindars, peasants of eastern Bengal, despite their conflicting interests with this burgeoning class, began to support them against the zamindars. Remaining two classes, under-ryots and bargadars, were practically dependent upon the classes we mentioned above, for they had neither proprietary right on land nor long term occupancy rights. Under-ryots are rent-paying holders of land having temporary possession of a holding under ryots, while the bargadars' right is limited only to the decision of crop to be cultivated on one harvest time of which he/she will receive a stipulated portion.

Among these classes, it is the ryots consisting of Jotedars, self-sufficient owner-cultivators and surplus peasants, who gradually began to form the core of the educated Muslim middle classes in Bengal. Mukherjee (1972:269) points to this aspect,

"Since most of the Jotedars could afford the cost of higher education for their sons, or provide them with capital to invest in business in neighboring towns, a large number of Jotedar families forged links with the urban middle class, as one or more members of the family became a school teacher or college teacher, a lawyer, doctor, businessman, government or civil official or clerk, etc."

According to Sen (1986:19) the other possible source of the emergence of Muslim middle class in East Bengal is the self-sufficient owner-cultivator. This trend became more obvious and distinct in the subsequent decades, especially in 1930s and 1940s as the Muslim middle classes of eastern Bengal began to vie for political power.

**Bengali Muslim Middle Classes' Quest For Power  
and Emergence of Pakistan: (1930s and 1940s)**

The last two decades of colonial rule in India is marked by political turbulence especially the spread of communal politics. In eastern Bengal the communal politics gained its ground as the middle classes strengthened their position in the society and their organized political expression became more obvious. As a matter of fact, the aspiration of the peasants to free themselves from the exploitation of the zamindars and money-lenders were tinted with the communal color as the middle class political leaders of eastern Bengal began to cling on to the newly achieved power in the 1930s. The politics of Krishak Praja Party (KPP) and the Fazlul Huq ministry in Bengal during 1937-43 bears the fact that the promises of reforms in agrarian relations and abolition of zamindari were shelved for the long-term interests of the emerging middle classes to carve out some space within the mainstream Indian politics. Some details would help us understand how the middle classes of Bengal moved in that direction.

**Mainstream Indian Politics  
and Two Political Parties:**

It is necessary to remember that by the beginning of the third decade of the century Indian social structure and politics in general underwent certain remarkable changes, most important of which is the emergence and consolidation of an Indian capitalist class, primarily based in northern India and Bombay, with all its pertinent political expressions. The consolidation of capitalist class in the economic arena was followed by their deliberate intervention in politics. In the words of Mukherjee and Mukherjee (1984:534)

"By the end of the 1920s, the Indian capitalist class had succeeded in creating a class organization on a national basis which effectively subsumed or subordinated various existing divisions within the class, in the long-term interest of the class as a whole."



The class was aptly represented by the Indian Congress, which by now succeeded to assume the leadership of the Hindu middle classes<sup>26</sup>. But, in addition to the predominance of Hindus, its distinct position in support of the landed classes in previous years, call for annulment of partition of Bengal and abrupt discontinuation of the non-cooperation movement launched in the early 1920s isolated them from the Muslim masses of eastern Bengal. On the other hand, the leadership of the Muslim League, initially organized by the Bengali Muslim landed class, gradually moved to the hands of the non-Bengalis. It is of particular significance that the Muslim League, despite its apparent hostility towards the colonial government after the annulment of the Bengal partition, failed to reach the Muslim masses in the Bengal as their leadership as well as their political programs were confined to the interests of the landed class. The alliance of the Muslim and Hindu leaders after the annulment of the Bengal in order to put pressure on the colonial government for granting more political rights to them fell apart after the violent riots between Hindus and Muslims in 1926, especially after the Calcutta Conferences of both the Congress and the Muslim League in 1928.

Nonetheless, a significant development in terms of organized political expression of the burgeoning middle classes of the Bengal was the establishment of the Nikhil Banga Praja Samity (All Bengal Tenant's Association) in 1929 'with a view of safeguarding, amongst others, the interests of tenants and the laboring classes' of the province of Bengal<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup>The leadership of the Congress also came from the middle classes. The professional background of 13,839 representatives who attended the annual conferences of the Congress between 1892-1901 shows the extent of middle class predominance in the Congress. 5442 of them (i.e. 40 percent) of them came from law profession, 2629 of them were zamindars, 2091 of them were businessmen, and the remaining were doctors, school teachers, journalists. None of them came from rural areas (Moudud, 1969:182).

<sup>27</sup>There were two previous moves to organize the peasants of Bengal. First in December 1917 under the leadership of Fazlul Huq, who later played the key role in organizing the Praja Samity, a group of lawyers and journalists attempted to organize Calcutta Agricultural Association; and the second one was in 1920, under the name 'Bengal Jotedars and Ryots Association' with office bearers drawn from Calcutta and towns of eastern Bengal (Sen, 1986:34).

Nikhil Banga Praja Samity  
and Huq Ministry in Bengal:

The leaders of the newly formed Praja Samity became popular through the non-cooperation movement and following the abrupt discontinuation of the movement emerged as the populist leaders among the Muslim peasantry. They, however, took a distinctively secular attitude towards the problems of the Muslim peasantry of Bengal<sup>28</sup>. Within a brief period the Praja Samity became one of the major popular organizations in Bengal and despite Muslim League leaders' efforts to patch up the differences between the Samity and the Bengal Provincial Muslim League (BPML), and Bengal United Muslim Party (BUMP) led by Kwaja Nazimuddin and H. S. Suhrawardy a sharp polarization took place in Bengal politics whereby the representatives of the Muslim landed class rallied in one pole of Muslim League while the peasants and middle classes assembled under the banner of Samity, now renamed as Krishak Praja Party (KPP). In the election<sup>29</sup> of Bengal Legislative Assembly held in 1936-37, out of 119 seats reserved for Muslims 54 were secured by KPP candidates contesting directly against the Muslim League candidates, while Muslim League won 60 seats. The Congress secured 60 seats out of 80 general constituencies. KPP in its 14-point election manifesto called for 'abolition of

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<sup>28</sup>The non-communal attitude of the leaders of the Samity is reflected in speeches of Fazlul Huq, the moving spirit behind the Praja Samity. In All India Muslim League Conference held in 1918 Huq unequivocally stated that, 'as regards the oppression of Hindu landlords, money lenders, lawyers and others, I do not think that the Mohammedan representatives of these sections of the society are less merciful to their respective victims; the relation between a landlord and his tenant, between a money lender and his debtor, between a lawyer and his client are merely personal and individual and are seldom affected by communal consideration. I know of instances of actual oppression by the Mohammedan landlords and money lenders of Mohammedan tenants and debtors which can hardly be surpassed by any authentic records of oppression by any members of non-Muslim communities' (Presidential Address, All India Muslim League Session, Delhi, December 30, 1918 quoted by Sen, 1986:35). In an address to a public meeting before the 1936-37 election Fazlul Huq urged the voters to shun communalism and vote for Bengali candidates. He said, 'Both Hindu and Muslim societies should shun communalism. We are all bengali. if we go to the legislature as bengali and strive for the development of Bengal then it matters little whether a particular member is a Hindu or a Muslim' (ibid, p.39).

<sup>29</sup>The election was held under the Government of India Act 1935 and the Communal Award Plan of 1932. The latter enabled the Muslims of the province to have separate constituencies.

zamindari system without compensation' and 'full autonomy for Bengal' (Shamsuddin, 1973:28). Since none of the political parties could secure an absolute majority in the 250-member House, formation of a coalition government became necessary. After an unsuccessful attempt of KPP to form coalition with the Congress, a Muslim League-KPP coalition government headed by Fazlul Huq was installed in 1937. Though Fazlul Huq was the Premier, the coalition was primarily dominated by the Muslim League in terms of both number and ideological position<sup>30</sup>. Furthermore, the cabinet was completely dominated by members of wealthy zamindar class and well-to-do families<sup>31</sup>. The conflict within the coalition finally surfaced on the issue of Bengal Tenancy Amendment Bill of 1937 and selection of Chairperson and members of the Land Revenue Commission. Nonetheless, after a bitter feud within the KPP and formal division of the party Fazlul Huq and some other members loyal to him joined the All India Muslim League in late 1937. In AIML conference held in 1940 Huq himself moved the 'Lahore Resolution' demanding separate state of Pakistan for the Muslim majority based on 'two nations' theory bringing almost an end to the non-communal politics in Bengal. It is, however, necessary to remember that the move towards Muslim separatism can not be blamed on the KPP or the Muslim League alone. Rather loud protest from the Hindu communalist organizations like Hindu Mahasabha against the Huq ministry with extremely communal overtone drove the Muslim masses more and more towards Muslim separatism. This, indeed, is in addition to the other factors I have discussed previously such as British policies of discrimination against the Muslims in the earlier phase and later dispensation of patronage and encouragement of Muslim separatism by the British, the time-lag in Muslim's English education in relation to the Hindu and consequent economic gap between them, maltreatment of Hindu zamindars, government

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<sup>30</sup>Of 11 members of the cabinet 6 were Muslims and 5 Hindus. Out of 6 Muslims, 4 came from Muslim League while only 2 came from KPP.

<sup>31</sup>Out of 11 members, 6 were zamindars, 1 capitalist and 3 lawyer-cum-politicians. (Rashid, 1987:93-4)

officials, professionals, and money-lenders, of the Muslim tenants, and Muslim middle classes; Hindu dominance of the Congress national organization etc. Cumulative effects of these factors together matched with the interests of the rising Muslim middle classes that made it possible for the Muslim separatism to flourish so rapidly.

A combinations of factors including Huq's differences with the Muslim League leaders, especially Jinnah himself and the English Governor brought down the Huq ministry in 1943. With the formation of the succeeding ministry of Muslim League under Nazimuddin and Suhrawardy moved away the power and leadership from the Bengali middle classes and passed on to the Muslim upper class predominantly landed class. But, it is indeed true that it is through the KPP and its political maneuvering that the rising middle classes came closer to the state power, though at provincial level.

Thus, the Bengali Muslim middle classes which began to emerge in the beginning of the century from within the peasantry, started to strive for political power by the third decade of the century. The paths of collaboration and conflict with the landed Muslim class made the Bengali Muslim middle classes more visible in the Indian political arena and forced the non-Bengali Muslim leaders to take the Bengali middle class into account, at least for the time being in order to realize their demands for an independent country. Nonetheless, in the absence of powerful leader as well as failure to assert their independent identity as the Bengali made them merely a junior partner of non-Bengali Muslim (League) leaders.

It is against this background that the Pakistan movement intensified and Bengali middle classes as well as the peasants of Bengal joined the movement in full strength. By 1943, Muslim League became the most organized Muslim organization in Bengal. Despite the fact that it is the ineptitude of the Muslim League ministry under Nazimuddin combined with the Bengal Government's complete subordination to the Indian Government's war policy; food shortage, with its ugly consequences of maldistribution; profiteering, brought the famine of a colossal proportion

in Bengal in 1943, Muslim League secured 96.7 percent of the Muslim seats in Bengal Legislative Election of 1946.

The last two flickering of the Bengali Muslim middle classes to assert their separate identity as the 'Bengali Muslims' as opposed to 'Muslims of Bengal' were the move of Fazlul Huq in 1941 through his resignation from the Muslim League and the proposal of a 'sovereign Bengal' advanced by Suhrawardy and Sarat Bose. In the former move, Huq broke away with the Muslim League alleging that the All India Muslim Leaders have moved away from the principles of democracy and autonomy, and seeking to 'rule over the destiny of the thirty-three million Muslims in the Province of Bengal.'<sup>32</sup> The latter move was more dramatic. As a last minute move by the Bengali nationalist leaders like Sarat Bose and some Muslim League leaders including the General Secretary of the Bengal Muslim League, Abul Hashim and the Prime Minister of Bengal H.S. Suhrawardy advanced a scheme of 'sovereign Bengal'. But, the move failed miserably, as the Muslim as well as the Hindu landed class were very against such a move.

The political developments beginning with the Cripps Mission of 1942 and continued through the Wavel Plan and Simla Conference of 1945, the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 finally culminated in the establishment of Pakistan in 1947 with eastern Bengal being a Muslim majority region one of its provinces.

Thus, in 1947 when eastern Bengal became a part of Pakistan its agrarian social structure consisted of four main classes, viz. a small category of big zamindars of which very few were Muslims; a sizeable section of petty zamindars, Jotedars and rich farmers who were shared by the two religious groups; a large part of self-sufficient owner-cultivators highly dominated by Muslims; and a big number of poor peasants composed of sharecroppers (bargadars/ adhiars/ bhagh-chasi) and agricultural laborers almost evenly distributed between Hindus and Muslims. The urban sector was mainly composed of small group of industrial worker and a sizeable section

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<sup>32</sup>Open letter of Fazlul Huq to M.A. Jinnah, quoted by Ahmad (1970:56)

of English educated, professional and salaried middle class elements, most of whom were Hindus but a quite substantial number came from Muslim community.

The major trend of class formation in the period reviewed in this chapter can be summarized in the following way. In the early phase of the colonialism, Bengal experienced a domination of external mercantile capital, and the British mercantile bourgeoisie represented by the East India Company were engaged in the process of primitive accumulation leading to massive plunder and drainage of resources from Bengal. Such actions of the Company was conducted with an intention to uproot the potentialities of any other possible changes. In doing so, Company squeezed as much revenue possible from the primary producers especially peasants. The principal forces in the class struggle were the external mercantile bourgeoisie, their intermediaries, zamindars and the peasants. Since the mercantile bourgeois seized the state power and utilized the state machinery to extricate revenue from the primary producers, the peasants confronted with two sorts of exploitation, feudal and colonial. Thus, the primary contradiction was between the primary producers and the state power and its intermediaries, while the secondary set of relation was comprised of the zamindars and the state power, where antagonism was primarily on the issue of share of the total extracted from the primary producer. In non-agricultural sectors the relations between the primary producers (viz. weavers and artisans) and the mercantile capital was directly antagonistic. The class relations, however, changed in the subsequent years.

With the introduction of Permanent Settlement and the complementary juridico-legal measures a new landed class was developed followed by massive sub-infeudation of land. The remnants of the classes engaged in non-agricultural activities were enticed to the land. Subsequently, English education was introduced making it possible for the emergence of a educated class subservient to the interests of the colonial state. Thus, in the nineteenth century the classes that became prominent in the agrarian class struggle in Bengal were the new

zamindars, their intermediaries (including Jotedars), peasants and the sharecroppers. The new landed class were let loose for reckless expropriation of agricultural surplus, making the rent question a primary one and the contradiction between the landed class (i.e. zamindars and their intermediaries) and the peasants the dominant contradiction. While in the urban Bengal the new educated middle classes, solely dependent upon the largesse of the colonial state (for it is the state patronage that made their existence possible) continued to grow. With infusion of British capital and the changing demand of the metropolitan bourgeoisie for raw materials, commercialization of agriculture took place that accelerated the differentiation within the peasantry and paved the way for development of a class of agro-commercial entrepreneurs. It is of particular significance that all these classes allied with the colonial state because it was through the perpetuation of the colonial state that these classes could continue their relatively privileged class position.

It is also necessary to remember that these classes were not unified. Instead they were fractionalized with the Hindus constituting the dominant group while the Muslims formed the weaker fraction. The state patronage towards the Hindus in the early years of colonialism matched with Muslims hostile attitude towards the colonial rulers made this possible. But, eventually the Muslims, followed the suit. And by the beginning of the twentieth century, cooperation of the Muslim community began to reap benefit as the colonial rulers decided to utilize the division within their subjects. In eastern Bengal, state patronage, commercialization of agriculture, and vitality of agriculture brought changes in the structure of the predominant Muslim peasantry. Nonetheless, the principal contradiction remained the same: landed class versus the peasants. As the landed classes were predominantly Hindus, the contradiction was tinted with communal color making it possible to use Islam as a means of political mobilization. The annulment of the Partition of Bengal made the Muslims of the eastern Bengal in general and the landed class in particular hostile to the colonial state as they thought this would bring more

opportunities for them. The discontent of the peasants against the Hindu landed class and the money-lenders, had no reasons to disappear. This gave the Muslim landed class and the burgeoning middle classes (those in the process of emerging from within the richer peasants) an opportunity to direct them against the colonial state. But, it is interesting to note, the leadership of the struggle against the colonial state slipped away from both the landed and middle classes of Bengal. The non-Bengali Muslim Leaders from the Northern India, predominantly landowners, usurped the leadership and eventually became the spokesmen for an independent state -- Pakistan, that came into being 1947.

To conclude, it is important to note that the class formation processes in the region that now constitutes Bangladesh followed a different path than that of West Bengal, and in the emergence of the middle classes the colonial state played the role of mid-wife. In the late 19th Century, the policies of the colonial state in favor the commercialization of agriculture and cultivation of cash crops paved the way for the emergence of a class of small owner-cultivator. Taking the advantage of high fertility of the soil of Eastern Bengal, the peasants, predominantly Muslim, began to cultivate rice and jute as cash crops, which again fortunately found a favorable international market. The small owner-cultivator class and surplus farmers benefitted from this situation and gradually began to appear as the competitor of Hindu Zamindars. The patronage of the state to the Muslims following the partition of Bengal (1905) gave this burgeoning class ample opportunity to take advantage of education and jobs, and flourish. By the third decade of this century, the Bengali middle classes appeared in the political arena with remarkable clout. Though they failed to retain the leadership in the following decades, the journey of the Bengali middle classes for the state power began.



**CHAPTER IV**  
**EMERGENCE OF INTERMEDIATE CLASSES AS**  
**PROMINENT POLITICAL ACTORS IN BANGLADESH: 1947 - 1971**

The end of the direct colonial rule in all colonies bring changes in class relations. On the one hand, it paves the way for the emergence of new classes, and new forms of alliances between the classes are formed for the perpetuation of the system onto which their respective class interest was embedded. On the other hand, new forms of class conflict emerge between dominant classes and subordinate classes, and amongst the leading classes themselves. Furthermore, 'with the departure of erstwhile colonial rulers, leading classes of the indigenous society are elevated into the realm of rule and power and they search constantly for a viable mode to articulate power' (Uyangoda, 1986:59). Pakistan was no exception. In addition, some unusual characteristics of the newly emergent state and society necessitated a realignment of classes more sharply than usually the case in post-colonial situations. It is of particular significance to note that the realignment of existing classes and their mode of articulation of this newly gained power determined the nature of the state of Pakistan. It also determined the relationship between the state and Pakistani society in general, and the socio-economic structure of the then-East Pakistan in particular. As such, class formation processes in Bangladesh are incomprehensible without reference to the nature of Pakistani state and the underlying causes of the latter's rise. Thus, this chapter begins with an analysis of the nature of Pakistani State and its impact on the social formation in Bangladesh. I will then proceed to examine the relationship between the state and the classes of Bangladesh<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Such an examination is necessary for two reasons; first, the policies pursued by the (second) colonial state shaped, produced and transformed the social classes of Bangladesh in general and intermediate classes in particular, making the state and classes closely interrelated. And secondly, since the state policies were more beneficial to the middle classes than for other social classes (which I will show elaborately below) the relationship between the state and the middle classes

It is, however, true that prominence in economic and social arena by itself does not ensure a class the prominent or 'leading' position in politics. Instead, the emergence of a class or a group of classes as prominent political actors is dependent upon other factors such as the relationships to other social classes. Additionally, on a historical juncture one or more classes can and do appear as the prominent actor(s) because of factors specific to a given social formation. In the third section of this chapter I will trace the factors that helped the growth of the intermediate classes led by petty-bourgeoisie as the prominent political actors in Bangladesh politics. I will show that an array of factors abetted the rise of intermediate classes as the prominent group in politics. The prime reason that facilitated their rise was the conflict and collaboration of the middle classes with the colonial state as the colonial state itself cultivated the class as its political agent. Here again, we must not lose sight of the fact that although the mode of colonial subjugation, the nature of the colonial state and state policies are important factors contributing to the preeminence of the intermediate classes in Bangladesh polity, these are not enough for comprehending the total picture. It is, rather important to see how the intermediate classes led by the petty-bourgeoisie, who themselves were subjected to the hegemony of the colonial state, established their 'moral leadership' over the other subordinate classes. Such a project was actualized due to the weakness of other social classes, but more so because of the successful creation/ appropriation of the hegemonic ideology of Bengali nationalism. Thus, in the last section of the chapter I will deal with the issue of hegemony of intermediate classes and their means of hegemony.

#### **Nature of Pakistani State**

The regions that came to constitute Pakistan in 1947, in addition to their role as suppliers of raw materials to the British industries, were primarily the hinterlands of industries established in other parts of India, especially Bombay. East Bengal (later East Pakistan) supplied raw jute

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determined the position of the latter in the socio-economic arena.

to the mills of Calcutta while West Pakistan primarily supplied cotton to the textile mills of Bombay (Ahmed, 1973:420). As such, when British colonialism formally ended, Pakistan received less than 10 percent of the industrial base of the subcontinent (Jalal, 1986:8). The contribution of industry to national income was less than one percent (Maniruzzaman, 1982:48). Taken together, these statistics clearly indicate that Pakistan at the time of its inception had a very small bourgeoisie.

Furthermore, there was a sharp difference between the social and economic structure of the two wings of Pakistan. While in East Pakistan, as I have shown in the previous chapter, the rural area was dominated by various groups of intermediaries such as zamindars, jotedars, landowners, and various other rent-receiving sub-leasees with the self-sufficient owner-cultivators in ascendancy -- the situation in West Pakistan was entirely different.

#### The Propertied Classes in West Pakistan:

The society and economy of West Pakistan was dominated by a firmly entrenched landed aristocracy. There had been a large concentration of landownership in a few hands. In Sind, less than 1 percent of the population owned thirty percent of the total cultivated area. On average each owner possessed more than 500 acres. In the North West Frontier Province 0.1 percent of the population each owning more than 500 acres, were in possession of nearly one-eighth of the total area. Even in the Punjab, a major beneficiary of agricultural development programs in colonial days, more than one-fifth of the cultivable land was owned by about one-half of one percent of the owners (GOP, 1958:309). Taking Pakistan as a whole, about 0.1 percent of the total land owners, that is about six hundred people, owned land to the extent of five hundred acres or more (Khan, 1964:50). According to an estimate of Alavi (1976:340) about five percent of all rural households in Pakistan (including absentee landowners) controlled about seventy percent of the land. It is in this context, the Pakistan National Board wrote that, 'while taking

stock of the conditions in the country, one is struck with their similarity to feudalism' (GOP, 1958:309).

The preeminence of the feudal relations of production transcended into political arena of the country. It is the landlords who dictated the politics of country in both pre- and post-independence days. The extent of their preeminence can be understood from two sets of data. First, the composition of the different provincial assemblies of Pakistan constituted through the elections of 1951, 1953 and 1954; and secondly, the professional classification of the members of the Second Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. In the provincial elections in 1951 in Punjab 80 percent of the members elected were landlords. In the NWFP Assembly constituted through the elections of 1951 landlord group held a majority. In the Sind elections of 1953, 90 percent of the members of the Assembly came from landowning classes. In 1955 when West Pakistan Assembly was set up, out of 310 members 200 came from the landed interests (Maniruzzaman, 1982:45-46). The second Constituent Assembly of Pakistan comprised of 80 members, 40 from each wing of the country. Out of 40 members from West Pakistan 28 were landlords, 3 lawyers, 5 retired officials, 4 involved in industry and commerce. In contrast to that, 20 members from East Bengal were lawyers, 9 retired officials, 3 involved in industry and business, 8 came from other professions, and not a single member came from the landlord class (Ahmed, 1963:115).

The preeminence of the landlords in Pakistan after the partition was matched by a peculiarity of Pakistani society, viz; the virtual absence of the bourgeois class. As I have noted, the areas that constituted Pakistan were practically the hinterlands and thus lacked any industrialist class. It would, however, be a mistake to assume that there was a total absence of Muslim bourgeois class. There was indeed a bourgeois class represented by families such as Bawany and Fancys. But it had two principal weaknesses. First, the big Muslim bourgeoisie who extended their support to the Muslim League during the nationalist movement, and migrated to Pakistan after the partition, were conducting their businesses outside the region. For example,

the Bawanys had their capital invested in Rangoon, while Fancys invested in East Africa. Others, such as the Adamjees, Saigols, Habibs, Ispahanis and Rahimatools remained small entrepreneurs, mostly engaged in commercial activities outside the areas that came to constitute Pakistan. Secondly, the business families who hailed from Gujrat and Kathiawar, and belonged to minor sects of Islam, being mostly Memons, Bohras, Khoja Isnashari or Khoja Ismailis, representing roughly 0.3 to 0.5 percent of the total population (Ahamed, 1980:22; Ahmed, 1973). Being immigrants as well as belonging to minority sects, these small number of Muslim bourgeoisie found themselves socially and politically weak. Yet, these communities formed the 'initial nucleus of an entrepreneurial class' (Nations, 1971:4).

Thus, what is discernable is that in the formative stage of Pakistan two native propertied classes were represented by Muslim League which led the political struggle for an independent homeland for the Muslims in India. It is through this political party, (i.e. Muslim League) that these two classes were elevated to the status of ruling class though they did not share the same world view neither do they had mutually compatible confluence of class interests. Given that there was a preponderance of landed aristocrats in the Muslim League (out of 503 members of Muslim League Council members 163 were landlords) and a leader (i.e. Muhammad Ali Jinnah) who attempted to articulate bourgeois-populist ideology, it is obvious that neither of them succeeded in establishing their total hegemony over the party. In such circumstances, with the establishment of Pakistan, these two propertied classes came to form a class alliance or 'ruling power bloc'. The existence of two competitive classes in power bloc necessitated a mediator between these classes.

#### State as the Mediator:

Although the ruling party (i.e. Muslim League) appeared to be the mediator between these classes in pre-partition period, it gradually lost ground in post-colonial situation because the landlords held relatively stronger position within the party and hence all legislative process

impeded the bourgeois hegemonic striving. The situation was further complicated by the fact that capitalism was the dominant mode of production and the state structure that Pakistan inherited was a capitalist state (with all the limitations of a peripheral capitalist state). Perpetuation of that capitalist mode of production was very much necessary for reproducing the conditions for the viability and continuity of the state itself. Necessitated by the structural needs of the state, in a situation where the ruling power bloc consisted of competing interests, the bureaucracy as an apparatus of the state assumed a position of mediator between the two propertied classes. Thus, in the early days of Pakistan, the conflict between the propertied classes was not resolved through a struggle leading to the subordination one by another, rather, it was mediated through the state. In addition to this mediation, the state needed to play another important function: shape, produce and ensure the viability of an industrial capitalist class, for it is in this class that the state attempted to anchor itself.

The logic of capitalist expansion project initiated by the Pakistani state since its inception can be explained only by the above mentioned factors. The class upon which the state fell back was so weak that it showed reluctance to undertake risks with their capital on their own. The state came forward in an interventionist manner to shape them<sup>2</sup>. Such a role of the state made this so-called 'nucleus of entrepreneurial class' dependent upon the bureaucracy for the patronage in the form of licenses and thus entered into a patron-client relationship with the bureaucracy.

Nevertheless, under direct state patronage a capitalist class began to emerge. Their rise was so meteoric that in 1959, according to Papanek (1967:40-41), only one community, namely, the Halai Memon 'controlled one-quarter of investment in privately owned Muslim firms.' Even

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<sup>2</sup>The extent of state's role in the economy of Pakistan can be understood from the fact that at that point of time 40 percent of gross monetary investment had been public, and these investments have gone to industrial undertakings where no private interests existed and to infrastructure required by industry. (Papanek, 1967)

as late as 1959, 35 percent of the total private and corporate firms in Pakistan were controlled by four trading communities - Memon, Bohra, Khoja and Chinioti (Sayeed, 1980:47).

The unusual origin of the industrial capitalist class gave a specific character to capitalist development in Pakistan which is best described by Rashid and Gardezi (1983) as 'mercantilist'. Like the British East India Company, the doctrine of this burgeoning class was to buy cheap and sell dear. It is because of this reason, that from an early stage, Pakistan followed the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) policy. Government clearly stated that,

"Pakistan would ... seek, in the first place, to manufacture in its own territories, the products of its raw materials, in particular jute, cotton, hides, and skin etc. ... for which there is an assured market whether at home or abroad. At the same time, to meet the requirements of the home market, efforts will be made to develop consumer goods industries for which Pakistan at present (is) dependent on outside sources" (Pakistan Year Book, 1953, quoted by Hassan and Gardezi, 1983).

It is also clear in the above statement that the state would seek its best to increase the raw materials, meaning squeeze the primary producers. Given that the raw materials Pakistan could produce were primarily agricultural products, essentially the underlying policy is to exploit the peasants as much as possible to fuel the state's drive for autarchy. Additionally, it is obvious that the state would look for a protected and assured market within the country first. As an attendant to this policy the state adopted the method of providing incentives to entrepreneurs along with paternalistic guidance. These incentives include tax concessions, cheaper credits, and subsidies to the traders. The Economic Report of 1953-54 maintained, 'fiscal policy was designed to provide powerful incentives to private enterprise and investment in industry' (GOP, 1953a).

The economic strategy of the state was evidently one of pure growth without taking into consideration the consequences of such a policy. This some times gives the impression that the state gradually became an instrument of the propertied classes, especially the burgeoning capitalist class. But a closer look into the economic policies reveal that the state had never been an instrument of these propertied classes, and neither did these classes play instrumental role in

the formulation of policies pursued by the state. Government's policies regarding Bonus Voucher Scheme, Open General License, Import list, and corporate taxation demonstrate that the bureaucrats formulated the economic policies best suited to the interests of the state in order to gain leverage to control the propertied classes. For instance, the Bonus Voucher scheme 'became an efficient tool of the state for redistributing economic benefits from one class to another' (Burki, 1977:156) and was used against the Karachi-based industrialists. In a similar vein, the Open General License scheme was used to break the monopoly of the Karachi-based merchants. The import list formulated by the Ministry of Commerce in collaboration with the Chief Controller of Imports restricted the importable items and thus determined who should be patronized. The corporate taxation has been set as high as fifty percent of corporate income knowing well that there would be large tax evasion and periodically exemptions will have to be made. Nevertheless, both of this move made the business community vulnerable to the bureaucrats.

Thus, the economic policies beneficial to the propertied class was formulated by the bureaucrats not to serve the immediate interests of the propertied classes and pave the way for capitalist development, but more so to generate surplus that can be appropriated by the state and later deployed in economic activities directed by the bureaucracy, a distinct feature of a relatively autonomous state.

#### Dominance of Bureaucracy:

At the time of partition, there were 1157 officers in the Indian Civil Service (ICS), of whom only 101 were Muslims and 95 of them opted for Pakistan, but the number grew rapidly after the independence. Additionally, they began to place themselves in the upper echelons of the administration and control political positions like ministers. During 1958-1971, for example, there were 17 ministers for finance, industries, agriculture, and commerce; of whom 6 were civil servants, 3 army officers, 5 landlords, 2 industrialists, and one journalist. During the same period,



there were nine governors for the two wings of Pakistan, of whom four were military bureaucrats, three were civilian bureaucrats, one was a lawyer and one was a landlord (Ahmed, 1980:40.) In the area of economic development, the key policy making institutions were National Economic Council, the Planning Commission, and the central corporations. All of these were dominated by bureaucrats (Braibanti, 1966:444-447). In the sixties, there were 13 central public corporations. The Chairman or Managing Directors of all of them belonged to the higher echelons of the bureaucracy (Ahmed, 1980:44-46).

Such a preeminence of bureaucracy in the state apparatuses is largely due to the colonial legacy, which Alavi termed as the overdevelopment of super structure. The legacy of bureaucratic preeminence goes back to 1919 (i.e. Government of India Act 1919) and to subsequent developments. It is the Government of India Act 1919 that allowed Indians to hold the position of ministers in the provincial governments. This meant that senior civil servants, who were all British at that time, had to work under 'native' Indians. But due to protests from the civil servants the relation between the minister and the secretary was reversed making the Indian minister a protegee of the British civil servants. The partition of 1947 did not change this administrative procedure and thus making the political nominee subservient to the bureaucracy.

This was further exacerbated by the non-representative character of the first Constituent Assembly and the concentration of power in the office of the Governor General. The members of the first CA had been elected before Pakistan was created. "West Pakistan Muslim League nominated many members of the first CA of Pakistan who had no constituency of their own from where they could get elected" (Barua, 1978:306). This made them vulnerable to pressure from the bureaucracy. On other hand, power was concentrated in the office of Governor General. It was he who picked the cabinet ministers and the entire mechanism of government. Jinnah, the first Governor General, relied heavily on the civil-servants who had the administrative experience 'necessary for proper functioning of government'. It is not only that Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan

-- the first Prime Minister -- relied heavily on the bureaucracy for day to day functions, they were given important posts in the government. For example, the office of the Finance Minister was given to the former bureaucrat Ghulam Muhammed (who became the governor-general in 1951) and Choudhury Muhammed Ali was given the post of Secretary General with powers to coordinate all activities of the government (who in 1951 became finance minister and in 1955 became the Prime Minister).

It is, however, important to note that the dominance of bureaucrats was not confined to the policy-making upper level only. In addition, they were entrenched into local level elected bodies in charge of implementation of those policies. In early sixties, during the Ayub era, a four-tier local self-government system was introduced. The lowest and most important tier being the Union Council, then Thana Council, District Council and Divisional Council respectively. The Union Council covers an area of eight to twelve square miles and represents a population of 8,000 to 12,000, where one councilor or Basic Democrat represents 800 to 1500 people, elected through universal adult franchise<sup>3</sup>. The Thana Council which covered 8-15 unions consisted of the Chairman of the Union Councils and equal number of officials nominated by the government. Half of the District Council was elected by Union Council Chairmen, while the other half was again nominated government officials. The composition of Divisional Council was identical, half being elected while the other half being nominated.

Like the civilian bureaucrats, the military bureaucrats established a firm grip over the state. The dominance of military bureaucracy in the state apparatuses of Pakistan can be attributed to both internal and external factors. Given the fact that Pakistan was situated in a strategically important area, which once served as the centerpiece of British imperial defense strategy of the subcontinent, early state-managers of Pakistan felt that they could cash in on its

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<sup>3</sup>Forty thousands Basic Democrats were elected from then-East Pakistan, who performed as the collegiate for national and parliament elections. I will discuss the role of Basic Democrats as well as the implication of this system on Bangladesh society later.

strategic location to get a guarantee for their sovereignty against a perceived Indian threat. In their perception, Pakistan's potential contribution to the existing and future systems of Western defense will only be taken into consideration if Pakistan gets increasingly involved in the international system. There was another impetus for more involvement in the international system: economic crises. Since it was quite clear to the state-managers of Pakistan that Britain was going to be an unlikely source of financial assistance, Pakistan was looking for allies with 'power and pelf'. Under such circumstances, the obvious choice was the United States. The United States, however, showed a little interest at that point of time due to its narrowly defined interests in South Asia<sup>4</sup>.

The desperate straits of the early state-managers of Pakistan to have the United States as an ally was dictated by, besides the economic woes, the colonial tradition of the army. During the British rule, the major chunk of Army recruited from the north-west region of British India (that fell under the jurisdiction of Pakistan), particularly from Punjab and NWFP. This army was used not only to defend the western borders against Russian advances, but also to crush the anti-colonial movement. Indoctrination of this imperial army successfully sensitized them against communism and any internal resistance (as the latter was viewed as an act of Russian infiltration). As such, from the inception of Pakistan, army viewed that the Pakistan's defense and foreign policy should be well connected with the western defense.

The security-mania of the army against India and search for absolute authority of the bureaucrats with the help of a powerful ally finally began to reap results in May 1948 with the

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<sup>4</sup>Pakistan, within a month of partition, made a request to the United States for economic assistance but could attract little attention. Later, in October 1947, made its second and formal request to the US for a two billion dollar loan. This time Pakistan emphasized that the loan is necessary for its administrative and defense expenditures. According to the Pakistani request such a huge expenditure on defense is necessary to forestall a Soviet threat. Pakistani representatives clearly indicated that Pakistan wants to line up its defense policy with the USA and its domestic stability was dependent upon economic assistance; yet it failed to get any assistance from the United States.

signing of a credit agreement with the United States. Empowered with this slight external support, Pakistan army earned the formal approval from the cabinet for the expansion of the army and procurement of arms from external sources. Nonetheless, developments in international politics in subsequent years along with further isolation of the ruling party elite from the masses finally completed the total 'sell-out scheme' of the Pakistani rulers and ensured an abject dependency on the United States.

Following the Korean crisis in the beginning of the 1950s, the United States decided to take a calculated risk in South Asia and accelerated its plan to develop a West Asian defense strategy<sup>5</sup>. Given the fact that Pakistan was willing to join the defense strategy and the United States military had 'eyes on bases in Pakistan'<sup>6</sup>, Pakistan was brought into the orbit of US influence without any disguise. Both political leadership and bureaucrats of Pakistan was very much in favor of the alignment<sup>7</sup>. With the departure of political leadership from power and consolidation of the bureaucracies, the state-managers of Pakistan "began in earnest to negotiate a military pact with the United States, offering military bases on Pakistan's territory for America to fight 'communist aggression'" (Gardezi and Rashid, 1983:8). These negotiations finally resulted in the "Mutual Defense Agreement" in 1954 followed by Pakistan's entry in SEATO (1954) and CENTO (1956). These treaties helped bring about military assistance along with the economic assistance that started to flow earlier and "expanded the size and capability of the armed forces, and its ability to handle both internal and external missions" (Wilcox, 1965:147-48). The external

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<sup>5</sup>National Security Council Report 98/1: 'The Position of the United States with Respect to South Asia', January 1951, Documents of the National Security Council, cited in Venkataramani, (1982:137-139).

<sup>6</sup>Harrison (1959:10) quoted a letter of Gen. Hayt Vandenberg, the then Chief-of-Staff of US Air Force, written in September 1951, where Gen. Hayt wrote "we have our eyes on bases in Pakistan."

<sup>7</sup>For example, Liaquat Ali, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, in 1950 brushed aside an invitation from the Soviet Union and went to Washington and pleaded for Pakistan's inclusion into any future West Asian defense strategy.

mission was to be the police of the United States in the region and the internal mission was to maintain a repressive authoritarian state. The final show of this 'internal mission' was staged in 1958 when military usurped power after consultation with Washington (Khan, 1967: 59).

There was another important aspect of this bureaucratic dominance: exclusivity of the bureaucrats in terms of their regional origin.

#### Exclusivity of the Bureaucrats:

Available data reveals that the bureaucratic elite of Pakistan was an exclusive group in terms of their regional origin: almost all of them came from the West Pakistan. In words of Choudhury (1972:6), who served in both the military regimes of Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan:

"Except during (a) short thirteen-month interval ... in 1956-7, the Bengalis had hardly any role in national affairs. Every vital decision, whether it related to political or defence or economic or diplomatic matters, was in the final analysis made by the ruling elite, composed of West Pakistani civil and military officers."

According to the Report of the Pay and Services Commission of 1959-60 (GOP, 1969:66), at the time of partition there were only 2 ICS officers from Bangladesh, and up to 1950 only 17 new recruits entered the Civil Service of Pakistan out of a total of 175 such officers. The representation of Bengalis in higher policy-making positions of bureaucracy, i.e. secretaries, and in official positions in different branches of defense forces in 1956 is documented in the following tables (Table 4.1 and Table 4.2).

**Table 4.1**

#### Secretaries in the Central Secretariat 1956

	Total	EP	WP
Secretary	19	0	19
Joint Secretary	41	3	38
Deputy Secretary	133	10	123
Under Secretary	548	38	510
<b>Total</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>690</b>

Source: Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, Debates, January 1, 1956 Vol 1, No. 52, p.1843-44

**Table 4.2**  
Officers in Defense Forces 1956

	Total	EP	WP
Lt. General	3	0	3
Major General	20	0	20
Brigadier	35	1	34
Colonel	50	1	49
Lt. Colonel	200	2	198
Major	600	10	590
Navy Officers	600	7	593
Air Forcer Officers	680	40	640

Source: Dawn, January 9, 1956, quoted by Sen (1988:81)

Fifteen years after the independence of Pakistan, in 1962, of the 19 Secretaries, there was none from East Pakistan. Only 7 of the 46 Joint Secretaries and 24 of the 124 Deputy Secretaries came from the eastern wing (Singhal, 1972:199). Even as late as 1968, East Pakistan's representation in the civil service was only 36 percent. In the central services the share of East Pakistan was about 27 percent in 1970; at the higher levels of administration it was even less: 13 percent. The share of Bengalis in civil service of Pakistan between 1950-68, and East-West representation in Class I officers in some divisions in 1968 and 1969 is documented in the Table 4.3, Table 4.4 and Table 4.5.

Similar to the situation in the civil bureaucracy, the overwhelming majority of military officers were West Pakistani in general, and Punjabis and Pathans in particular. In mid-1955, East Pakistan had a share of 1.5 percent of the officer ranks of Army, and the corresponding percentage for Navy and Air Force being 1.1 and 9.3 respectively (Jahan, 1980:4). In 1964, the last year of the data available in this format, share of East Pakistanis in officer rank rose up to 5 percent in Army, 10 percent in the Navy, and 16 percent in the Air Force. A complete picture drawn by Rizvi (1987:138-39) is presented in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.3**  
**East-West Representation in Civil Service**  
**of Pakistan, 1950-1968**

Year	No. of CSP officers	East Pakistan No.	%	West Pakistan No.	%
1950	11	4	36.4	7	63.6
1951	17	5	29.4	12	70.6
1952	13	3	23.0	10	77.0
1953	25	7	28.0	18	72.0
1954	17	5	29.4	12	70.6
1955	21	11	52.4	10	47.6
1956	20	7	35.0	13	65.0
1957	24	10	41.7	14	58.3
1958	25	12	48.0	13	52.0
1959	30	10	33.3	20	66.7
1960	28	11	39.2	17	60.8
1961	27	12	44.5	15	55.5
1962	28	13	46.5	15	53.5
1963	31	13	41.9	18	58.1
1964	33	14	42.2	19	57.8
1965	30	15	50.0	15	50.0
1966	30	14	46.7	16	53.3
1967	20	13	65.0	7	35.0
1968	20	11	55.0	9	45.0

Note: During this period 14 Army officers joined the civil service. They have not been counted in the above list. All of them were from West Pakistan.

Source: GOP, Establishment Division. Civil List of the Class I Officers Serving Under Government of Pakistan, 1951 through 1969; Gradation List of the Civil Service of Pakistan.

**Table 4.4**  
**East-West Representation in Class I Officers**  
**in Selected Divisions, 1968**

Division	East Pakistan		West Pakistan	
	No.	%	No.	%
Economic Affairs	16	36.0	28	64.0
Commerce	19	38.0	33	62.0
Finance	10	29.0	27	71.0
Agriculture	4	13.0	26	87.0
Industries	9	28.0	23	72.0
Cabinet Division	3	13.0	21	87.0
Establishment	12	32.0	25	68.0
Planning	21	30.0	51	70.0
Information & Broadcasting	5	25.0	15	75.0
Labor & Social Welfare	4	28.0	10	72.0
Defense	4	10.0	35	90.0

Source: GOP, Establishment Division. Civil List of Class I Officers serving Under Government of Pakistan, 1968.

The monopolistic grip of West Pakistani elites over politics, administration and the civil and military bureaucracy was deliberately planned and executed by the ruling power bloc of Pakistan. It is through such exclusionary methods that they could institutionalize the system of inequality, uneven exchange, uneven development and economic domination over East Pakistan. As I have noted previously, in the post-colonial situation in Pakistan, the classes elevated to the realm of rule and power did not ascend to that position through an ideological struggle that enabled them to emerge as 'leading' classes (i.e. establish their hegemony over the subordinate classes) before winning the governmental power. Instead, it is the governmental power that enabled them to appear as the 'leading' classes. Thus, to the ruling bloc, the method through which they could express their domination was coercion, differentiation and exclusion. This was



commensurate with the ideology of the state apparatuses that was inherited from the colonial state.

### **Pakistani State and Social Structure of Bangladesh**

Despite the relative autonomy of the state and the dominance of the bureaucrats as pointed out earlier, the Pakistani state was acting on behalf of all the propertied classes in order to preserve the social order in which their interests were embedded, namely, the institution of private property and the capitalist mode as dominant mode of production (Alavi, 1973:148).

Capitalist development in any country, especially in peripheral societies, is bound to be uneven as it squeezes a section of population to serve another. In Fagen's (1983:15) words, "the development of the more advantaged classes or sectors of a peripheral society occurs at the expense of the development and well being of the less advantaged classes or groups." In case of Pakistan this unevenness was far more distinct and was not only between the classes or sectors (viz. agriculture and industry), but also between the two regions of Pakistan, East and West. As a matter of fact, insofar as East Bengal is concerned, uneven development was extended up to colonial exploitation. This, obviously, was very much 'normal', because 'the long-run consequences of relationship between unequals (nations, classes, groups) -- at least in circumstances where the capitalist mode of production prevails -- are the multiplication and intensification of existing inequalities. This leads to widening gaps (both nationally and internationally), the fragmentation of communities, and decreased autonomy for the weak' (Fagen, 1983:15). The state structure of Pakistan brought about the subordination of Bangladesh in such a manner that it replicated some of the important features of classical colonialism. These features included economic exploitation, political subordination, and an extreme demonstration of imperialist attitude - racial discrimination.

Table 4.5

East-West Representation in Class I Officers  
in Selected Divisions, 1969

Division	East Pakistan		West Pakistan	
	No.	%	No.	%
Economic Affairs	20	44.0	29	59.0
Commerce	20	33.0	41	67.0
Finance	12	30.0	30	70.0
Agriculture	6	17.0	28	83.0
Industries	10	32.0	21	68.0
Cabinet Division	4	16.0	22	84.0
Establishment	11	30.0	25	70.0
Planning	28	29.0	67	71.0
Information & Broadcasting	6	26.0	17	74.0
Labor & Social Welfare	5	33.0	10	67.0
Defense	5	13.0	31	87.0

Source: GOP, Establishment Division. Civil List of Class I Officers serving Under Government of Pakistan, 1969.

Table 4.6

East Pakistan's Representation  
in the Armed Forces in 1964

	Percent
The Army/ Officers	5.0
Junior Commissioned rank	7.4
Other ranks	7.4
The Air Force/ Officers	16.0
Warrent Officers	17.0
Other Ranks	30.0
The Navy/ Officers	10.0
Branch Officers	5.0
Chief Petty Officers	10.4
Petty Officers	17.3
Leading Seaman and Below	28.8

Source: Rizvi (1987:138-39).

The extent of economic exploitation of Bangladesh can be gleaned from the statistics regarding regional disparity. An array of data on revenue and development expenditure in East and West Pakistan, per capita revenue and development expenditure, per capita GDP of East and West Pakistan, allocation of money for education, document the disparity between the two wings.

Regional Disparity: Revenue  
and Development Expenditure

Data concerning the revenue and development expenditure in East and West Pakistan from fiscal year 1950-51 to fiscal year 1969-70, documented in the following Table, clearly reveals that East Pakistan received a meager amount, not even half the amount of West Pakistan. During fiscal 1950-51 and 1954-55 East Pakistan received only a 20 percent share of total development expenditures. After much hue and cry the amount was raised up to 36 percent in the last fiscal year of united Pakistan. Though the share of East Pakistan in development expenditure was increasing in the later years, differences between these two wings were increasing in an alarming rate in certain respects. In terms of per capita income, for instance, the disparity increased at a spectacular rate. Available statistics show that in 1960-61 West Pakistan's per capita income was 31 percent higher than that of East Pakistan. By the end of the decade in 1969-70 the gulf had widened to 61 percent; West Pakistan's per capita income shot up by 30 percent (Singhal, 1972:176). According to a Bengali economist, the disparity in per capita incomes between East and West Pakistan increased from 64 percent in 1959-60 to 95 percent in 1968-69 (Sobhan, 1970). During the 1950s the growth rate of total gross West Pakistani products was 3.6 percent compared to East Pakistan's 1.7 percent. During the 1960s West Pakistan's total growth rate was 42 percent as opposed to East Pakistan's 17 percent, meaning that over the two decades, the share of the GNP produced in West Pakistan grew 2.5 times faster than East Pakistan.

**Table 4.7**  
Revenue and Development Expenditure  
in East and West Pakistan, 1950-1969

Period	Rev. Exp.	Dev. Plan Exp	Outside Plan	Total	% of Pak.
<b>East Pak.</b>					
1950/51-1954/55	171	100	-	271	20
1955/56-1959-60	254	270	-	524	26
1960/61-1964/65	434	925	45	1404	32
1965/66-1969/70	648	1656	-	2141	36
<b>West Pak.</b>					
1950/51-1954/55	720	400	-	1129	80
1955/56-1959-60	898	757	-	1655	74
1960/61-1964/65	1284	1840	211	3355	68
1965/66-1969/70	2223	2610	360	5195	64

Source: Government of Pakistan (1970). Report of the Panel of Economists on Fourth Five Year Plan 1970-75. Islamabad: Planning Commission.

Table 4.8

Per capita Revenue and Development Expenditure  
in East and West Pakistan, 1950-1970

Period	Rev. Exp. (Crore)	Dev. Exp. (Crore)	Average Pop. (Million)	Per Capita Estimate (Rs.)	
				Rev.	Dev.
<b>East Pak.</b>					
1950/51- 1954-55	171	100	45.3	22.08	37.75
1955/56- 1959/60	254	270	52.0	51.92	48.86
1960/61- 1964/65	434	970	59.4	163.30	73.06
1965/66- 1969-70	648	1656	69.0	240.00	70.29
<b>West Pak.</b>					
1950/51- 1954-55	729	400	36.1	108.03	201.94
1955/56- 1959/60	898	757	42.3	178.96	212.26
1960/61- 1964/65	1284	2071	49.1	421.79	261.51
1965/66- 1969-70	2233	2970	57.0	521.05	390.35

Source: Government of Pakistan (1970). Report of the Panel of Economists on Fourth Five Year Plan 1970-75. Islamabad: Planning Commission.

**Table 4.9**  
**Per Capita GDP in East and West Pakistan**  
**At 1959-60 Constant Prices**

Year	East	West	West-East Disparity Ratio	Index of Disparity
1959-60	269	355	1.32	100
1960-61	277	363	1.31	97
1961-62	286	376	1.31	97
1962-63	277	393	1.42	131
1963-64	299	408	1.36	113
1964-65	293	426	1.45	141
1965-66	295	427	1.45	141
1966-67	290	448	1.54	169
1967-68	307	468	1.52	163
1968-69	312	490	1.57	178
1969-70	314	504	1.61	191
<hr/>				
Growth over the decade	17%	42%		
Growth over in Third Plan period	7%	18%		

Index of Disparity:

(Disparity ratio - 1) x 100 expressed as index with base 1959-60

Source: Government of Pakistan (1970). Report of the Panel of Economists on Fourth Five Year Plan 1970-75. Islamabad: Planning Commission.

#### Expenditure in Education:

The same bias in favor of West Pakistan and to the detriment of East Pakistan operated in the allocations for the education sector. Available data suggests that East Pakistan always received much less than West Pakistan, approximately one-half what had been given to West Pakistan. In 1947, East Pakistan received Rs. 43.2 million to West Pakistan's Rs. 91.1 million; in 1957 it got Rs. 183.1 million to 406.2 million; in 1968 Rs. 185.4 million to 330.5 million, and in 1969-70 Rs. 211.9 million to Rs. 372.7 million (GOP, 1970). This discrepancy resulted in a gulf of difference in the enrollment of students at various levels, in the number of educational institutions, in the number of staff and in the staff-student ratio. A few statistics can be cited as example. During the first twenty years of Pakistan, number of primary schools increased by four times while it decreased in East Pakistan (from 29,633 to 28,255). The number of secondary schools increased by less than 25 percent in East Pakistan, while it went up by five times in West Pakistan. Worst of all is the fact that the development of West Pakistan was funded from the resources transferred from Bangladesh.

#### Transfer of Resources:

Through a surplus of international trade and a deficit in inter-wing trade a sizeable amount of Bangladesh's foreign exchange was diverted to the West. Exports from East Pakistan earned the bulk of Pakistan's foreign exchange. At the same time, the major share of foreign imports was destined for West Pakistan. In terms of regional commodity trade East Pakistan had a continued deficit in its current account which until 1957 was less than its surplus on its foreign trade account, thus indicating a net transfer of resources to West Pakistan (Stern, 1971). Added to this was East Pakistan's share in foreign aid which was mostly utilized in West Pakistan. Haq (1963:100) estimates that such transfers amounted to Rs. 210 million per year from 1950 to 1955 and perhaps Rs. 100 million a year from 1956 to 1960. The Advisory Panel of Economists showed that the net transfer amounted to Rs. 31,120 million at the rate of Rs. 1,556 million a year (GOP,

1970:84-86). The net balance of payments of East Pakistan registered a surplus of Rs. 5,367.98 million during the period 1948-49 to 1960-61 and a deficit of Rs. 9,386.2 million during 1961-62 to 1968-69. West Pakistan throughout the period incurred a deficit amounting to Rs. 55,004 million. If the total foreign aid amounting to Rs. 35,140 million due to East Pakistan on a population basis was added to it, the net surplus amounted to Rs. 3,120 million which was transferred to West Pakistan.

The scale and dimension of economic exploitation conducted by the West 'bore comparison with East India Company at its worst' (Addy and Azad, 1975:149). It is not only the drain of resources that was similar between British colonial rule and Pakistani colonial rule but also the consequences.

The economic policies of the Pakistan government were deliberately made to expropriate surplus from Bangladesh in general and from agriculture in particular as Bangladesh was predominantly an agrarian society. The expropriation of surplus was conducted in a planned manner to achieve two goals: firstly, to generate capital for the West Pakistan, and secondly, to perpetuate the mode of production that best suited the interests of a colonial state, namely, the colonial mode of production characterized by deformed generalized commodity production and extended reproduction of capital.

#### Appropriation of Surplus:

Policies regarding jute production and marketing reveal how surplus from agriculture was appropriated by West Pakistan. It also reflects the entire situation confronting the agrarian sector of Bangladesh under the colonial domination by the Pakistani state. As I have shown in the previous chapter, jute became the principal commercial crop in East Bengal in the early decades of the century. When Pakistan came into being Bengali rich and middle peasants were monopoly producers of jute. In the 1950s, jute enjoyed a world wide market, as synthetic fibers were not yet widely used. From the beginning, the Pakistani government established a total control over



the production and marketing of jute and jute goods through various legal and institutional measures such as the Jute Ordinance, 1949; Provincial Jute Dealers Registration Law of 1949; the Jute Act of 1956; Central Jute Act of 1956; Jute Marketing Corporation, 1957; and Jute Ordinance, 1962. Nearly seventy percent of Pakistan's foreign exchange was earned through the export of jute. According to one estimate, during the year 1948-49, Pakistan exported jute worth 1195.6 million Rupees and in 1963-64, jute worth 1065 million Rupees was exported (Shahidullah, 1985:151). This huge amount of money, however, did not return to Bangladesh.

By centralizing the foreign exchange earned by agriculture to pay for imports, the government of Pakistan deprived the Bengali peasants of their legitimate share of foreign exchange. By carefully manipulating two aspects of international trade the government of Pakistan set up its strategy of surplus appropriation from agriculture to provide initial risk capital for industry. 'The first was', Nations (1971:7) explains, 'the power to determine the exchange rate of the domestic currency and the second to control imports into the country.' Under the circumstances, 'the strategic weapons of accumulation became the over valuation of the currency and strict control of imported products' (Nations, 1971:7). The worst victims of this policy, obviously, were the Bengali peasants. The foreign exchange which the Bengali peasants earned from the sale of jute in foreign markets had to be surrendered to the central government in return for Pakistani currency at the official rate. The official rate of the Pakistani rupees was fixed at least fifty percent above its market value vis-a-vis all other countries. Thus, the jute growers of Bangladesh, lost approximately fifty percent of the buying price to the government. The foreign exchange earned was then passed onto the business clientele of the bureaucracy to pay for the necessary imports for which they were earlier issued licenses. Thus, by reserving two important powers related to international trade, the government not only appropriated surplus produced by Bengali peasants but also deprived the Bengali business communities. In issuing

licenses, the Pakistani government always discriminated against the Bengali business communities in favor of their Punjabi counterparts.

Large scale expropriation of surplus, like in the case of jute, resulted in the stagnation of agriculture. In the absence of any investment equal to the amount realized as profits, agriculture in Bangladesh came to suffer from lack of growth. The Bengali rich and surplus farmers lost all incentive for productive investments in agriculture as they were squeezed through the extraction of surplus. This also undermined their capacity to accumulate through increasing their control over productive assets. In other words, this meant a return to the situation that existed during the previous colonial era. Under British colonial domination, the expropriation of the agrarian surplus without being followed by any significant investments for its development, restricted the development of rural capitalism (Patnaik, 1972). In a manipulated stagnant situation, as Patnaik (1972:146) argued, the 'antediluvian' forms of capital -- trading capital, money-lending capital, land purchasing capital -- could only flourish. The one form of capital which remains absent, is capital in the sphere of agricultural production. Such a situation, essentially, thwarts any possibility of capitalist transformation of agriculture and rise of bourgeois class from within the rich and surplus farmers. The economic policies of the Pakistani state, in this way blocked any possibility of capitalist development in Bangladesh and thus, rise of any bourgeois class.

Instead, it contributed to the utter impoverishment of the rural poor. On the one hand, stagnancy in agricultural production contributed to their pauperization, while usury, and land leasing contributed to their gradual alienation from the ownership of the means of production on the other. The proletarianized peasantry was further exploited by the rural rich, as the latter

found it profitable to carry out production with destitute landless or near landless peasants paying them the barest minimum in subsistence wages, most usually in kind<sup>8</sup>.

In order to strengthen the expropriation of surplus from agriculture state favored the non-cultivating intermediate tenurial holders, namely jotedars. The abolition of zamindaris in 1950 (i.e. promulgation of East Pakistan State Acquisition and Tenancy Act 1950), introduction of Basic Democracy by Ayub Khan in the sixties, and the initiation of a Rural Works Program (RWP) sequentially consolidated this class of intermediate interests.

Consolidation of Intermediate Interests in Rural Areas:

With the enactment of the East Pakistan State Acquisition and Tenancy Act 1950, various groups of rent-receiving intermediaries pervading the rural areas disappeared, and the government of the province acquired all rent-receiving interests in land. The Act recognized the former ryots as proprietors and gave them permanent, heritable and transferable rights in land. A ceiling of 33.3 acres was imposed on the size of the holding of the individual family. According to the Act a 'family' included ' a cultivating ryot and all persons living in the same extended household, including a man, his wife, unmarried children, and any other person dependent upon him and living in his household, excluding servants and hired laborers' (Hussain, 1976). The act provided for compensation to be paid for all lands acquired by the state for redistribution. The rate of compensation varied from ten times the net income of the estates with income below rupees five hundred to two times the net income for the largest income of rupees one hundred thousand and above per annum (GOP, 1951:71). Though the legislation appeared to be a drastic move against the feudal land tenure system, essentially it was superficial, for it did not bring any radical change in existing class relations except to legitimize the situation already in existence.

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<sup>8</sup>The rate of increase in pauperization and landlessness of the rural poor is reflected in the census of 1951 and 1961. In ten years the number of landless agricultural laborers increased by sixty three percent, while cultivators as a whole increased by thirty-three percent.

By 1950 the zamindari system in general was decaying and was incompatible with the interests of the state. As early as in 1940 the Land Revenue Commission (popularly known as Floud Commission after the name of its chairman Sir Francis Floud) suggested that the zamindari system should be abolished (Tepper, 1966:7). After ensuring a substantial profit for themselves from land, which also allowed them to meet their revenue obligations, the zamindars withdrew from the rural areas and settled in towns and cities. The responsibility of rent collection was left with the tenurial holders who acquired these rights from the zamindars in return for fixed cash rent. In urban areas the zamindars were able to ensure better education for their children who went on to become members of the new urban middle classes. In the absence of zamindars, the petty-landowners and the jotedars emerged as the direct employer of the farm labor. Thus, under changed circumstances, the intermediate tenurial holders, namely, the jotedars, were now favored by the colonial state against the old zamindars (Alavi, 1980:26). The newly emergent Pakistani state followed suit. Given the fact that large numbers of zamindars in Bangladesh were Hindus and had migrated to West Bengal after the partition<sup>9</sup>, and taking advantage of the situation, in many parts of Bangladesh, the large Muslim jotedars expropriated much of the land left behind by the Hindu zamindars, the act simply legalized the expropriation.

Furthermore, two other points of this act warrant attention. First, limits of land on family holding, and secondly, the definition of 'cultivator'. In 1951, when the average area per family of agriculturalist excluding the rent-receivers was 3.91 acres, setting the limit at 33.3 acres on the individual family holdings was clearly in favor of the interests of the jotedars<sup>10</sup>. Secondly, the

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<sup>9</sup>R. D. Lambert (1950:307-328) recorded that 'out of 2237 large landowners in Bengal, only 358 of them were Muslims, who were, concentrated in Chittagong and Dhaka Districts.' He elsewhere (1959:52) noted that, 'eighty out of 89 estates with annual income of over Rs 100,000 and 122 out of 137 estates earning between Rs 50,000 and Rs 100,000 annually were owned by Hindus.'

<sup>10</sup>Though the government claimed that the act was made to redistribute land among the landless, the act failed to make available enough land for redistribution by setting the limit at such high level. Initially, the government could acquire only 163,741 acres of land. Besides, as

act retained the definition of the term 'cultivator' as incorporated earlier in the Rent Act of 1859, and thus, allowed the growth of non-cultivating interests in land depriving the genuine cultivators. In other words, by failing to undermine the position of non-cultivating interests in land, the act, in fact, reinforced the position of the jotedars in the rural areas, while the act did not provide any legal protection to the bargadars. Instead the act equated bargadars with agricultural laborers.

While this strategy of the Pakistani government helped rich peasants and jotedars to consolidate their economic gains, the subsequent policies helped the same class to gain political control over the rest of the peasantry. By gaining control over the local cooperatives, the village governments, namely the Union Parishads and Basic Democracy, the rich peasants came to form a vital link in the chain of expropriation. The Basic Democracy is a glaring example of the expansion of intermediate interests.

The 1962 constitution promulgated by the military regime of Ayub Khan after usurpation of power through a military coup d'etat in 1958, introduced "Basic Democracy". Under this new form of 'controlled' or 'guided' democracy eighty thousand 'Basic Democrats' formed the electorate for the Presidency, the National and Provincial Assemblies, as well as the channel through which developmental funds were distributed (i.e. Rural Works Program). The chief motive behind the 'Basic Democracy' was to enlist the support of the rural upper class through a distribution of favors among the rural elite and the establishment of channels of communication with them on the one hand, while disenfranchising the total population on the other. The regime indeed succeeded in doing so. According to one survey, in 1962, only ten percent of Bangladesh's farmers owned more than 7.5 acres of land, whereas more than sixty-three percent of Basic

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the landlords were given an option about the part of the land they wish to surrender, it was quite possible that a significant amount of surrendered land was waste land. By 1959, total land acquired was 234,746 acres, out of which 159,537 acres or almost sixty percent was waste (Abdullah, 1976:85).

Democrats owned as much or more land (Sobhan, 1968:168). After the 1964 elections it was reported that nineteen percent of Basic Democrats owned more than twenty five acres of land (Jahan, 1972:117). 'As far as income is concerned', Westergaard (1985:52) reports, 'about 15 percent of income earners had incomes above Rs. 3,000 against 46 percent of the Basic Democrats.'

It is, thus, evident that with the patronization of the state, the rural rich was consolidating their positions in the rural area and in fact became political agents of the colonial state and worked in close liaison with the bureaucracy and coercive apparatus of the state<sup>11</sup>. The situation further exacerbated as this class was bestowed with some economic power. Basic Democrats were entrusted with the responsibility to handle the funds for the Rural Works Program<sup>12</sup>. It is not only that they could divert these funds according to their wishes and select projects beneficial to their interests, but they could also misappropriate funds as the government directly supported this blatant form of corruption by slackening supervisory and audit checks.

Hence, state policies for agricultural and rural sector, in the main, helped the growth of a distinct middle class interest at the expense of the poor, for it was a necessary condition for the colonial state to increase the surplus. The impact of the economic policies of the colonial state was not limited to the agrarian sector alone. Their influences were felt in the industrial sector as well. Similar to the situation in the agrarian sector, industrial development along with the development of an industrial bourgeoisie in Bangladesh was thwarted during Pakistani colonial rule. The most important factor that inhibited the growth was the lack of capital.

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<sup>11</sup>In order to allure the rural rich in support of the colonial state the ceiling on private landholding was raised to 125 acres in 1961 from the 33.3 acres limited by the Act of 1950.

<sup>12</sup>This program was initiated in 1962-63 primarily financed by U.S P.L 480 counterpart funds, and up to 1966-67, had spent Rs. 670.8 million in Bangladesh (GOP, 1966:226).

From Industrial (Under)Development  
to Comprador Bourgeoisie:

Given the extent of expropriation of surplus by the state it was almost impossible to accumulate and invest as capital. The amount of private investment in Bangladesh reflects the situation. In 1949-50 private investment in Bangladesh was about Rupees 14 crore, whereas in Pakistan it was Rupees 38 crore. In 1954-55 the corresponding figure was Rs. 20 crore and Rs. 55 crore respectively. In 1959-60, the respective amount rose to Rs. 37 crore and Rs 77 crore (Sengupta, 1971:2319). Furthermore, most of the investments in Bangladesh came from Pakistani entrepreneurs. As a matter of fact, the bulk of the industries were held by Pakistan based industrial capitalists. Available data relating to the manufacturing sector indicates that, excepting public sector assets, "Non-Bengali business houses controlled 47 percent of fixed assets and 72 percent of industrial assets" (Sobhan and Ahmad, 1980:57). It is equally significant to note that, 45.1 percent of the total assets of privately controlled firms in Bangladesh were held by 43 families, only one of whom was a Bengali<sup>13</sup>. According to one estimate, the Bawanis, Amins, Ispahanis and the Karims had their entire holdings in Bangladesh; 50.3 percent of Dawood's and 51 percent of Adamjee's total net assets were located in Bangladesh (Shahidullah, 1985:154). In

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<sup>13</sup>White (1974) identifies these 43 families in Pakistan who controlled 72.8 percent of all assets of Pakistani controlled firms operating in Pakistan in 1962, listed on the Stock Exchange. In 1963 these same families controlled 73.7 percent of such assets. In the manufacturing sector their control was much higher, 77.3 percent of assets. According to Sobhan and Ahmad (1980) even if the private firms not listed on the Stock Exchange are included, control of these families was yet remarkably high, 58.2 percent of manufacturing assets. The control of these families were not limited to manufacturing sector. Instead, in the financial sector they commanded almost equal control. Insurance is a case in point. Fourteen companies from amongst the 43 families controlled 75.6 percent of all insurance assets held by Pakistani companies. It is of further significance to note that among these 43 families, 22 were at the apex who gradually took more control over the Pakistan economy. In April 1968, Mahbub-ul-Huq, the then-chief economist of the planning commission stated that, "66 percent of all industrial assets, 79 percent of all insurance funds, 80 percent of bank assets were controlled by some twenty families. About 80 percent of the total loan advanced by the Pakistan Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation had gone to fifteen families" (Weekly Holiday, 28 April, 1968).

1971, Ahamed (1974) reckons, about 66 percent of fixed assets in the jute manufacturing industry in Bangladesh were owned by the Pakistani bourgeoisie.

Thus, it is evident that the economic policies pursued by Pakistani state on the one hand blocked the capitalist transformation of agricultural sector, while on the other hand they frustrated any potential for industrial development in Bangladesh. This, obviously helped the state to 'appropriate a large part of economic surplus and deploy it in bureaucratically directed economic activity', but insofar as the social structure of Bangladesh is concerned, impeded the development of a bourgeois class. Instead, in the agrarian sector, as I have pointed earlier, it is the non-cultivating intermediate interests that was favored by the state.

In the non-agrarian sector, until mid-1960s, the state's economic policy left no room for a Bengali entrepreneurial class to flourish. In the face of massive discontent among the Bengali population and in response to the structural needs of the Pakistani bourgeoisie, a major change was brought in policy by mid-Sixties: the government began to purposely encourage the growth of a Bengali super rich class of industrialists and traders. Alavi (1973:169) refers to them as 'contactors' and 'contractors'. The former transformed themselves into a parasitic class of people by living on the sale of permits and licenses to the Non-Bengali entrepreneurs. These licenses and permits were obtained through their contacts with the bureaucrats and politicians. The latter group, on the other hand, starting with small construction companies, turned themselves into owners of industrial enterprises. Nonetheless, substantial support from the government in forms of loans from the Industrial Development Board and the East Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (EPIDC) were advanced to help the growth. Actual public sector investments in East Pakistan doubled between 1960 and 1965 (Lewis, 1970:146). Sobhan and Ahmad (1980:61-62) described the situation quite succinctly,

"In the urban sector a conscious attempt was made to build up a Bengali capitalist class from within the Bengali petty bourgeoisie. These classes were to be created by undiluted exercise of state patronage so that they would have no



doubts as to the source of their advancement and would thus promote and fund Ayub's political hegemony in East Pakistan. This was the first occasion where a Bengali comprador bourgeoisie class to began to emerge, founded on the patronage of the ruling power and identified with the perpetuation of this power."

The crude statistical parameters of the emergence of an industrial capitalist class from within the Bengali middle classes is the number of units that received support from the financing agencies. The Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan (IDBP) and Pakistan Industrial Credit and Investments (PICIC) supported creation of 272 units under Bengali ownership, while East Pakistan Small Industries Corporation (EPSIC) supported 1008 industrial enterprises<sup>14</sup> (Sobhan and Ahmad, 1980:64). The number, however, may give a wrong impression if we do not take into consideration the figure of the loans advanced. The median figure, according to Sobhan and Ahmad (1980) was below Rs. 150,000. This clearly shows that larger section of the nascent Bengali capitalist class can, at best, be categorized as medium. However, along with them, the state sponsored a small segment of large Bengali capitalist class. By late-1960s, 36 Bengali controlled enterprises were created in jute, 25 in textiles, and one in sugar. Additionally, at least 16 large firms were involved in jute exports, and 12 in inland water transport sector, 12 insurance companies and one Bengali owned bank were in operation. In the import business, 39 Bengalis were listed among those with import entitlements above Rs. one million. According to Sobhan and Ahmad (1980:67-68),

"The last two years of united Pakistan witnessed the apotheosis of the Bengali upper bourgeoisie. During the phase, the development allocations to the eastern region accelerated. In 1968-69 the East Wing received a record allocation of development funds of Rs. 2881 million, which was 55.45 million of total public sector development of Pakistan. This trend was accompanied by a record net inflow of external resources into the regions of Rs. 1454 million and by accelerated financial allocations to the private sector in East Pakistan through the public financial institutions. Of the loans approved by PICIC and IDBP up to the end of 1971, 46.2 percent was approved between the period 1969-71."

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<sup>14</sup>The number does not include jute and textile industries supported by different financing agencies.

Some other indices also bear the fact that in the late-1960s an upper rich class began to emerge in Bangladesh. Changes in the average annual income per household of the upper strata of the society, for example, reflects the trend. The average annual income of the upper 0.6 percent of households in Bangladesh increased by about 32 percent between 1963-64 and 1966-67 fiscal years as opposed to an average increase of about 10 percent for all households. The average annual income of households in Bangladesh in 1963-64 was Rs. 1740, and that of the top 0.6 percent households was Rs. 13,224 (Bergan, 1967). In 1966-67, the average annual income per household rose to Rs. 1878 and that of the top 0.6 percent of the households to Rs. 17,465 (Azfer, 1971: Table III quoted in Abdullah, 1972). The increase in the consumption of luxury items like cars, jeeps and station wagons also shows that a newer rich class in Bangladesh was rising. In 1951-52, the number of cars, jeeps and station wagon bought by the upper class was 3296. The corresponding figure for 1958-59 was 5,532 and for 1966-67, was 15,849 (GOP, 1968). It reached twenty thousand by 1969-70. Expenditure on urban housing especially meant for the upper classes increased nearly three times between 1964-65 to 1969-70 from Rs. 26.1 million to 73.0 million. By all standards, a comprador bourgeois class began to appear in Bangladesh in the last years of the sixties.

The discussion on the impact of the policies of the colonial state on Bangladesh society would be incomplete if we fail to mention the urban middle classes and the working class.

#### Urban Middle Classes:

Along with this emerging comprador bourgeoisie, an array of urban middle classes arose during the 1960s. They were engaged in different sorts of professions ranging from petty-trading to lower level official jobs, even fraud and middlemanship centered in urban areas. As matter of fact, the urban middle classes which emerged in this decade were the first generation of middle classes in Bangladesh who were completely dependent on their education and skill unlike their

predecessors who had some kind of economic relations with the rural areas<sup>15</sup>. This was matched by the expansion of educational institutions where large number of students were coming in from the rural areas<sup>16</sup>. According to Gankovsky (1972:222), in 1971, there were about 500,000 small-scale merchants and a little less than three-quarter of the total 300,000 intelligentsia were employed with low pay in different state institutions, private firms and as teachers in the elementary schools.

#### Working Class:

From the displaced rural landless peasants emerged a class of lumpen proletariat and a small industrial labor force. The class of lumpen proletariat developed primarily in the urban areas of Bangladesh, especially in Dhaka. This class comprised of rickshaw pullers, thelawallas, ferriwallas, slum-dwellers, domestic servants, beggars etc.

It is from the same origin that a small working class developed during this period. At the time of partition (i.e. 1947) the size of the modern industrial labor force was less than 50,000, which grew to about 300,000 in 1969 (BBS, 1979:396). Since 1965 the number of working class increased substantially. The growth in number of workers employed in cotton textile industries and jute industries, for example, reflects the trend. Number of workers in jute industries rose from 78,077 in 1965 to 163,000 in 1970. And corresponding numbers in cotton textiles went up to 59,500 from 35,989 (BBS, 1975). On the eve of the independence of Bangladesh (i.e. 1970)

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<sup>15</sup>Sheer growth of urban population during the period of 1951-61 reflects the trend of urban-based population. During this period population growth in urban areas were 45.11 percent. In previous decade corresponding figure was only 18.41 percent. (Ahmad, 1966?)

<sup>16</sup>There is no accurate figure for the actual proportion of students who came from rural backgrounds, but the 'Report of the Commission on Student Problems and Welfare' of the Ministry of Education written in 1966 stated that: "Students are now drawn from all strata of society, but quite a number of them come from families in which they are perhaps the first to reach institutions of higher learning. Their background, outlook and behavior patterns are very different from those of earlier generations who belonged, for the most part, to the upper and middle strata of society" (p.177). Maniruzzaman's study (1961:5-36) also reveals that most of the students of Dhaka University came from rural middle and lower middle classes.

the labor force employed in industry was estimated at around 976,000. Forty-one percent of the working class population (i.e. 403,000) were employed in modern industry<sup>17</sup>. The total industrial work force in the major industrial centers of Dhaka/Narayanganj, Chittagong, and Khulna comes to 287,000. Additional 101,000 were employed in tea gardens in Sylhet. Together about 40 percent of the total industrial labor force were concentrated in these four areas. According to a survey by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics conducted in 1970, at least 151,000 workers out of 863,578 workers employed in 304,481 small and household enterprises in rural areas of Bangladesh were wage labors (BBS, 1972).

Thus, the class structure of rural Bangladesh under the second colonial domination was sharply differentiated with the non-cultivating intermediate class of jotedars and rich peasants on the apex, followed by self-sufficient middle peasants. And it is the poor peasants, bargadars, landless laborers who were at the bottom of the hierarchy being oppressed the most. In the urban areas the social structure was far more complicated. There was a class of nascent comprador bourgeoisie, very small in size but influential in terms of their newly earned wealth and connections with the colonial state. Between this burgeoning class, and the working class and the lumpen proletariat existed an array of intermediate classes, petty traders, shopkeepers, salaried class serving the state and private enterprises as junior officials and clerks, professionals like doctors and engineers, intelligentsia involved in different educational and research institutions, students coming from different strata of the society, to name a few. Over and above, the most influential social force was the colonial state, a relatively autonomous administrative state manned by West Pakistanis, engaged in expropriating the economic surplus in a ruthless manner. Insofar as the class relations are concerned, it is evident that the upper classes, both in rural and urban areas, were the beneficiaries of the economic policies of the colonial state and were links

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<sup>17</sup>Data relating to strength is derived from unpublished data of the Ministry of Labor, Government of Bangladesh.

in the chain of surplus expropriation. The dominant contradiction, then, appeared as a contradiction between the colonial state on the one hand and the peasants, mostly landless; working class and the lumpen proletariat on the other hand. But, it is interesting to note that, this contradiction found its political expression under the leadership of the newly emerged intermediate classes, predominantly urban intermediate classes. A combinations of factors, both structural and historical, contributed to this phenomenon, with which I will deal in the next section.

#### **Intermediate Classes as Prominent Political Actors**

At the creation of Pakistan, Muslim political leadership of Bengal was divided into four factions, the Nazimuddin-Akram Khan faction, the Suhrawardy-Abul Hashim faction, the Fazlul Huq faction, and Maulana Bhasani faction. Nazimuddin-Akram Khan faction represented the upper Muslim landowning and commercial interests, who were mostly Urdu-speaking; the Suhrawardy-Abul Hashim faction largely represented the urban middle class elements, 'liberal' in political ideologies, and was led by Bengali speaking people;<sup>18</sup> Fazlul Huq had a broad base of support in rural areas because of his demand for the abolition of zamindari system, but was organizationally weak and remained politically inactive at the time of partition because of the political setback suffered by his party (KPP) in 1946 election. He, however, represented the Muslim landowning interests. Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, a popular peasant leader of Assam, came to East Bengal after the partition and represented the relatively poor section of peasantry.

Each of these factions were expected to be dominant in the state apparatus of the then-East Pakistan. But, the central leadership of the Muslim League deliberately choose the

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<sup>18</sup>It should be noted here that this faction came to Bengal Muslim League leadership in the late 1930s and contributed to a great extent in popularizing the party in Bengal. The success of Muslim League in the Provincial legislative elections of 1943 and 1946 is largely due to this group of Muslim League.

conservative, non-Bengali speaking faction led by Nazimuddin-Akram Khan. On the grounds of the partition of Bengal, the Bengal Provincial Muslim League was dissolved and Muslim League elected a new leader and a Chief-Minister, Nazimuddin, a loyal follower of Liaquat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Suhrawardy, the elected Chief Minister had to resign and hand over power to the hand-picked leader of the Muslim League. The decision of the Muslim League to remove Suhrawardy from power was quite obviously unjustified, as the procedure was not followed in Punjab, though the province was also divided. Punjab Muslim League remained as it was and the Prime Minister of Punjab became the Chief Minister of West Punjab. Such a move created uproar amongst the EPML leaders. Discontent of the other factions surfaced during a by-election of the provincial assembly held in April 1949. The disgruntled factions of the League nominated a young and almost unknown candidate against the official candidate of Muslim League, a local zamindar, and defeated the official candidate by big a margin. The surprising result of the election demoralized the conservative faction of the League<sup>19</sup> while their opponents morale was boosted. The election brought two of these disgruntled factions, Suhrawardy faction and Bhasani faction, much closer and finally, in June 1949, they formally launched a political party, East Pakistan Awami Muslim League, popularly known as Awami League<sup>20</sup>. Initiation of a new political party was influenced by some other important factors, such as the government's negligence towards the severe famine conditions that existed in the rural areas of East Pakistan, and a decision of the central government not to devalue the currency that forced down the price of jute in East Pakistan<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup>It is after this by-election the ruling faction decided not to hold any other by-election, though 34 seats were vacant.

<sup>20</sup>Despite the word 'Muslim' in its nomenclature it was altogether a secular organization. Nonetheless, the word 'Muslim' was dropped from the name of the party in 1953. For a detailed history of Awami League see Ghosh (1990).

<sup>21</sup>Umar's (1970, 1975, 1979) illuminating study on the language movement of 1952 provides detail history of the political events from 1948.

From the very beginning, the Awami League leadership was heavily weighted in favor of the intermediate classes. Vice Presidents of the party were the lawyers from small towns, and its General Secretary, as well as Assistant Secretary, were the student leaders with 'middle class backgrounds' (Jahan 1972:84-85). Of the 37 members of the Working Committee, 57 percent were lawyers, 14 percent businessmen, 1 percent landholders, 11 percent teachers, 3 percent labor leaders, 3 percent religious leaders (Maniruzzaman, 1981:20). In addition to the leadership, the newly formed party fetched support from the sections that can be best described as the middle men. Sen (1986:81) noted, 'the rising Bengali bourgeoisie and a section of landowners, locally known as 'Jotedars' especially in North Bengal districts, who first supported the Muslim League, and at one stage became prominent in Praja Party in the 1930s, now shifted their support to the EPAML.' The reason behind the support from the landowning class in general and jotedars in particular can be appreciated if we look into the demands of the party. In its 12-point demand, EPAML, called for the abolition of zamindaris, and in order to check the monopolization of jute trade by non-Bengali entrepreneurs, demanded for nationalization of jute trade<sup>22</sup>.

Despite the fact that in the early 1950s the peasants of Bangladesh were increasingly faced with the exploitation of the colonial state, it is the intermediate classes who came forward to launch a movement against the state policies. The question of state language became the first issue of contention between the emerging Bengali middle classes and the colonial state.

#### From Language Movement to Electoral Victory:

Since 1948, Pakistan Government deliberately excluded the Bengali language from all official usage, though Bengali was spoken by the majority population of the country (i.e. 54.6%). Muhammed Ali Jinnah, the founding leader of Pakistan, declared in 1948 that Urdu would be

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<sup>22</sup>The demand regarding jute trade raised by Awami League, as a matter of fact, was an echo of the one East Pakistan Jute Association's demand. The latter organization was pressing for equity among the traders of the East and West Pakistan.

the only state language of Pakistan. Bengali intelligentsia and students immediately opposed the idea. The opposition, however, remained confined to students and intelligentsia. But in 1952, the issue took a political form and people were mobilized. The language movement of 1952 was the first mass movement through which the middle class politicians established their hegemony over other classes.

It is of no debate that the language question per se was a middle class issue. Urdu-Bengali controversy was prevalent in the Muslim society of Bengal for a long time. Urdu was the language of the feudal alien elements and was esteemed by them as a symbol of their aristocracy. The Bengali Muslim educated middle classes who largely sprang up from the indigenous population were in favor of Bengali language. The introduction of Urdu as the state language was primarily detrimental to the interests of the aspirant middle classes. They quite rightly thought that if Urdu was accepted as the only state language in Pakistan they would be handicapped in competitive examinations for generations to come, and would be excluded from all the opportunities that the state can offer. For the poorly educated and mostly illiterate workers and peasantry the issue had no immediate bearing. That is why the entire movement was launched by the middle class students and people involved in cultural activities, and at the initial stage was characterized by two limitations, social (i.e. middle class) and spatial (i.e. urban). But, given the economic hardship confronted by the peasants and workers due to state policies, especially the severe food crisis and remarkable decrease in the price of jute, they joined the movement and turned it into a mass upsurge against the Muslim League regime.

While the language movement contributed to the rise of intermediate classes as a powerful political force, the provincial assembly election of 1954 consolidated their leadership over other classes. In the 1954 elections, the Awami League led by Bhasani and Suhrawardy, Krishak Sramik Party (KSP) led by Fazlul Haq along with some other political parties formed



an electoral alliance, the United Front<sup>23</sup>. The Front was in fact a conglomeration of different interests within the Bangladesh society. Bhasani, for example, represented the poor peasantry, while Suhrawardy was represented the urban upper classes and provided an elitist type of leadership. Fazlul Haq was represented the landowning class. The leadership, nonetheless, remained with the urban middle classes. The conflict of interests amongst the different segments of the Front was so obvious that they had to compromise on different issues. Regarding enactment of zamindari abolition, the Front was quite eloquent, but did not show any opposition to the jotedar interests in their 21-point manifesto. The rightist elements within the Front, such as Nizam-I-Islam Party (NIP), succeeded in blocking the incorporation of a demand for neutral foreign policy, though political parties supported by the Communist Party, such as Gonotantrik Dal (GD) and Youth Front (YF), were also components of the alliance. But the most important point of unity among them was their opposition to the Muslim League regime and realize some demands beneficial to the people of East Pakistan. In the election, UF routed the ruling Muslim League. Out of 237 Muslim seats UF secured 215 seats, while ML got only 9 seats<sup>24</sup>. Such an astonishing election result was made possible, according to Sen (1986:125), "by the significant rise of middle class in the Bengali Muslim Society from the agrarian background." Sen analyzed the defeat of the Muslim Leaguers as the defeat 'of those persons who chiefly represented the big bourgeois and feudal interests in the hands of the middle class elements who had not yet alienated from the peasantry.' Whether the success of the Front can be attributed to the non-alienation or should be put as proof of a close connection between the rural and urban middle classes is a point of debate. But, it is indeed true that the 1954 elections vindicated the powerful

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<sup>23</sup>After remaining politically inactive for a long time Fazlul Haq revived his party in 1953.

<sup>24</sup>The strength of the UF was further increased when out of 72 non-Muslim members, 68 supported UF and 8 out of 9 independent Muslim members joined the Front. One independent member joined the League. Thus, the total number of UF members raised to 223, while corresponding number for ML was 10.

presence of middle classes in the provincial politics. Furthermore, it was through this election that Awami League established its claim over the leadership of the class it represents, intermediate classes. For, it is the only component-party of the Front whose all 140 candidates won in the election.

The election results not only terrified the ruling Muslim League, but more so the military-bureaucratic oligarchy who were running the political show of Pakistan from behind the curtain since the death of Liaquat Ali Khan. With entering into an alliance with the U.S. in 1954 the military-bureaucratic oligarchy was about to obtain total control of the Pakistani state<sup>25</sup>. The election results were a severe blow to that design and thus posed a challenge to them. In the face of such a threat palace-intrigue began and taking the advantage of the ideological differences among the UF components one section was played against other.

Disunity and Demise of United Front;  
Military Rule in Pakistan:

The ambition of one section of political leaders to gain blessings of the central authority at the expense of others created the squabble inside the provincial parliament. In only four years at least four coalition governments came into provincial power. The scenario in central government was almost identical. It is against this background that the military-bureaucratic oligarchy staged a coup d'etat in 1958 and overtly seized power. Following the promulgation of martial law, political activities were banned and remained so until 1962 when a parliament was elected by the Basic Democrats and a new constitution was enacted.

An important political development that took place before the promulgation of martial law was the split in Awami League. In 1956, when Awami League formed a coalition government

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<sup>25</sup>Announcement of the alliance treaty was quite significant in respect to the elections. Because according to Spain (1954) and Hertzberg (1954) announcement of the alliance was made hastily on request from Pakistan government, who thought that this alliance would help the ruling Muslim League win the elections. Since the announcement was scheduled on February 21, the election was shifted from February 16 to March 8.

both in the province and at the center, an ideological conflict developed between party President Bhasani and H.S. Suhrawardy, Prime Minister of the central government, on two issues, the question of regional autonomy for the East and pursuing a neutral foreign policy. Suhrawardy, clearly deviating from the party policy, lowered the priority of autonomy issue and championed Pakistan's alignment with the West through participation in SEATO and CENTO and the Military Assistance Agreement with the USA. The rift finally culminated into formal division of the party in 1957. Bhasani formed a new left-of-center political platform, National Awami Party (NAP), and the pro-Suhrawardy group led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman manipulated an endorsement for Suhrawardy from AL Working Committee. Nonetheless, the rift in AL reflects the conflict between the urban educated middle classes represented by Suhrawardy-Mujib faction and peasants and rural poor represented by Bhasani. As a matter of fact, the departure of Bhasani from AL made the party leadership completely dominated by intermediate classes. While on the other hand, the NAP, though in terms of ideology and program was oriented towards poorer sections of the Bengali population, had been led by middle class political leaders (Rashiduzzaman, 1970:395).

In 1962, when political activities resumed in Pakistan under the new constitution and a new parliament was elected by the selected electorate, some remarkable changes in the social structure of Bangladesh have already taken place. As I have noted in previous section, through BD system an alliance between the rich peasants and jotedars and the state have already been formed. In the urban areas, a small segment of middle classes, mostly 'contactors' and 'contractors', began to emerge. The military rule, on the one hand, benefitted a section of middle classes of Bangladesh, while on the other a larger section felt their total isolation from the state structure. To the aspirant political leaders of Bangladesh, military rule showed how little access they have to the state power, to merchants it was obvious that the non-Bengali merchants were availing themselves of all the opportunities as they had closer relations with the bureaucracy, to

urban salaried class the military rule was a clear domination of non-Bengali people. Thus, by 1964, at the time of reorganization of political parties, the relationship between the intermediate classes and the colonial state reached a precarious level, a relationship of both conflict and collaboration.

The collaboration of the intermediate classes with the colonial state is clear as they functioned as political agents of the state. The social origin of the BD members mentioned in previous section bears out this fact. Furthermore, there was a preponderance of middle class representatives in the Provincial as well as National Assemblies elected in 1962 and 1965. In the National Assembly, out of 78 members elected from East Pakistan, 31 were lawyers, 23 small businessmen and industrialists, 12 landholders and rest belonged to other groups. (Ahmad, 1963:273) In the Provincial Assembly, out of 130 members, 60 were small businessmen including contractors, 37 landholders and 16 lawyers (Sen, 1986:183).

The other side of the coin was the conflict with the state. Since the political activities were resumed in 1962, question of regional autonomy came into the forefront of politics more pronouncedly than ever before. Except right-wing political parties, such as Jamat-I-Islami, and different factions of Muslim League, all political parties of East Pakistan voiced for regional autonomy. The question of disparity between the two wings of Pakistan became inseparable from any political discourse.

Nonetheless, both collaborationists and disgruntled sections of rising Bengali bourgeoisie and middle classes had one point in common that they were looking for a greater share in the surplus expropriated by the state from the poor peasantry and the massive external aid/ grant infused to perpetuate the capitalist system. Thus, both sections were in search for ways and means to establish control over the state apparatuses. Such an expectation found its political expression in the Six-point demands advanced by Awami League in 1966.

Six-Point Movement and Middle Class as the Protagonist:

The essence of the six-point demand was regional autonomy for the province under federal parliamentary government with total control over revenue earnings and foreign trade by the federating states. The Six-point demand though quite successfully drew a charter for the rising Bengali bourgeoisie and intermediate classes, it failed initially to appeal to the subordinate classes, such as peasants and workers. For it remained silent about the problems of sharecroppers, small peasants, kulees working in tea plantations, and industrial workers. But, by late-1960s, the objective conditions for unrest among the poorer sections such as decline in real wages of workers<sup>26</sup> and per capita income of peasants<sup>27</sup> brought them closer to Awami League and its six-point demand. It is indeed true that such a convergence could take place primarily because there was an absence of class consciousness among the working class and peasantry, or in other words, absence of a process that transform the 'class-in-itself' to 'class-for-itself'. But, additionally, two equally significant factors contributed to the convergence of interests of middle classes and working classes. First, the failure of the left forces to present an alternative to the six-point program of Awami League. Secondly, numerical preponderance of middle classes in political leadership, who tend to vacillate between the pronounced party program and immediate achievements.

Besides, the Awami League's commendable success in appropriating the nationalist ideology and utilizing the Bengali nationalism as the tool for establishing its hegemony over the other subordinate classes of East Pakistan is very much critical in understanding the rise of

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<sup>26</sup>According to the survey conducted by Khan (1967), the real wages of a worker in all industries of East Pakistan sharply declined over the years. In 1954 annual real wage was Rs. 794.50, but in 1962-63 the corresponding figure was Rs. 727.40.

<sup>27</sup>Bose (1968) reckoned a decline in the per capita income of agricultural population in the 1960s. According to him, the amount was Rs. 228 in 1950s, while 1962-63, the amount went down to Rs. 200.

intermediate classes as prominent political actors. These factors along with Pakistani regime's suppressive measure on AL and its leaders including Sheikh Mujib that made AL the legitimate constitutional representative of the intermediate classes of Bangladesh during the last days of Pakistan. I will reflect on the failure of the left, and the numerical preponderance of middle classes in political parties in a while, and address the issue of Bengali nationalism in a separate section.

In the face of gradual rise of popularity of six-point demand and the mass upsurge of 1966 in which the working class actively participated, and the structural factors I have described in previous section, Ayub regime adopted a two-pronged policy, developing a comprador bourgeois class in Bangladesh on one hand, and employing coercive measures against the Awami League on the other. A conspiracy case, named as "Agartala Conspiracy Case", was initiated against Sheikh Mujib and others for an alleged conspiracy to separate the East Wing by violent means, in collusion with India<sup>28</sup>. But soon the trial became the target of a mass movement opposing Ayub regime and demanding autonomy for East Pakistan. This gave a rise to the popularity of Awami League in general and Sheikh Mujib in particular making him the symbol of resistance against colonial exploitation. The mass upsurge of 1969, though initiated by the left student organizations and was based upon the 11-point demands which included calls for the nationalization of banks, insurance companies and all big business; reduction of the rates of taxes and revenues on peasants; fair wages and bonuses for workers; and quitting SEATO and CENTO and Pakistan-U.S. military pacts, eventually led to movement popularizing Awami League. The

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<sup>28</sup>The conspiracy was alleged to have been planned in the Indian town Agartala near the border between India and East Pakistan. Whether there was any such attempt is still a mystery. During the mass upsurge of 1969 leaders of the opposition parties in East Pakistan outrightly denied such allegations and termed them as a premeditated move against the autonomists. However, after the independence of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujib himself claimed in several interviews that he had been working for the secession of East Bengal for some time. (Mujib's interview with David Frost, London Weekend Television, 16 January 1972; his press interview with Musa Ahmed, Bangladesh Observer, Dhaka, 23 March 1972.)

mass upsurge in Bangladesh matched the mass agitation in West Pakistan, and was gradually turning to be a violent anti-systemic upheaval. But, it was contained through removal of Ayub regime and promulgation of martial law bringing Yahya Khan in power. Nonetheless, by 1969, the intermediate classes led by petty-bourgeoisie in Bangladesh emerged as prominent actors in political arena.

As I have noted earlier, the factors that facilitated such a rise include failure of left forces, numerical preponderance of middle classes in political leadership, and Awami League's success in appropriating the nationalist ideology.

Since the inception of Pakistan, the Communist Party was outlawed on the one hand, while failing to pursue a consistent line of actions on the other. As early as 1953, the Party split on the question of whether party workers should work inside a progressive lawful petty-bourgeois party or not. In the mid- sixties, the umbrella organization of the left, NAP, faced a rift as a consequence of the division in the international communist movement. The pro-Peking leftist organization experienced further disintegration when Ayub regime established good relations with China. Maulana Bhasani, a staunch critic of military-bureaucratic oligarchy and supporter of regional autonomy also extended his tacit support to the Ayub regime. The pro-Moscow groups favored a close relationship with Awami League in realizing the 'national demands' as they considered the national contradiction to be the prime one. The radical underground left organizations overemphasized the class aspect of Pakistani colonial rule and overlooked the national question altogether. These weaknesses together made the left organizations a non-viable alternative and thus paved the way for political parties of intermediate interests to assume a preeminent position.

The numerical preponderance of the middle classes in political leadership can be gleaned from the study of social origins of the leadership of different political parties, both right-wing and leftist. According to the study by Maniruzzaman (1973:241), in 1968, 28 percent of the members

of the executive committee of Pro-Moscow NAP were lawyers, 23 percent professors and teachers, 15 percent small businessmen, 8 percent were engaged in journalism and literary professions, 5 percent were engaged in services to private firms, 3 percent doctors. As opposed to this, twenty percent came from working classes (12 percent were peasant leaders and 8 percent trade unionists). Though the situation was little different in pro-Peking NAP committee as 31 percent came from working class (14 percent and 17 percent from trade unionist and peasant leaders respectively) it was obviously dominated by intermediate classes (69 percent altogether, 33 percent lawyers, 14 percent from journalism and literature profession, 10 percent from business). It is interesting to note that such a preponderance of intermediate classes in leadership was not confined to left parties. The leadership of Jamaat-I-Islami, the most fanatic fundamentalist party, also came from these classes. Maniruzzaman (1980:28) in another study notes that according to the Jamaat sources, in 1969-70, 56 percent of the leaders' profession was teaching (college and schools), 24 percent were small businessmen; small government officers and service personnel from private firms constituted 8 percent each; lawyers, however, were only 4 percent. When we look into the composition of Awami League leadership in 1969-70, it is by no means different from the above mentioned political parties insofar as the class character is concerned. Lawyers constituted the largest segment of the party leadership, 57 percent. Businessmen had 29 percent share; former school and college teachers constituted 6 percent of the leadership, equal to landholders. Only 3 percent came from trade unionist (Maniruzzaman, 1980:28).

#### **Nationalism as a Hegemonic Tool**

Since the mid-1960s, the idioms, icons and symbols of nationalist ideology began to occupy relatively more space in the political discourse of Bangladesh polity. The concept of 'two-economy' (i.e. meaning the East Pakistan's economy should be considered a separate one from the one of West Pakistan or the federal economy of Pakistan) propounded by the Bengali



economist translated into the political discourse as a theory of 'two nations' - Bengali and Pakistani. The underlying theme of the newly articulated concept of nation emphasized that the Bengali people for a long time maintained a separate identity through their distinctive culture, language, and lifestyle. And it was held that the Pakistani ruling power bloc is up against these distinctive characteristics. Bengali language and its place within the federal structure as well as the language movement of 1952 had been portrayed as the prime example of the antagonistic attitudes of the ruling power. The attempt to introduce Arabic script in Bengali and to ban Tagore's songs in the state-controlled media were other examples that reflected the deliberate attempt of the state power to crush the cultural heritage of the Bengali people and thus made them subordinate to the alien culture patronized by the state apparatuses. The examples cited were in no way an exaggeration. Rather they were quite reflective of the colonial attitudes of the ruling power bloc of Pakistan. However, the point to note is that the symbols and idioms of Bengali nationalism highlighted were precisely the ones that fit into the middle class culture of the Bengali population.

Neither the distinctive identity of the Bengali population was new, nor the nationalist ideology. As I tried to show in the previous chapter, that in the early 19th century middle class educated urban population of Calcutta embarked on such an ideological position in order to seek their 'legitimate share' from the colonial state. The political objective of the so-called 'Bengal Renaissance' of 19th century, led and eulogized by the bhadrolok community of middle classes, was to demand greater participation in the colonial administration. While this strand of nationalism sought to collaborate with the colonial state yet create a sub-hegemonic structure to subsume other subordinate classes, subordinate classes created their own brand of nationalist ideology which altogether rejected the colonial domination and resisted the colonial state and its functionaries on many occasions. The former strand of nationalism, considered to be the only nationalist movement by the elite historians, had a number of limitations in terms of the social

origin and the space within which it operated. First, it could not go beyond the educated middle classes. Secondly, it willfully excluded the Muslim middle classes, for the Muslim middle classes were yet to be incorporated into the power bloc that performed the role of functionaries of the colonial state. Thirdly, the entire movement was limited spatially within urban Calcutta. The latter strand of nationalism, reflected in the peasants' uprisings of Bengal, was militant and deeply rooted in the class struggle of the subordinate classes. Additionally, given the social structure of the Eastern Bengal the latter one was relatively more powerful than the former.

After the partition of 1947, the elite nationalist ideology, for obvious reason lost its ground, while the latter one prevailed in a dormant form. Given the setback of Communist Party in East Pakistan, the militant nationalist movement of the subaltern classes could not be transformed into a radical resistance against the newly emergent Pakistani state. But sporadic resistance in different parts of East Pakistan continued in the early phase of Pakistan-era. Severe food crisis in early-1950s and reduction in jute prices matched with the exploitation of jotedars gave impetus to the subaltern classes to confront the state. It is in this context the language movement of 1952 erupted. As I have mentioned earlier, though the question of language bears no significance for the illiterate subaltern classes, they joined the urban middle classes to pressure the colonial state. This was again possible because the ruling political party (i.e. Muslim League) emerged from within the landed class in Bangladesh. As such, the resistance against the Muslim League rule and the alien colonial rule had no difference to the poor peasants of East Bengal.

The militant nationalist movement of the subaltern classes was defeated militarily by the Pakistani state in its very early days and given the fact that no attempt was made by the ruling power bloc or the state apparatuses to incorporate them, the subaltern classes remained antagonistic to the state. It is in this background, Awami League advanced its six-point demand in 1966. The demands, as it is noted before, was purely a petty-bourgeois political program. Yet,

its posture to confront the state and the subjective conditions for discontent against the state that brought the poorer segments of the society closer to Awami League.

In the very particular historical circumstances of mid-1960s when the intermediate classes in general and Awami League in particular began to use the icons of Bengali nationalism to rally people of 'all walks of life', their goal was to create tightly-controlled and well-orchestrated extra-legal pressure on the colonial state in order to open the avenue of negotiations. Since until then intermediate classes were kept by the colonial rulers on the periphery of power, directly under the domination of the colonial state the primary political objective of the intermediate classes was to create space for negotiation, and in order to pressurize the state to do so, it was very much needed from the part of the intermediate classes to counter the colonial state on an ideological plane. With this end in mind intermediate classes led by the petty-bourgeoisie set out to evolve a sub-hegemonic structure. The question of Bengali nationalism, at that historical conjuncture, was posed by the intermediate classes as an opposition to the dominant ideology of the Pakistani state. Here, the category of the nation was attractive to the intermediate classes because of its 'predilection to suppress the class question' (Ahmad, 1985:62), and its supra-class appearance. Despite the existence of a militant nationalist consciousness (in a dormant form), the one that was articulated and propagated by the intermediate classes, came as a hegemonic project of the intermediate classes led by petty-bourgeoisie.

It is necessary to note that the Bengali nationalism in question pointed towards 'Sonar Bangla', a golden Bengal of pre-colonial retreat of classlessness. Furthermore, they used 'people of Bengal' as frequently as possible, as if the people of Bangladesh were an undifferentiated mass and all of them would equally benefit from the cancellation of the colonial state. Thus, another important aspect of the underdevelopment, the exploitation of the subaltern classes by the petty-bourgeoisie, was completely subsumed within the discourse of Bengali nationalism. Under the rubric of Bengali nationalism, the proponents, in the words of Kamal Hossain, an ideologue of

the nationalist movement, "sought to forge an unity between the alienated urban elite groups and rural masses" (Hossain, 1979: 103). They transposed the class conflict on to the inter-nation level identifying the whole of the Bangladesh as 'oppressed' and West Pakistan as 'oppressor' 'capitalist', and hence the prime task is to eliminate colonial presence which causes the oppression and underdevelopment (Jahangir, 1986). As I have pointed before, Bengali language and culture had been portrayed as the unifying point of the entire nation. The conflict between the Bengali political leadership since the inception of Pakistan were explained in terms of a conspiracy against the Bengali nation as a whole. Aspirations of different classes, subaltern, intermediate, and nascent bourgeoisie, were articulated in their own idiom and thus brought together in a common platform under the ideological hegemony of petty bourgeoisie against the colonial domination. The uprising of 1969 that ousted Ayub regime was the zenith of the ideological hegemony of the petty-bourgeoisie. The militant nationalist consciousness of the masses, especially of the rural subaltern classes, were incorporated within the politics of intermediate classes on its own terms.

Having the ideological hegemony of the petty-bourgeoisie established firmly through the mass upsurge of 1969, Awami League sought constitutional legitimacy of its leadership.

#### **Constitutional Legitimacy of the Middle Class Leadership**

The general elections of 1970, first ever held in Pakistan with universal adult franchise, provided the constitutional legitimacy to the intermediate classes in general and Awami League in particular to represent the majority population of Pakistan (i.e. Bengali)<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup>In the elections of 1970, Awami League won a landslide victory. It obtained 167 seats out of 169 seats allotted to East Pakistan in National Assembly, 288 out of 300 seats in the provincial Assembly of East Pakistan, and polled 72.6 percent of the votes cast in East Pakistan. The victory according to some analysts, was unanticipated even by the Awami League (Jahan, 1980:53, Ayoob, 1971:35).

The occupational background and annual income of the members of the National and provincial Assemblies elected from Awami League, presented in the following two tables, reveals the situation quite clearly.

**Table 4.10**

Occupational Background of the  
Members of National and Provincial Assemblies, 1970  
(Total Sample 268)

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Lawyers	79	29.47
Businessmen	72	26.86
Teachers	25	9.32
Doctors	20	7.46
Farmers	34	12.68
Large Landholders	12	4.47
Service	7	2.60
Others	19	7.07

Source: Jahan (1980:99)

**Table 4.11**

Annual Income of the  
Members of National and Provincial Assemblies, 1970  
(Total Sample 270)

Income (In Taka)	Number	Percentage
Less than Tk.20,000	138	51.11
Tk.20,000-30,000	65	24.07
Tk.30,000-50,000	43	15.92
Above Tk.50,000	24	8.88

Source: Jahan (1980:99)

The election results, like those of 1954, posed a challenge to the Pakistani state and an impasse regarding transfer of power to the elected representatives emerged. The election was projected by Awami League as a referendum on their Six-point program, which denied the center

the right of taxation and transferred the authority of negotiating trade agreements with other countries from the central bureaucracy to the provincial governments. Thus, the program which essentially called for the removal of the mechanism for extracting the surplus from the hands of the bureaucracy was unacceptable to the military-bureaucratic oligarchy. Because without that mechanism it was impossible to support "the coercive and administrative organizations (which) are the basis of the state power" (Skocpol, 1979:30). Under such circumstances, a conflict between the Pakistani state and the intermediate classes of Bangladesh appeared. Protracted negotiations between the military-bureaucratic oligarchy and the representatives of the preeminent classes failed to reach a compromise. This led to an armed conflict in 1971 culminating in the establishment of independent Bangladesh.

In sum, during the Pakistan-era, perpetuation of colonial domination blocked the development of a bourgeois class in Bangladesh. In the agrarian sector, though the colonial government helped the jotedars and rich peasants to consolidate economic gains as well as establish political control over the rest of the peasantry, the rich farmers could not develop into a capitalist farmers because of the subordination of Bangladesh's agriculture to the capitalist development of Pakistan. Instead, large-scale expropriation of surplus by the state resulted in stagnation of agriculture. This, again, increased the pauperization and landlessness at an spectacular rate. On the other hand, in the non-agrarian sector, state policies deliberately excluded the Bengali entrepreneurs from participating in trading and industrial activities, making it impossible for the emergence of any capitalist class. Lack of industrial development in Bangladesh impeded the growth of a large-scale industrial working class. Thus, in both sectors an array of intermediate classes emerged as the prominent classes. With massive urbanization, a large section of these intermediate classes gathered in urban areas and involved themselves with small-scale trading. Similarly, the expansion of education gave rise to a class of salaried class serving the different lower level jobs of the state as well private firms and other professions

dependent upon education. In spite of the fact that the state policies were beneficial to the emergence of these classes, the ultimate exclusion of the Bengali population from the state apparatuses restricted their growth. Hence, a precarious relation emerged between the colonial state and the intermediate classes. On the one hand they were performing the role of political agent of the colonial state in subordinating the primary producers to perpetuate the surplus expropriation, on the other hand, they themselves were subordinated by the colonial state. Thus, the Bengali intermediate classes were positioned in simultaneous dominant and subordinate positions. Nonetheless, the lack of bourgeoisie, absence of a large-scale working class, absence of class consciousness among the peasants, lead to the emergence of intermediate classes as the prominent political actors of Bangladesh. In order to ensure their leadership, intermediate classes led by petty-bourgeoisie, appropriated the ideology of nationalism and reconstructed it as a supra-class ideology that subsumes the class contradiction. It is through this Bengali nationalism petty bourgeoisie established their ideological hegemony over the subaltern classes. The Bengali nationalism, as propagated by its proponents, called for the cancellation of colonial state. This led to a conflict between the colonial state and the Bengali intermediate classes and its legitimate constitutional representative Awami League. The conflict eventually culminated into an armed struggle in 1971 and a new state of Bangladesh emerged.

**CHAPTER V**  
**THE NATURE OF BANGLADESH STATE**  
**1972-1975**

Our discussion of the class formation processes in Bangladesh under two colonial dominations closed with the note that by 1970 an alliance of the intermediate classes emerged as the prominent political actors and established their ideological hegemony over subaltern classes. The endeavor of this alliance to share state power led to an armed conflict in 1971 and eventually brought an end to colonial rule. The nine-month long violent national liberation struggle ended on December 16, 1971 through the establishment of an independent state for the first time in the recorded history of the region called Bengal. Although independence was achieved through armed struggle that lasted nine months, some obviously conflicting conditions prevailed. The most significant of which was the existence of two contending sources of authority, first being the state structures left behind by the Pakistani military-bureaucratic oligarchy and the second, rooted in the nationalist movement in general and liberation struggle in particular.

In spite of the fact that a war was fought, a number of factors precluded the possibility of one source of authority being subordinated by the other. Firstly, the liberation struggle was not initiated deliberately by its leadership to overthrow the colonial state structure or to bring about a radical change in the social order, but rather imposed upon the people of Bangladesh by the military regime of Pakistan as they unleashed a reign of terror and began a genocide on March 25, 1971<sup>1</sup>. Secondly, the exile government of Bangladesh, in its first proclamation, accepted the continuance of the structures they inherited<sup>2</sup>. Thirdly, the war was fought neither

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<sup>1</sup>Tajuddin Ahmed, the Prime Minister of the exile government, in his speech on April 17 while formally proclaiming independence recognized the fact saying, 'we did not want this war' (Chowdhury, 1982).

<sup>2</sup>On April 10, 1971, the day the Proclamation of Independence was adopted, the exile government issued the Laws Continuance Enforcement Order. According to the Order, all the government officials -- civil, military, judicial and diplomatic, who would take an oath of allegiance to Bangladesh would continue in their office and terms and conditions of service so



under a unified leadership nor under a single command of the political party that legitimately provided the political leadership and formed the exile government (i.e. the Awami League). Fourthly, the leadership of the Awami League was divided, even during the war itself, on vital issues such as who should be the Prime Minister of the exile government<sup>3</sup> and whether or not the exile government should respond to the United States' initiative for a solution within the framework of Pakistan state<sup>4</sup>. And finally, the war was not long enough to bring about a clear polarization within the liberation forces and between the pro- and anti-liberation forces.

Nevertheless, the Awami League, by virtue of being the legitimately elected representatives of the erstwhile East Pakistani people through the elections of 1970, led the struggle, formed the exile government, and finally assumed power after the liberation. The termination of colonial rule and assumption of power by the Awami League brought remarkable changes in the nature of the state. But the formation and transformation of Bangladeshi state did not stop after the creation of an independent state. The ongoing process took a new shape.

At the outset of independence the emergent Bangladesh state became an intermediate state in the sense that the state apparatus was captured by the alliance of intermediate classes led by the petty bourgeoisie. The economic policies pursued by the state were directed towards the benefit of the intermediate classes. But gradually the nature of the state began to change.

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long enjoyed by them.

<sup>3</sup>For details see Hasan (1986) and Islam (1991). Hasan (1986:146-47) reports that a faction led by Sheikh Fazlul Hoq Moni attempted to assassinate Tajuddin Ahmed sometime in October 1971.

<sup>4</sup>Sometime between August and October of 1971 the United States attempted to contact the Bangladesh government in exile through Harold Saunders of National Security Council and George Griffin of the US consulate at Calcutta to bring an end to the conflict maintaining the geographical unity of Pakistan. A section of AL leaders under the leadership of Khandaker Mustaque Ahmad, foreign minister of the exile government, favored such negotiations and established contact, which was later foiled by the pro-independence leaders (for details see Hasan, 1986:94-102; Chowdhury, 1989:155-170; Kissinger, 1979:869-73). It is worth noting that, Ahmad became President after the assassination of Sheikh Mujib in 1975.

The executives (primarily bureaucrats) established their control over the ruling bloc and hence began to act somewhat autonomously from the prominent social classes. The struggle between these two contending sources of authority that I have referred to, can be described as a conflict between old state and the new regime. In the final analysis, it was the bureaucrats who succeeded in marginalizing the political regime. Meanwhile there were discernable changes in terms of the state's relationship with the world economic system. Further integration with the world economic system as a dependent state made Bangladesh more susceptible to external pressure.

In order to comprehend the changes over the period of three and a half years (i.e. January 1972 - August, 1975) one must look into five aspects of Bangladesh state -- the constitutive elements of the emergent state, the class character of the power bloc, the economic agenda of the power bloc, struggle between and among the components of the state, and the position of the state within the world economic system.

### **The Emergent Bangladesh State**

#### **The Ruling Party:**

Owing to the fact that the Awami League, since its inception, attempted to represent a broad range of classes, cleavages within the organization always existed. The events leading to and during the liberation struggle accentuated the divisions within the party. It also brought forth some new elements for factionalism. In 1972, there were at least four factions within the AL. Firstly, the radical elements; secondly, the liberals; thirdly, the conservatives; and fourthly, free-riders, those who fled to India, and instead of participating in the war, enjoyed a luxurious life.

The radical elements within the party were to some extent new, but remarkably powerful. They entered into the Awami League in the mid to late 1960s and were product of the increasing radicalization of the body politic since 1966. The mass upsurge of 1969 and the failure of left political parties to bring the youth under their umbrella made it possible for the AL to attract these young radicals. Within a brief period they acquired so much clout that they forced the

leadership to incorporate a pledge to establish socialism in the election manifesto of 1970. This section of the party, primarily drew its support from the student wing, the 'Students League', and played a significant role in the landslide victory of Awami League in the elections of 1970. As the unwillingness of the Pakistani military-bureaucratic oligarchy to hand over power became obvious, the radical elements of the AL began to put pressure on Sheikh Mujib in March 1971 to declare independence. They insisted that a war was imminent, although their idea of war was naive. During the war, they expected it to be a long one. In a post-independence situation, these radical elements began to insist that a massive restructuring of the society under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib was necessary to establish an egalitarian and just society.

The second strand, comprised of liberal elements of the AL, was more pragmatic. It is this section of the party which practically led the liberation war. The Prime Minister of the government in exile, Tajuddin Ahmed, came from this section. In spite of pressure from both the radical and the conservative sections and severe resource constraints, the leaders of this section played the most prominent role in coordinating the activities of the government in exile.

The third faction of the party, the conservatives, strove throughout the war to seize power from the liberals. A number of attempts were made to remove Tajuddin Ahmed from the position of PM. Interestingly, on several occasions this section worked closely with the radicals who also attempted to remove Tajuddin.

The fourth faction, the free-riders, fled the country to save their lives. But as soon as they crossed the border, they understood the importance of being an Awami Leaguer. Most of these leaders instead of living in the refugee camps in the border areas, went to Calcutta and lived a sumptuous lifestyle. After the war was over, they came home as heroes, warriors, freedom fighters.

The infighting within AL began as early as April, 1971<sup>5</sup>. On the very night the Pakistan Army began the massacre, Sheikh Mujib was taken into custody and the top-ranking AL leaders fled Dhaka. Tajuddin Ahmed crossed the border to India in the late March and sought help from the Indian authority to continue the resistance against the Pakistani forces. On April 4 and 5, he met the Indian PM in New Delhi and introduced himself as a member of the Bangladesh government led by Sheikh Mujib. Tajuddin Ahmed, in consultation with his close aides, decided to form a government comprised of a five-member high command (i.e. Sheikh Mujib, Tajuddin Ahmed, Nazrul Islam, Mansur Ali and Khandaker Mustaque Ahmed), although he had no information about other leaders. Tajuddin's aides insisted that he should shoulder the responsibility of the office of Prime Minister. On April 9, when a number of AL leaders finally assembled in Calcutta, the decision to form government and having Tajuddin as PM was bitterly criticized. Sheikh Fazlul Hoq Moni, nephew of Sheikh Mujib and a prominent youth leader, proposed a Revolutionary Council. He claimed that only he and some other young leaders were authorized by Sheikh Mujib to provide leadership in this situation. In spite of this claim, Tajuddin succeeded in winning over other AL leaders and broadcast a speech over a clandestine radio as the PM of the Government of Bangladesh. Khandaker Mustaque Ahmed joined the AL leaders next day, but expressed his discontent that Tajuddin had become the PM. He argued that as the senior most member of the team he should have been named as the PM. He also expressed his desire to leave the country and go to Mecca for the rest of his life.

With the formal declaration of independence and the formation of a cabinet on April 17 the conflict subsided, but it never came to an end. The dissension resurfaced when the AL

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<sup>5</sup>The following description of the conflict within the AL during the liberation struggle is drawn from two sources, Hasan (1986) and Islam (1991). It is worth noting that both Hasan and Islam worked closely with the government in exile. Islam, an Awami Leaguer, was the person with whom Tajuddin Ahmed crossed the border. Later, Islam was appointed as the principal aide of the PM of the government in exile. Hasan, a close friend of Tajuddin Ahmed, joined him on May 5 and later became the principal emissary of the government in dealing with the Indian counterpart.

members of National Assembly and Provincial Assembly met in Shiliguri (Agaratala district of India) on July 5-6, 1971.

Furthermore, by then Sheikh Moni along with three other youth leaders, Tofail Ahmed, Abdur Razzak and Serajul Alam Khan, organized a separate armed group 'Bangladesh Liberation Force' (BLF, later renamed Mujib Bahini). What is of great significance is that this force was organized with the active help of an Indian counter-insurgency agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). An Indian Major General, Uban was in charge of training and supply of this group. The structure, leadership, training, and operation patterns of this force were deliberately concealed from the Bangladesh Government in exile. They were operating on their own. The organizers, especially Sheikh Moni, cited three reasons for organizing the Mujib Bahini. Firstly, they had the authorization from Sheikh Mujib to organize the Armed Forces; secondly, in the event of a failure of the senior AL leaders to lead the war, they were preparing themselves to take over; thirdly, in the event of a long-term liberation war, they would act as counter-weight to the left forces.

The Mustaque faction of the party, after their abortive attempt to conduct negotiations with the Pakistani regime, desperately moved to oust Tajuddin Ahmed from power. On September 12, forty elected representatives of Southern administrative zone belonging to Mustaque group and Sheikh Moni group, met and adopted a resolution calling the AL high command to make Tajuddin resign from both the General Secretary position of the party and cabinet membership. In September, another faction led by two prominent AL leaders, Kamruzzaman and Yusuf Ali attempted to increase their influence over the freedom fighters on the northern part of the country. They even contacted some pro-Beijing left political parties operating from Calcutta.

It would be a mistake to assume that one can draw some easy lines between the members of these groups. These groups were neither well organized nor monolithic. But in so far as the

struggle for power within the party was concerned, one was pitted against the other, while some members were crossing the lines now and then.

The situation was further complicated by the fact that there were internal dissensions within the groups and that, rightly or wrongly, the members as well as the groups were classified with extra-territorial labels. For example, some of the radical elements, who received all-out support from the Indian Government during the war, much to the annoyance of the government in exile, were not happy with the India's decision to intervene in the war. In so far as the extra-territorial label is concerned, leaders were classified as pro-American (i.e. Khandaker Mustaque), pro-Indian (i.e. Tajuddin Ahmed), and pro-Russian (i.e. Abdus Samad Azad).

Thus at independence, in spite of the fact that there was a sigh of relief and euphoria over the victory, the ruling party was factionalized to the extent that it can be seen as a conglomeration of groups jockeying for power. There was no charismatic leader to lead and no rallying point except power. The first significant decision of the government after reaching Dhaka was the removal of Khandaker Mustaque Ahmed from the post of Foreign Minister for his alleged involvement with the US move<sup>6</sup>, and induction of five new members in the cabinet (Dec 27, 1971). Although the induction was made to lessen the conflict, it did not make any significant change. On the other hand, Mustaque's removal from the Foreign Minister position further accentuated the prevalent conflict. Anthony Mascarenhas (1986:7) aptly described the situation after the independence and before the arrival of Sheikh Mujib<sup>7</sup> in following sentences: 'if he (Mujib) did not get to Dacca very quickly there was grave danger of new government falling apart and risk of civil strife. The war was over. The in-fighting, the jostling for power in the Awami

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<sup>6</sup>See the footnote no.4 for details.

<sup>7</sup>Sheikh Mujib was released from the prison of Pakistan on January 8, 1972 and flew to London same day. On January 10, he reached Dhaka via Delhi.

League had begun.' The intrigue and in-fighting subsided when Mujib reached Dhaka and became the PM. But all was not over. On many occasions it resurfaced.

The Bureaucracy:<sup>8</sup>

Like the ruling party, factionalism beleaguered the bureaucracy. According to a newspaper report, in December 1971 the higher public service officials could be divided into four categories: 1. officials who went into hiding inside Bangladesh, 2. those who joined the exile government, 3. those who were attending to their duties and willingly or unwillingly, cooperating with the military regime, 4. officials who remained stranded in Pakistan<sup>9</sup> (Weekly Wave, March 25, 1973). There was another source of factionalism: those who had served the central government of Pakistan (i.e. CSP) and those who were under the provincial government (i.e. EPCS). They engaged themselves in a bitter feud regarding their positions in the emerging state apparatus. The factionalism was enhanced by the decision of the government to put all those who had worked in Mujibnagar in the forefront, allegedly brushing aside the established rules and procedure.

Despite internal divisions and some intimidations from party members, the bureaucracy as an organization was firmly entrenched as there were clear indications that the ruling party has no plan to dismantle the bureaucratic structure. Instead, they would rely on them to a great

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<sup>8</sup>In order to deal with the state of bureaucracy in early-1972, we should describe, in brief, the structure of bureaucracy during Pakistan period. In Pakistan, Government services were classified under different categories: Class I, II, III, and IV. According to the prestige and privileges, there were gazetted and non-gazetted officers. All the top administrative positions were filled by the Central Superior Servants who were selected by the Central Public Service Commission of the Government of Pakistan. The Central Superior Service was divided into several branches: 1. Civil Service; 2. Foreign Service; 3. Police Service; 4. Taxation Service; 5. Audit and Account Service; 6. Postal Service; 7. Controller of Exports and Imports. Among all these services, the officers belonging to the civil service occupied the most important administrative and executive positions. With enormous power in their hands they virtually controlled the entire administration. Besides, there was another provincial service known as EPCS (East Pakistan Civil Service) whose members occupied the subordinate and less important positions in the provincial administration.

<sup>9</sup>The issue of the stranded Bengali bureaucrats became more prominent in 1973. After August 1973 a large number of them were repatriated from Pakistan.

extent. The first indication was the Laws Continuance Enforcement Order. The government in exile, instead of attempting to build a parallel administration, favored the existing one. Hence no moves were made to replace the existing structure. As a matter of fact, the government completely relied on the 'civil administration' for the restoration of law and order. In a cabinet meeting held on November 22, 1971 the issue of 'civil administration set up in liberated Bangladesh' was discussed. The cabinet opined that 'a large purge of the Government employees may create an administrative vacuum.' The cabinet then formed a sub-committee of the secretaries 'to examine the serious facets of the problem of setting up civil administration.' The sub-committee was comprised of Secretaries of Defense, Home, Cabinet, Finance and General Administration [Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Memo No. 391(8)/Cab, Dated Nov 25, 1971]. Furthermore, on December 16, after the liberation of Bangladesh, a memo from the Establishment Secretary was sent to the Deputy Commissioners of different districts to take control of the civilian administration. The memo also stated that, 'the magistracy and the police have to be put back in their proper position as the lawful authority for maintenance of law and order' [Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Establishment Division, Memo No. Estbt. Dvn./3179((19), dated December 16, 1971].

A number of factors contributed to the government's reliance on the existing civil administration for restoring law and order. Firstly, there was no single command of the freedom fighters that they could be mobilized for this purpose. Because in addition to the freedom fighters trained by the government in exile there were a number of groups operating from within the country without any control of the government in exile. Hence, such decisions could create more chaos than peace. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, no alternative structure was built to take over. Thirdly, the ruling party was neither a monolithic organization nor ready to shoulder the total responsibility.



The Military:

At independence, the military faced a precarious situation -- there were cleavages within the organization and they had been deprived of their due share in the glory of liberation war. The division within the military was along various lines. The primary division was, of course, along the line of involvement in the liberation war. According to Azad (1972) Bangladesh armed forces was comprised of five types of erstwhile Pakistan Army personnel. These are:

"...(1) those who actively participated in the liberation war by joining the Mukti Bahini officially, (2) those who helped organize the resistance movement in their homes and villages, (3) those who left Pak Army and did not participate either way and stayed home, (4) those who were arrested and remained in Army custody until liberation, and (5) those who served under the occupation army."

The members of the military were also divided ideologically. The fundamental point of contention was whether or not the military should be reorganized according to the existing colonial structure. While the larger section was in favor of maintaining the status quo, a small segment was trying to push for a thorough restructuring, organizing the army like a 'peoples army'. Additionally, rivalries and jealousies among the top-ranking leaders that had originated during the liberation war started to become obvious.

The conventional army did not get the due share of the glory because of the common perception that it was only the non-professional guerrillas drawn from all walks of life who made the independence possible. Such a perception was rooted in the long-standing alienation of the military from the common people, and the military's attitude towards political movements preceding the war. In fact, it became public knowledge that the most of the Bengali military personnel were very reluctant regarding the political developments taking place before the military assault of Pakistan Army<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup>Col. (Retd) Osmani, the Commander-in-Chief of the Freedom Fighters, stated the fact quite candidly. He said, "Bengali personnel in the Army might well have stayed neutral had the Pakistani authorities confined their crack-down to selected Bengali politicians. It was the over-kill, the systematic 'elitocide' campaign to exterminate the professionals, intellectuals and army officers, which decided them to revolt" (Singh, 1971:22; Patil, 1972). It is also reported by Patil

Although the members of the Army was reluctant to get embroiled in politics, facing the threat of being disarmed or becoming targets of the Pakistani Army, the military units stationed in different parts of the country along with the paramilitary forces, especially the EPR, mounted the first resistance against the military operation. The total number of them were insignificant compared to the Pakistani Army<sup>11</sup>, but until April 10, 1971 these forces fought practically without any direction or leadership from the leading political parties. This had both positive and negative consequences. It is indeed true that had there been no resistance from them, the course of liberation war may have taken a different turn. But, on the other hand, it gave the military officials a feeling that the war can be fought without political leadership per se or at least military leadership should supersede political leadership. Such a feeling was expressed when the military

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(1972) that being requested by Sheikh Mujib, Col. Osmani send a secret circular to Bengali commanders on March 19, 1971 regarding the political crisis. But, one of the three points Osmani made to them, was that they should not get 'embroiled in politics.' Actually, this was the mood prevalent among the Bengali military personnel. Major Ziaur Rahman, who happened to be the highest ranking military officer who lent his voice for the proclamation of independence on March 27, 1971 over a clandestine Radio station in Chittagong is another example. In early March he commented on the political situation that, "these are political problems and politicians' headaches. We as soldiers have nothing to do. You must keep away." (Rafiq-ul-Islam (1981) narrated this conversation between Major Khalid Mosharraf and Ziaur Rahman.) As late as March 24, Zia dissuaded his colleagues from making any move against the Pakistani Army stating that there is nothing to worry about (Rafiq-ul-Islam, 1981:67). Zia, nonetheless, became a symbol of patriotism in the army because of his involvement with the proclamation of independence. Events surrounding the proclamation of independence by Major Zia from Chittagong on March 27, 1971, however, remain controversial to date. Zia's followers claim that it is Ziaur Rahman who first declared the independence over the radio on March 27. But the organizers of that clandestine radio station assert that President of the local unit of AL, Abdul Hannan, proclaimed independence in the afternoon of March 26 claiming that he has received a message from Sheikh Mujib. It is assumed that Zia did not hear that announcement. He initially declared himself as the Acting President and C-in-C of Bangladesh Liberation Forces. He, however, later made another statement wherein he affirmed that he is making the announcement on behalf of Sheikh Mujib. The AL leaders claim that Mujib send a message through East Pakistan Rifles' (EPR) wireless in early hours of March 26 declaring independence. Mujib in his message called upon the people to resist the Pakistani forces.

<sup>11</sup>The total number of members of Bengal Regiment stationed in East Pakistan in March 1971 was about 3,000. East Pakistan Rifles, who played the key role in resistance had 10,000 members. The latter one bear the brunt of the first attack of Pakistan Army and lost a large number of their members within first two days of the resistance (Muhith, 1978).

leaders first met with the leaders of the exile government on July 10-15, Zia and seven other commanders proposed to set up a 'war council' led by military officials to coordinate the war. The proposal was opposed by a section of military officials and rejected by the government (Hasan, 1986:54).

Rivalries and jealousies among the prominent military personnel began as early as in April. On April 4, 1971 Col. Osmani, Lt. Col. Abdur Rab, Lt. Col Salehuddin Muhammed Reza, Major Kazi Nuruzzaman, Major Zia, Major Khaled Mosharraf, Major Shafiullah, Major Nurul Islam, Major Shafaat Jamil, Major Mainul Hossain Chowdhury and some other top-ranking military officers met in a tea estate in Sylhet to review the situation<sup>12</sup>. This was the first meeting of the resistance forces after the war began on March 25. It was at this meeting that Col. Osmani was appointed Commander-in-Chief. It is alleged that Major Zia made an abortive attempt to become the C-in-C referring to his earlier announcement over the clandestine radio. But both Khaled and Shafiullah repudiated such a move (Sayeed, 1989:157)<sup>13</sup>. Personal rivalries resurfaced among this trio in July, 1971. Col. Osmani decided to raise a brigade comprised of three battalions (1East Bengal, 3East Bengal, 8East Bengal). Major Zia was appointed the head of the brigade and it was named after him -- 'Z' force. Soon after the decision was taken, both Khaled and Shafiullah pressured the central command for two more brigades named after them. Though there was a lack of trained manpower, especially officers, and ammunition, within two months two more brigades were raised -- 'K' force and 'S' force (Hasan, 1986:61, Sayeed, 1989:158).

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<sup>12</sup>This meeting is commonly referred to as the 'Teliapara meeting' named after the place where the military officers met.

<sup>13</sup>A war strategy was devised in this meeting. Bangladesh was divided into 4 sectors -- Chittagong, Comilla, Sylhet and Kushtia. Major Zia, Major Khaled Mosharraf, Major Shafiullah and Major Osman Chowdhury were appointed sector commanders respectively. In July meeting the sectors were reorganized into 11 sectors.

The ideological differences over how the Bangladesh army should be organized was not a sudden thing that surfaced in post-independence period, but rather a continuation of the differences that arose during the war over how the war should be conducted. Col. Osmani, until October, was in favor of raising the regular force and conducting a conventional war. He was never quite enthusiastic about guerilla warfare<sup>14</sup>. Zia, in contrast, was more interested in dividing the regular army battalions into small companies and conducting commando-style activities along with the guerrillas. Both of them, however, were more concerned with equipping the regular army. Shafiullah and Khaled, preferred a coordination of activities between the guerrillas and the conventional forces, with latter in command. What was common among them was their interest in raising the army to a preeminent position in the war. In October, when the sector commanders met in Calcutta, Col. Taher and Col. Ziauddin raised serious objection to this line of thinking. Both of them joined the war fleeing from Pakistan. They suggested that instead of raising the number of regular forces emphasis should be given to increasing guerrilla brigades involving both regular army and peasants to fight a long-term war. They strongly opposed the dependence on Indian forces for supply of arms and ammunition. According to their plan, the forces HQs should be moved inside Bangladesh. Most significant was their idea about future of Bangladesh Army. They maintained that if guerrilla brigades can be raised, these will act as the core of the production-oriented army in independent Bangladesh. Zia also supported this idea (Islam, 1983:103).

The rapid developments of early December leading to full-scale war and direct Indian involvement in Bangladesh liberation war were so overwhelming that these conflicts within the Bangladesh army could not be resolved. Thus when Bangladesh became independent these differences along with the involvement issue served as the point of later cleavages.

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<sup>14</sup>For details see OPS Plan drawn by Osmani in September 1971, quoted in Hasan (1986:269-275).

It is obvious from the foregoing account that the emergent Bangladesh state in 1972 was in shambles. Given the fact that the state was emerging through a bloody war, this was nothing unusual. But what is significant is that all of the three components of the state were wrecked by infighting. The liberation war neither built a consensus nor did one succeed in subordinating the others. Nevertheless, the ruling party had an edge over the others because of their legitimate claim on constitutional power. One further point should be noted: the ideological differences within and among these components had not yet come to light. It did not take much time, however, to surface. As soon as the ruling party began to articulate and subsequently implement the economic and political agenda of the intermediate classes -- whom they were representing, the differences among and between them began to appear. Nevertheless, at the early stage the ruling party succeeded in implementing the economic and political agenda of the intermediate classes which turned the Bangladesh state into an intermediate state.

**Bangladesh as an Intermediate State:  
Class Character of the Power-Bloc**

In the capitalist periphery, as I have mentioned previously, the relationship between the state and the social classes are mediated by a power bloc -- which is comprised of the political leadership and the members of higher echelons of the state apparatus. Hence, both of them are determinant in the nature of the state. Although it is possible to have a heterogeneity within the bloc itself, this was not the case of Bangladesh. With the assumption of state power, the political representative of the intermediate classes (i.e. the ruling party, Awami League) rushed to establish total control of its constituent classes over the power-bloc.

As it was documented in the previous chapter, the Awami League nominees in the elections of 1970 as well as the leadership of the party predominantly came from the intermediate classes. Hence, the regime constituted after independence, comprised of Awami Leaguers, was bound to be of intermediate nature. The first full-fledged cabinet of ministers formed in 1972

indicates the extent of the preeminence of this class. In the 23-member cabinet, 13 were lawyers, 4 businessmen, 3 (including Mujib) professional politicians, a college professor, a landholder and former military official (i.e. the C-in-C of Mukti Bahini)<sup>15</sup>.

The elections of 1973 brought some new faces in the regime, but mostly the old guards of the party remained (66 percent of the former Constituent Assembly members were re-elected, the cabinet was composed of the same persons except for one who was inducted after the elections). Insofar as the class character is concerned this did not bring about any fundamental change. Jahan's (1980) study shows that 'the majority of the MPs belonged to the urban middle class professions, such as law business, teaching and medicine' (Jahan, 1980: 148). The figures show that about 27 percent of the MPs were lawyers, 24 percent businessmen, 3 percent large landowners, 15 percent rich and middle farmers, 10 percent teachers and 5 percent doctors. In terms of annual income, more than 56 percent of the MPs had an income between Taka 20,000 and Taka 50,000. The landholding of the MPs also shows the preponderance of the representatives of surplus farmers. The study reveals that 30 percent of the MPs owned more than 25 acres of land and 10 percent of the MPs owned more than 40 acres. If we take into account the fact that 75 percent of the farmers of the country at that time owned less than 3 acres of land and 75 percent of the MPs owned more than 6.5 acres of land, it will be quite clear to us where the MPs were coming from.

Parliament members' class origin was not an exception, but rather commensurate with the overall situation where the intermediate classes captured the state apparatuses. In the local level administration, for example, the picture was the same. The leadership of the Union Parishad elected in 1973 came predominantly from the rich and middle income peasants. Data drawn from the Solaiman and Alam's (1977) study on the UP leadership of Comilla area reveals

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<sup>15</sup>Bangladesh Observer, Brief Life Sketches of the Ministers, January 20 and 29 and April 14 and 15, 1972.

that 63.6 percent of them owned 2 to 7 acres of land, while 18 percent owned more than 7 acres. Wahab's (1980) study of Rangpur show that 50 percent of the UP leaders had land more than 9 acres. The remaining 50 percent had land between 2 to 9 acres. None of the UP leaders came from the rank of landless or poor peasants having land less than 2 acres.

The ascent to political leadership by the intermediate classes was matched by the rise of middle class professionals in different parts of the state. The Planning Commission and the public enterprises are the best examples. The Planning Commission in Pakistan was an exclusive preserve of the bureaucrats. This not only put them in a privileged position in terms of enjoying the benefits, but more importantly gave them unlimited power to chart the course of the economy. In contrast, the Bangladesh Planning Commission, established in 1972, was headed by academic economists and manned by professionals drawn from various sectors of the economy but only a few from the traditional civil service and bureaucracy. The Planning Commission was composed of an ex-officio Chairman (the PM), and four members -- a deputy chairman and three others -- all of whom (with the exception of the Chairman) held positions in the universities or other academic bodies. Four academically- brilliant young economists, 'who had very little direct experience in government administration' (Islam, 1979:xi) virtually ran the planning commission and became, according to a reporter 'the most powerful government experts in the macro-economic field' (Richard Sachs, The Times, March 26, 1973). Excepting Rehman Sobhan, who has a tripos from Cambridge, they all had Ph.Ds -- Nurul Islam, Deputy Chairman; Mosharraf Hossain and Anisur Rahman. Additionally,

"...the Planning Commission was composed of ten divisions each having a chief, deputy chiefs, assistant chiefs, and research officers; all most all of these positions were offered to university teachers and fresh university graduates who were either loyal to the Awami League or supported the liberation movement" (Islam, 1988:62).

With the massive nationalization in 1972 there emerged a large public sector and public enterprises became an important instrument of the state in economic planning and

development<sup>16</sup>. A large section of the higher echelon of the management of these public enterprises came from the middle class professionals. According to the account of Sobhan and Ahmed (1980:535), out of 76 chief executives appointed during the period of January 1972 - August 1975, forty-four belonged to the professional class as opposed to twenty-five from government services. The remainder were military officers.

#### **Economic Agenda of the Power-Bloc**

At the heart of the economic policies framed by the new regime between 1972 and 1975 was de-bourgeoisification<sup>17</sup> and the expansion of the role of the state. Although the Planning Commission maintained that in order to avoid 'serious and sudden dislocation in the economic system' (Islam, 1977:31) drastic institutional and economic changes should be averted, and hence a continuation of "mixed economy" as a transitional stage in the evolution of a socialist society was underscored, yet they proposed a number of institutional changes that accorded the state a preeminent position in the economy. The following sentences quoted from the First Five Year Plan (FFYP) succinctly puts the basic underpinnings of the economic policies of the regime:

"The removal of the capitalist system of income distribution, the private ownership of the means of production and of the pre-capitalist mercantile or feudal forms of production relations is a necessary pre-condition to social transformation... Reforms to such an end are needed to be worked out in phases. In landownership, cooperatives among small and landless farmers; in large, heavy and basic industries ascendancy of the public sector; in trade, both domestic and international as well as in housing, transport and distribution, state and cooperatives will largely rule leaving small enterprises and retail trade in private hands. In such a society, where the function of the state is usually more than in a welfare state, the public sector performance will be expanded" (GPRB, 1973:2).

The principal feature of the economic policy envisaged in the Planning Commission document show the regime's desire to heighten the role of the state in a manner the country never

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<sup>16</sup>Further discussion on the nationalization will be presented in the next section.

<sup>17</sup>The term 'de-bourgeoisification' is intended to mean the condition wherein the regime thwarted flourishing of the indigenous bourgeoisie.



experienced before. Implementation of these policies primarily began in the industrial sector even before the policies were delineated publicly, through taking control of properties abandoned by Pakistani entrepreneurs in the beginning and then through nationalization of other industrial units. But such policy move was not restricted to a single sector. An analysis of the investment and agricultural policies of the government will bear out the fact that a deliberate attempt was made to accord the state a central position.

Nationalization:

The process to accord the state a predominant position in the economy began as early as January 1972 through the government's action towards industrial enterprises, which later served as the genesis of the nationalization program. Primarily owing to the fact that a large number of properties including industrial enterprises belonged to Pakistani entrepreneurs who left the country abandoning their properties behind<sup>18</sup>, the government on January 3 1972 promulgated a law (Acting President's Order No. 1, 1972) enabling it to take control of those and organize their management. While the APO 1 of 1972 vested the right of control and management in the government, the Bangladesh Abandoned Property (Control, Management and Disposal) Order 1972 (i.e. PO 16 of 1972) promulgated on February 28, 1972 transferred the abandoned properties to the government.

Simultaneous to the legal process of enhancing the government's control over the abandoned properties, the Planning Commission outlined a policy for massive nationalization. In early February, the Commission submitted a paper to the Cabinet on policy options and recommendations for the nationalization of industries (Bangladesh Planning Commission, 1972). It was recommended by the Commission that all enterprises in jute, textile, and sugar industries

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<sup>18</sup>Private Pakistani citizens left 725 industrial enterprises with assets worth Tk. 2885.7 million. These companies controlled 47 percent of the Bangladesh's modern industrial assets and 71 percent of its private industry. They relinquished six of the leading commercial banks which controlled 70 percent of the deposits of the entire banking system in the region and also the insurance companies that constituted 90 percent of the assets of insurance business.

with fixed assets of over Tk. 1.5 million be nationalized. An inter-ministerial committee to examine the recommendations were set up which later accepted recommendations<sup>19</sup>. Accordingly, the PM in a policy statement on March 26, 1972 announced that all large industries and financial institutions with assets over Tk. 1.5 million stand nationalized and henceforth would be managed by the state. It was also mentioned in the government announcement that compensations will be made for the nationalized enterprises owned by Bangladesh citizens.

This announcement changed the nature of the Bangladesh economy overnight. According Sobhan and Ahmad: "on the 27th of March, 1972 Bangladesh was faced with a situation where under law public ownership and control over the economy had increased from 10% of GDP to 16%. In the sphere of industries public ownership of fixed assets increased from 34% to 92% of modern industry and the number of enterprises under public management from 53 to 392" (Sobhan and Ahmad, 1980:142). (See Table 5.1). A total of 254 large industrial units (jute, textile, sugar, iron and steel, engineering and shipbuilding, fertilizer, pharmaceutical and chemical, oil, gas and mineral, paper and paper products, and forest industries combined) were nationalized. Additionally, 12 commercial banks with 1,175 branches all over the country and 12 insurance companies were brought into public sector. About eighty percent of the trade were concentrated in the hands of the public sector trading corporations.

Following nationalization the picture was this: ten corporations were set up to manage the nationalized industries; commercial banks were organized into six nationalized banks; insurance business was brought under two insurance companies; in order to meet the special needs of different sectors such as agriculture, housing and industry four specialized financial institutions were set up; a trading corporation was established for controlling import business;

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<sup>19</sup>The committee consisted of the ministers for Industries, Finance, Commerce, Law and the Deputy Chairman and Member (Industries) of the Planning Commission. The decision to nationalize all industries was not unanimous. The Commerce Minister opposed the recommendation. He argued for nationalization only of abandoned industries.

Table 5.1

Large-Scale Industrial Ownership in Bangladesh  
Before and After Nationalization

	Number of units	Value of fixed assets million TK	Percent of fixed assets
Total Industries	3051	6137.5	100
<b>Before Nationalization</b>			
EPIDC	53	2097.0	34
Private Pakistani	725	2885.7	47
Private Bengali	20	118.8	18
Private Foreign	20	36.0	1
<b>After Nationalization</b>			
Nationalized of which	392	5637.5	92
Former EPIDC	53	2097.0	34
Private Pakistani	263	2629.7	43
Private Foreign	1		
Private Bengali	75	910.8	15
Private Bengali	2178	208.0	3
Abandoned:to be sold	462	256.0	4
With foreign participation	13	36.0	1
Total Private	2653	500.0	8

Source: Sobhan and Ahmad (1980:192).

three corporations were set-up to steer the jute business. All of these together made the state the largest economic enterprise by far. Essentially it became the largest employer and most of the assets came under the control of the state. This indeed made the state the central actor in the economic arena. Furthermore, this turned the state into a reservoir of opportunities and in the long term benefitted the intermediate classes in a number of ways.

Before going into the details of the consequences of nationalization, we need to briefly review the rationales for the massive nationalization program. There are two lines of explanation; first being the pragmatist and the second being the ideological<sup>20</sup>. According to the former line of explanation it is the circumstantial necessity that compelled the regime to follow a policy of nationalization. Firstly, the large number of enterprises (including banks and insurance companies) abandoned by Pakistani owners needed to be restored. Secondly, the entrepreneurial class of Bangladesh was relatively small and ill equipped in both capital and management skills and hence could not be entrusted with the responsibilities. As such the government had very little choice but to take control of the abandoned units. A government document narrated the situation in following manner:

"As an immediate and direct result of the liberation war, the predatory Pakistani industrialists had 'abandoned' their industries in Bangladesh but only taking with them everything they could, including in some cases, the provident fund money of the employees. They left behind only such plant and machinery which they could not remove and also left behind huge liabilities. In this situation, the government was faced with the immediate task of restoring the existing industries. This meant the assumption by the Government of the enormous responsibility of replacing the entrepreneurs and managers for efficient and effective management in the public sector" (GPRB, 1972:1).

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<sup>20</sup>These two lines of arguments are not mutually exclusive and analysts do not cancel out one in favor of the other. Sobhan and Ahmad (1980), Islam (1977), and Akash (1987), for example, maintained that both circumstantial necessity and ideological commitment of the AL are the factors for nationalization program. Akash (1987), however, emphasized the ideological aspects more than the other factor. On the other hand, Khan and Hossain (1989), find nothing in the history of Awami League to suggest that the AL was implementing socialism and the nationalization was a step towards that end. A radical interpretation, advanced by Umar (1980), suggests that nationalization was sinister move of the AL to discredit socialism and pave the way for the development of a comprador bourgeoisie.

Although there is no doubt that such a situation played a vital role in formulation and implementation of a policy of nationalization, that was not the driving force behind this sweeping measure. If that was the case the industrial units owned by Bangladeshi nationals would have been spared. Especially in jute and textile industries, where the proportion of total assets owned by Bangladeshi nationals was 34 percent and 53 percent respectively.

The ideological explanation to nationalization is that the AL regime was committed to the cause of socialism and it is their commitment that motivated them to nationalize industries. Such an explanation is extremely problematic, because, as we will see later, that the beneficiary of the nationalization of industries were mostly the intermediate classes, not the working class. Secondly, policy of nationalization alone cannot transform the society to a socialist one, especially in a society where agriculture constitutes the core of the economy. Analysis of the agrarian policy of the regime reveals that they essentially stood beside the landowning classes as opposed to the landless peasants who constitute the majority of the population. Thirdly, the nationalization policy of the government left foreign interests completely untouched<sup>21</sup>. It is, however, true that the government took a socialist posture and the driving force behind the nationalization policy was that socialist posture of the regime. In order to broaden the mass-base of the party and contain the radical elements both within and outside the party, the AL made electoral pledges in 1970 that banking and insurance sector will be nationalized. They also promised that if voted to power, they will work to eliminate exploitation, and work to establish a just and egalitarian society. Following the liberation struggle, these commitments turned out to be a promise for a

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<sup>21</sup>By 1972, there were 20 private industrial enterprises owned by foreign companies: 16 of them were pharmaceutical companies, while four other include Bangladesh Tobacco Company, Lever Brothers, Bangladesh Oxygen and Pakistan Fibers. There were two branches of foreign-owned banks (which accounted for 8.41 percent of deposits at the time of nationalization) and 33 tea-estates were owned by the British. None of these were nationalized. As a matter of fact, Bengali private enterprise in tea industry, though quite significant, was also spared from nationalization. According to Bangladesh Tea Board estimates, after March 1972, about 27.25 percent of the acreage of tea-estates were under the control of Bangladesh nationals. They accounted for about 19.4 percent of the output.

socialist transformation of the society. The industrial policy became the test case for the fulfillment of electoral pledges and nationalization became the 'first step' towards a socialist transformation of the society<sup>22</sup>. In addition to the rhetoric of the AL leaders, a number of government documents emphasized the point. The preamble to the industrial investment policy states:

"The Government in moving forward to deal with this problem (abandoned properties) recognised that this situation presented a historic opportunity to lay the foundations of socialism in the industrial sector of the economy. Socialism being one of the fundamental percepts of State policy, the government decided that when it had to assume responsibility for the bulk of the industrial sector, this should be affected within the total perspective which would identify the areas which should immediately be nationalized and taken into public sector" (GPRB, 1972:1).

It was also stated in the same document that the present phase was one 'of consolidation of nationalization, of stabilization of new institutions and of development of a socialist consciousness among management and workers.'

In a separate document the government states:

"The liberation of Bangladesh has opened a new chapter in the economic and political life of the people. The Government is determined to root out all kinds of exploitation and remove social and economic inequality which prevailed in the country for so long. ... As a first step towards socialism the Government have already nationalized (industries). ... This is definitely a step forward in socialising our country and in improving the living and working conditions of our working class" (GPRB, 1972a).

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<sup>22</sup>The context of the electoral pledge for nationalization of heavy and/or basic industries by Awami League in 1970 was completely different from the one they encountered in post-liberation Bangladesh. Heavy industries such as iron and steel, fertilizers, heavy chemicals, paper, were already under public sector before the emergence of Bangladesh. The jute, textile and sugar industries in pre-independent Bangladesh was owned and controlled by Pakistani industrialists and thus Bengalis had very little control over these sectors, though the raw materials were coming from Bangladesh. As such, it was perceived that nationalization of these sectors would provide the Bengalis an opportunity to share the profit and give the growers their due share. The situation drastically changed with the liberation, yet the electoral pledges before liberation was carried over to the post-liberation Bangladesh.

The rationale behind the nationalization of industries in 1972, as we can see from the foregoing discussion, were the circumstantial necessity and regime's desire to prove its socialist credentials.

Now the most significant question arises: who benefitted from the nationalization policy? Close examination reveals that the urban intermediate classes reaped the benefits of the nationalization in the same way it benefitted from other economic policies and indeed from the working of the economic system as a whole. Some of the benefits gained by the intermediate classes from the nationalization policy in particular mentioned below will bear out the claim. The immediate, yet significant benefits include an increase of job opportunities, appropriation of the potential surplus of nationalized industries, and personal enrichments through abusing the power to control the state enterprises etc.,

The expansion of the state activities necessitated an increase in the number of state-personnel. Nationalization contributed directly to that need of the state and created job opportunities for the urban intermediate classes. At the very outset a large number of management staff including administrators were appointed to the nationalized enterprises. These new appointees largely came from the party connection, either party members or those close to party leaders. White-collar jobs increased substantially in subsequent years. Sobhan and Ahmad's study of 39 public enterprises reveals two interesting facts in this regard. Firstly, during 1972-75, a total of 1,169 officers were recruited. Of these new appointees, only 50 had management training and 86 had technical training specific to their job (Sobhan and Ahmad, 1980:545). Secondly, 25 percent of the total employees were promoted from unskilled to skilled clerical level, 56 percent were promoted from clerical level to officer level, and of these at least 30 percent did not have the required qualifications for the posts (Sobhan and Ahmad, 1980:544). The class origins of those involved in the management of the nationalized enterprises revealed in a study on the social origins of the business executives of Bangladesh. The study shows that

only 4.54 percent of the business executives had a rural and agricultural background, remaining 95 percent of the upper class executives of the nationalized industries came from urban areas (Habibullah, 1976:206). The study further reveals that they were the descendants of people employed in high positions in government and semi-government organizations (34.85 percent) and self-owned business firms (15.15 percent).

The expansion of employment opportunity was not limited to the nationalized enterprises only. Given the heightened role of the state, it grew in many different ways. That is why employment in public services witnessed a dramatic expansion. At the time of liberation there were 450,000 employees of all grades in the public services, of whom only 320 were officers at the level of joint secretary or above. By 1973, total employment in the public services had increased to over 650,000 with officers in the higher grade to 660 (IBRD, 1984:109).

The potential surplus of nationalized enterprises became a source of rapid private accumulation for the intermediate classes. Two methods were used for appropriating the surplus; directly selling the distribution licenses gained through political connections with the regime, and/or siphoning off the margin gained from the difference between ex-factory price and market clearing price. It should be recalled here that although the industries were nationalized the distribution of products remained in the hands of private sector. Government retained the authority for issuing distribution licenses to the private citizens involved in the business. On paper the licenses were issued to the genuine businessmen, but in practice a large group of fake-businessmen close to the ruling party obtained the distribution licenses. The output of the nationalized industries was sold to these private distributors at a price that was well below the market clearing price. The margin between the market price and the ex-factory price was substantial and the difference was appropriated by the private distributors. In most cases, these fake-businessmen sold distribution licenses to legitimate traders at close to the market clearing price. This practice essentially created a number intermediaries between the factory and the



market and helped increase the price of the product besides increasing the wealth of the intermediaries.

The senior managers and the bureaucrats in the ministries and corporations responsible for managing the nationalized enterprises obtained numerous benefits in cash and kind, legally and illegally. The 'legal' ones were primarily the benefits obtained in kind: transport, personal services, supplies and other consumables. The illegal ones ranged from bribes (from suppliers, which was later passed on to the consumers in the form higher prices) to underinvoicing and overinvoicing. All of these on the one hand increased the burden on the consumers, while, on the other hand, they siphoned off the potential surplus.

At a very early stage of nationalization another group benefitted immensely: the former owners of the industrial units. Although this may sound ludicrous that the owners benefitted from a policy that took away their assets, it is true in this particular situation, especially in jute and textile industries. Firstly, even on paper only 24 percent of investments in these sectors came from personal income/savings of the owner. Most of these so-called personal investments practically came from the banks as personal loans. Of the remainder, 58 percent came from government sources as industrial loans and 18 percent came from public equity. The owners, therefore, had very little investments in these units. But when the units were nationalized they were offered compensations based on the assets of the units. This obviously benefitted them. Secondly, the changes in the objective conditions owing to independence made a large number of industrial units unprofitable. Jute mills provide the best example in this regard. In the pre-independence era the high rates of profit in this industry derived from the high protection it received. There was blatant discrimination against the peasant growers of raw jute and in favor of jute mill owners (primarily Pakistani). The export exchange rate for finished jute products was more favorable than exchange rate of raw jute. Hence the jute mill owners were benefitting at the expense of jute growers. But after independence, at least in the early days, made it impossible

to continue such a blatantly discriminatory policy. As such, these industries were destined to face a terrible time ahead. Nationalization saved the owners from facing such a consequence.

The immediate benefits, however, came in a different fashion. The former owners were appointed as managers of the nationalized units. This gave them a rare opportunity: control of productive enterprises without owning it, without the obligation to service the debt. The control itself was a source of economic power and they used it for personal aggrandizement. Given that there was little discipline -- financial or industrial -- and that it was unclear whom the new managers are accountable to, it was an unprecedented opportunity for these new 'managers' to embezzle. What made the situation worse was the absence of an inventory before appointing the new managers. That made it easier for some of the managers to liquidate machinery. Additionally, it was these managers who were authorized to appoint marketing and sales agents, which helped the process of personal gain. Maximization of personal profit within a short span of time turned out to be the ultimate goal of these new managers.

The implications of the nationalization policy pursued by the post-independent regime delineated above clearly show that it accorded the state a pre-eminent position in the economic and social arena. In addition to its heightened command over the resources, the state became the source of patronage needed for immediate gain of any social class. The other feature that stands out is the class character of the beneficiary of the nationalization policy. It was the interests of the urban intermediate classes' that were promoted through this policy. It must be recalled that this is not incongruent with other policies pursued by the state, but rather an example that bears out that fact. Some more examples are in order.

#### Investment Policy:

The salient features of the investment policy declared in the beginning of 1973 included a ceiling on private investment, a moratorium on nationalization and severe restrictions on new foreign investment (GPRB, 1973). According to the policy, private enterprises were limited to

units with fixed assets not exceeding Taka 2.5 million which could grow up to Taka 3.5 million through reinvested profits. Regarding possible nationalization the policy stated, 'there will be a moratorium on nationalization for ten years from the date of publication of this policy for old units up to TK. 25 lakhs (i.e. Taka 2.5 million) and from the date of going into production for new units set up during the First Five-Year Plan.'<sup>23</sup> Foreign investments were permitted only in collaboration with the Government whose share in the equity capital would be 51 percent. Foreign collaborations in the private sector were confined to licenses and patents only<sup>24</sup>.

Essentially the investment policy was a continuation of the nationalization policy of the regime, for the nationalization policy did not cover all sectors of the economy and a supplementary policy was required to set the direction for the remainder. We have seen that the nationalization policy practically limited the possibility of consolidation and expansion of a bourgeois class<sup>25</sup>. A policy to foreclose all avenues of development of a big industrial bourgeoisie in Bangladesh was prompted by the social class that was haunted by the memories of economic and political power of the big bourgeoisie in Pakistan. Having achieved that goal through nationalization, the intermediate classes moved to the second phase: ensuring state

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<sup>23</sup>There was, however, another provision that empowered the government to nationalize any unit any time in case of mismanagement or under-utilization.

<sup>24</sup>All acts of foreign collaboration, according to the policy, were to be approved by a committee called Investment Board. The Board was chaired by the minister of industries and its members included, member of industries division, Planning Commission; secretary, industries ministry; chairman of relevant corporation; secretary, finance; secretary, law; secretary, nationalized industries division; chairman, BSIC. Director General of Industries was to act as member-secretary.

<sup>25</sup>Sobhan and Ahmad, members of Planning Commission, eloquently mentioned that intention of the nationalization policy. They write, 'the nationalisation (sic) decisions of March 26, 1972 were intended to extend the role of the state sector and thereby limit the possibility of the upper bourgeoisie of Bangladesh from consolidating and expanding their position in the social hierarchy of Bangladesh' (Sobhan and Ahmad, 1980:191).

patronage for their expansion. The investment policy was formulated to that end<sup>26</sup>. It is evident that the imposition of a ceiling and the restrictions on foreign investments favored the small and medium-size enterprises. Those who were engaged in trading, small-scale industries, businesses like transportation, construction etc., benefitted immensely from this policy.

Two missing points of the policy need to be raised here. Firstly, the policy neither prohibited setting up several units with the maximum limit of assets (i.e. Taka 2.5 million), nor did it make any attempt to prevent disaggregating a unit with assets over Taka 2.5 million. Secondly, the policy did not indicate what an enterprise should do with its surplus beyond the limit of reinvestment. Both of these questions were discussed at length in cabinet sub-committee meetings and Planning Commission meetings. Yet, no clear-cut answer was given, because the policy-makers were not sure how much the small enterprises would be able to grow.

Nevertheless, the investment policy gave a boost to the traders and businessmen -- and not to those involved in industrial enterprises. While the government was looking for private entrepreneurs in vain to disinvest 462 small and medium-size abandoned industrial units, the intermediate classes, looked for quick-yielding opportunities in trading, dealership and businesses like transport and construction. The access to the government was used to reap benefits, legally or illegally.

The extent of private ownership and rapid proliferation of new entrants in these fields can be understood from a few facts. In the road transport sector, only 15 percent of passenger services were under public corporations, 85 percent was controlled by private owners. In inland water transport sector almost 50 percent was in private hands. During the year 1972-73, '56.56 percent of cash imports were in fact handled by private commercial importers' (Sobhan and

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<sup>26</sup>Nurul Islam, another member of Planning Commission, points to that fact. He writes, 'the basic rationale behind the ceiling was that private industrialists were not to be allowed to grow into big capitalists through the expansion of the existing enterprises either by reinvestment of profits or by means of external financing' (Islam, 1977:220).

Ahmad, 1980:195). Patronage in the form of issuing licenses, permits, dealerships to the party-members was so widespread that fake businessmen outnumbered the real businessmen. The Commerce minister acknowledged the fact on May 11, 1973. According to him, the government issued 25,000 licenses for import business and it turned out that 15,000 of them went to fake companies (Dainik Bangla, May 12, 1973). It is alleged that these fake-companies either sold those licenses to other traders and made a huge margin or engaged in smuggling items brought under the licenses.

It is of further significance that government not only issued licenses to these new traders, but also provided other facilities that helped them amass large sums of money in a short time. One way was exempting import duties on essential goods like food grains, fertilizers, seeds of all types, metallic ores and infant foods, and low rate of import duties on intermediate range of essential goods such as coarse fabrics, pharmaceutical, industrial raw materials, machinery and machine parts. Although these goods were taxed at low rates saying that this will benefit the common low-income people, the market price of these goods were significantly high due to high rate of scarcity margins. According to an account of the Planning Commission scarcity margin on essential goods like sugar was 100-150 percent, on milk foods was 150 percent and on coconut oil was 200 percent (Bangladesh Planning Commission, 1974a). The fortunate recipients of the import licenses appropriated this huge margin.

Owing to rampant corruption, widespread state-patronage and smuggling jute and other exportables to India, so much of wealth was accumulated in the hands of the intermediate classes that by the end of 1973 strong pressure began to mount to revise the investment policy. The pressure primarily came from within the party and from ministry of industries<sup>27</sup>. It was argued

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<sup>27</sup>The ministry of industries, from the very beginning, was opposed to the idea of imposition of ceiling on private enterprises and was interested in reviving private sector. In the second half of 1972, the ministry took initiative to publish an industrial investment schedule. But the Industry Division of the Planning Commission foiled the move and presented a policy paper to the cabinet outlining the investment policy. They again made a move in late 1973 in favor of the private

that a low-ceiling of investment had a discouraging effect on private investment, hence large sums were being diverted into unproductive channels. The second argument was that an upward revision of ceiling will provide a legitimate outlet for the 'black' money to be invested in industrial sector. Thirdly, over the years equipment prices in international market have gone up while the value of Taka had dropped remarkably. Thus the present ceiling in effect is lower than the one initially set and without an upward revision the intended goal of the government to encourage small and medium-size enterprises cannot be achieved.

The pressure for an upward revision of ceiling also came from external sources such as donor agencies. Donor agencies, who were in favor of a larger role for private enterprises in the economy, insisted that the ceiling was inhibiting entrepreneurship. The World Bank recommended raising the ceiling to Taka 10 million or removing it altogether (IBRD, 1974:312). Foreign investors also began to press for opportunities for collaboration with private investors.

Pressed by internal and external sources, the government finally revised the investment policy drastically in July 1974 with immediate effect (GPRB, 1974). The central features of the revised investment policy were:

- 1) the ceiling for private investment was raised to Taka 30 million;
- 2) private foreign investors were allowed to enter into partnerships with domestic private investors, mainly but not exclusively in projects where 'technical knowhow is not locally available, technology involved is very complicated, capital outlay is high and to industries based on local raw materials or wholly export-oriented industries';
- 3) the moratorium on nationalization was extended from ten to fifteen years and fair and equitable compensation was guaranteed in the event of subsequent nationalization:

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enterprise and became the spokesmen for revision of investment policy. The minister of industries suggested removal of ceiling altogether in a cabinet meeting held on March 3, 1974 (The minutes of the Cabinet meeting, March 3, 1974).

4) eighteen sectors were reserved for public sector leaving the rest open for private investment; in the field of industry proper, eleven industries remained exclusively in public sector.

The revised investment policy, as we have noted, was needed to accommodate the emerging new-rich class which appropriated the potential surplus from the public sector and accumulated wealth through a number of illegal means under the patronage of the ruling party.

#### Agrarian Policies:

While the nationalization and investment policies of the regime favored the urban intermediate classes, agrarian policies served the interests of their rural counterparts. In the industrial sector, the government on the one hand enacted laws that would promote the interests of the intermediate classes and protect them from potential rivals, while on the other hand public corporations were established to provide patronage. A similar method was used in the agrarian sector. The government legislated laws to serve the rich and upper class peasants and increasingly intervened in the agricultural sector through different public corporations including the newly established the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC).

The most influential laws affecting the agrarian interests passed during the period in review were the limitation on landholdings at 33.3 acres and the abolition of land revenue on landholdings of up to 8.3 acres. The government issued the Bangladesh Landholding (Limitation) Order of 1972 (Presidential Order 98 of 1972) at the beginning of the year. The order brought down the upper limit of the landholdings from 125 acres to 33.3 acres. Although the regime identified this measure as 'land reform', what is interesting to note is that the 'new' limit set by the government was not new at all. The East Bengal State Acquisition Act of 1950 imposed this ceiling, but ten years later during the Ayub era the upper limit was raised to 375 acres through a proclamation (East Pakistan Ordinance no 15 of 1961). Thus, the new limit on landholdings was essentially a return to the legislation of 1950. In a country like Bangladesh where anyone owning up to 7.5 acres of land can be considered as a rich or surplus farmer, and only 4.5 percent

of the land was in units even as large as 25 acres in 1968, it is clear as to who can and does benefit from such 'reform' measures<sup>28</sup>.

Given the fact that nearly three-fourths of the members of the parliament owned more than 10 acres of land, it is no surprise that the proposal of the Planning Commission to set the upper limit at 8 acres and the demand of opposition political parties to set the limit at 10 acres were rejected altogether by the parliament. Initially the Landholding Limitation Order made a departure from the Tenancy Act of 1950 in defining the 'family.' The definition of family was broadened to check the evasion of the ceiling through transfer of ownership. But in the face of pressure from the powerful landed interests, the government revised the definition twice (Presidential Order no. 135 of 1972,<sup>29</sup> and Presidential Order no. 154 of 1972<sup>30</sup>) bringing it back to its former position<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup>The government maintained that one of the reasons for the reform was to recover land and distribute it among landless laborers. This is one of the pre-election pledges of the ruling party. But owing to high limits, the government failed to acquire additional land for distributing among the landless. In May 1972, Minister for Land Reforms and Land Administration estimated that following the reform at least 1.2 million acres of land would come under government's control for redistribution (*Bangladesh Observer*, May 25, 1972). Later, he adjusted that figure to 0.8 million acres (*Bangladesh Observer*, August 5, 1972). According to Siddiqui's (1981:68) estimate the maximum amount of recoverable land would have been 0.4 million acres. By the end of 1973, the government announced that only 900 acres had been redistributed as a result of the reform (Blair, 1978:70-71). The government accounts of 1976 show that they have succeeded in identifying 58,409 acres of land that could be brought under government control. Until then only 31,250 acres of land were actually acquired by the government (Siddiqui, 1981:68). Whereas it was estimated by Zaman (1975:108) that an eight acres limit, suggested by a number of opposition political parties at that time, would have enabled the government to recover 2.63 million acres of land.

<sup>29</sup>The Bangladesh Gazette (Extraordinary), Nov 4, 1972.

<sup>30</sup>The Bangladesh Gazette (Extraordinary), December 15, 1972.

<sup>31</sup>After that the government never attempted any changes in the laws that might bring any change in land ownership. The Land Revenue Committee headed by M.A. Taher appointed in 1972 recommended that there be no interference with the existing laws of inheritance (GPRB, 1972: 20). Another Land Revenue Committee headed by K.M.M. Mosharraf Hossain appointed in July 1974 which finalized its report in April 1975 concurred with the earlier recommendation (GPRB, 1975).



The second influential measure of the government touches upon the system of land revenue and agricultural income tax. The State Acquisition and Tenancy (Third Amendment) Order, 1972 (Presidential Order No. 96 of 1972) was promulgated in early 1972. The law exempted landholdings of 8.3 acres or less from payment of land revenue<sup>32</sup>. This brought relief to small peasants, but the major beneficiary was the middle peasantry, because this measure essentially made their entire income tax-exempt.

In addition to the explicit favoritism manifested in these legal measures, there was a deliberate silence about two crucial and interrelated issues of agriculture: the issue of absentee landlords and the issue of a tenant's right to land. The following quotation from a government report of 1981 reveals the extent of absentee landlordism, its relationship with tenants rights and why these issues remained unaddressed,

"It is estimated that 3.63 lakh acres of land which is 1.74 percent of the total owned land are held by 1.45 lakh absentee families. The lands they own are let out on barga. About 52 percent of the absentee owners are service holders. 30 percent belongs to business and the remaining 18 percent belongs to other occupations" (GPRB, 1981:107).

Blair (1978) also points to that fact in his study of rural development and bureaucracy that a large number of the members of the civil and military bureaucracy, the members of parliament and the political parties either belong to this section or have close contacts with them.

It is, therefore, clear from the foregoing discussion that the laws related to agrarian issues legislated by the regime during the period of 1972-1975 unambiguously promoted the interests of the rural intermediate classes. Moreover, as I have mentioned earlier, the regime's agrarian policy was not limited to ensuring legal entitlement of land to the intermediate classes but to guarantee resources and patronage through a heightened role of the state.

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<sup>32</sup>Prior to that, collection of agricultural income tax was postponed for two years from 1973/74 on grounds that agricultural production suffered from dislocation during and immediately after the liberation war. While land revenue was abolished, a number of taxes or fees such as development and relief tax, education and local tax were levied.

The state became involved in agriculture primarily through two means: control and distribution of inputs, and providing credit to producers. The government exercised virtual monopoly over the distribution of agricultural inputs, principally through the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) which was responsible for the purchase (mainly in the international market) and distribution of minor irrigation equipment, spare parts, fertilizers and pesticides. These agricultural inputs were highly subsidized by the government and hence, effectively not allowed to be marketed privately. Additionally, the government provided agricultural credit through a number of specialized banks. The state practically arrogated to itself the role of merchant (as the government began to buy rice and jute at fixed prices under its internal procurement policy), money lender (as the nationalized banks became a significant source of credit) and dealer of equipment (as the BADC became the only source of agricultural equipment).

The extent of subsidies on agricultural inputs can be understood from the fact that in 1973/74 fertilizers were sold at less than half the cost of procurement or distribution<sup>33</sup> and in 1975/76 the total cost of fertilizer subsidy was as high as Taka 800 million. The annual amount of subsidies to the irrigation program for tubewells and low-lift pumps in 1974/75 amounted to over Taka 710 million (Bangladesh Planning Commission, 1975:45-6). The rate of subsidies on other agricultural inputs, according to Islam (1977:201), included about 50 percent for improved seeds and about 100 percent for insecticides and extension services. The amount of subsidy indicates how deeply the state became involved in the distribution of agricultural input. What is

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<sup>33</sup>In 1973/74 the cost of Urea fertilizer per maund, for example, was Taka 40.77 and the sale price was Taka 30.00. The cost of TSP fertilizer was Taka 56.16 and the sale price was Taka 20.00 and the MP fertilizer was sold at the rate of Taka 15.00 while the cost was Taka 42.56. In the following year the sale price increased marginally whereas the cost increased substantially. The cost of Urea was Taka 58.00, sale price taka 40.00; TSP, cost -- Taka 115.00, sale -- Taka 30.00; MP, cost -- Taka 70.00, sale price Taka 20.00 (Bangladesh Planning Commission, 1975:52-54).

important for the purpose of our study, however, is the class character of the beneficiaries of this subsidy.

The procedure followed for fertilizer distribution in and itself required a middleman between the users and the BADC. The BADC was responsible for procurement, transportation and storage up to the thana (local administrative unit) level, from where licensed dealers (either individuals or cooperatives) could purchase and sell at stipulated prices<sup>34</sup>. Apart from the procedural bias towards the rich and upper peasants which enabled them to have control over this basic input, it gave them ample opportunity to manipulate the market and appropriate the scarcity premiums which was sometimes as high as 100 percent (Ahmed, 1976:16; Rahman, 1973).

The 'small farmer' cooperative program evolved at Comilla during the second decade of Pakistani colonial rule was replicated on the national level under the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP)<sup>35</sup> after the independence and became the primary vehicle to disburse the agricultural inputs and rural credit. Given the importance of this institution, the rural intermediate classes took effective control of its structures and manipulated it in their favor. A number of studies have documented that large farmers have taken over the IRDP program

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<sup>34</sup>A brief description of the procedure followed in issuing a license would show that it was almost impossible for the producers to obtain a license. A person intending to have a license was required to apply to the Thana Inspector of the BADC with the documentation including a certificate from the Union Parishad Chairman as well as a trade certificate. On the basis of the Thana Inspectors recommendations, the application would be placed before the Agricultural Development Committee (ADC) headed by the Thana Circle Officer (Development). After attaining the committee's approval, it was to be forwarded to the sub-divisional level Manager of BADC who was the final issuing authority. Without having good connection with the authorities involved and ample time to spent for this purpose it was impossible to obtain a license. Both of these factors went against primary producers.

<sup>35</sup>The essential structure of this program consists of: a) the primary cooperatives (KSS) located within the villages and organized by the farmers themselves; b) the primary cooperatives which are federated at the thana level (TCCA). TCCA coordinates the credit procurement form the apex and distributes it among the village cooperatives. In 1972 the number TCCAs were 33 and number of KSSs were 5630. The number of cooperatives increased dramatically over the years. In 1973, the numbers were 87 and 10,171; in 1974, 152 and 14,690 and in 1975, 161 and 17,691 for TCCAs and KSSs respectively.

from the very beginning and still plays the leading role. Examples of such studies include those by Jones (1979), SIDA/ILO (1974), Khan (1979), Blair (1978), Abdullah et. al (1976), Hamid and Rahman (1977) and Rahman (1986), Huq (1978), Wood (1981), and Schendel (1981) to name a few.

Hamid and Rahman (1977) concluded after their evaluation of two IRDP projects in northern Bangladesh that the benefits of the cooperatives largely went to the pockets of large farmers. They write:

"The study demonstrates that, while in Natore and Gaibandha about 30% of cooperative farmers fell under the category of big farmers (having more than five acres of cultivable land of their own), all the executive committee members are surplus farmers" (Hamid and Rahman, 1977:2).

The picture was same in the southern part of Bangladesh. Majumdar's (1978) study of a village in southern Bengal shows that 83 percent of the members of the managing committee of a cooperative owned land of 2 acres or more.

Abdullah et. al.'s (1976) study on four villages reveals that the members of the IRDP cooperatives owned an average of 4.2 acres of land (whereas non-member households in these villages owned 2.8 acres) and the functionaries (chairmen, managers, model farmers) owned 6.16 acres on an average. As early as 1974, a report by the Planning Commission on the IRDP cooperatives arrived at a conclusion similar to these studies: the entire structure seems to become dominated by '...the rural elites ... in conspiracy with the urban rich' (Planning Commission, 1974).

Another source of agricultural credit was the specialized banks. The system of granting loans on the basis of security of land kept the tenants and sharecroppers out of the jurisdiction of the banks and placed the small farmers at a big disadvantage in securing loans. One account of loans granted to the farmers by the Agricultural Bank shows that 70 percent of the loans were

provided to farmers with more than 3 acres and about 30 percent of the loans went to those with 12.5 acres and more (IBRD, 1974a: Appx,II).

The discussion of selected economic policies of the regime presented above shows that urban and rural intermediate classes were the principal beneficiaries of the industrial and agrarian policies of the government. On the one hand they benefitted by the heightened the role of the state as they received its direct patronage, while on the other hand, the long-term benefits of these policies favored them. In the industrial sector, an expansion of the public sector enhanced the job opportunities for the urban middle classes, entrusted them with the control and management of productive enterprises without taking the burden of owning them and provided them with an unprecedented opportunity of becoming commercial middlemen. The policies also impeded the development of a big bourgeoisie, while opening all the avenues for the petty-bourgeoisie to appropriate the potential surplus of the public sector. The system of licensing and dealership gave the intermediate class an easy way to siphon off large sum of money -- legally and illegally. In the agricultural sector, the rich and upper peasants were assured of their legal entitlement over a precious resource -- land -- and were freed from major tax-burdens. Further, an extensive institutional infrastructure was built to support them with subsidized inputs and credits.

What should not be overlooked here is the fact that in both sectors the state was used to benefit certain classes. The intermediate classes of Bangladesh utilized the state as their prized possession. This feature of the Bangladesh economy, in spite of all of its specificity, is very similar to that of other post-colonial situations where intermediate classes capture state power. That is why Mahmood Mamdani's generalization about petit-bourgeoisie politics rings true in Bangladesh:

"Given that it is located within the state (state bureaucracy) and outside of it (Kulaks, traders), the petit-bourgeoisie has two alternative methods of accumulation open to it: either use the state to create public property which the

petit-bourgeoisie would control indirectly through its control over the state, or use the state to expand private property which the petit-bourgeoisie would control directly through ownership. The former necessitates an ideology that justifies the use of state economic action, of nationalizations. This ideology is socialism stripped of its emphasis on class struggle, robbed of its political (class) content, and put forth as an economic ideology" (Mamdani, 1976:313).

In Bangladesh, nationalization as economic action was put forth and socialism was declared as one of the high ideals of the state. These, however, did not preclude private ownership<sup>36</sup>. As such, it was not necessary for the intermediate classes to see the creation of public property as an alternative to the creation of private property, rather they saw these two as complementary. Hence they used the state in both ways to accentuate the processes of accumulation. Although the extent and pace of accumulation in early days of independence resembles somewhat a 'primitive accumulation of capital', a closer scrutiny reveals that what the intermediate classes in Bangladesh amassed during the period in review was not capital, but wealth. It is not the productive accumulation of an industrialist but the unproductive riches of a merchant. Its riches were not destined to be transformed into means of production, thereby expanding the productive base of the economy; it merely lubricated the export-import economy, at most permitted the creation of small-scale consumer good enterprises, thereby encouraging the habit of consuming luxury goods. Quite clearly, this was not the emergence of a bourgeoisie for capitalist development; it was the plunder by the intermediate classes for a sumptuous life-style.

An extensive use of the state, indeed, benefitted them in the short-run, for without employing the authority of the state these classes would not have had the opportunity to grow so fast and the rules of competition for accumulation would not have permitted them to acquire so much of wealth. But this had a serious and far-reaching repercussion: enlargement of the distributive power of the bureaucracy over the society. With the increasing power at its disposal,

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<sup>36</sup>Bangladesh Constitution of 1972 permitted three forms of ownership: i) state ownership; ii) cooperative ownership; and iii) private ownership (The Constitution of Bangladesh, Articles 10, 13, 14, 15, 19 and 20).

the bureaucracy could gradually assume a preeminent position within the power-bloc. That is why, as we will see in the next section, the hard rhetoric and reform measures against the bureaucracy, initiated in the early days of the independence lost its steam and eventually the political apparatus was subsumed by the bureaucracy.

**Bureaucracy Crucified, Bureaucracy Resurrected:  
Conflict Between the Old State and the New Regime**

Following independence, the attitude and actions of the new regime towards the bureaucracy was quite ambivalent. On the one hand, it opted for the perpetuation of the existing structure of the state and augmented the role of the state in an unprecedented manner. Hence, conditions for an expansion of the power of bureaucracy to establish control over all social classes were fulfilled. On the other hand, rhetoric against the bureaucracy was beefed up and some constitutional and reform measures to bring the bureaucracy under political control were launched. The structural imperatives, nevertheless, subdued the rhetoric and defeated these new measures within a very short time and thus bureaucrats regained their preeminent position. The other factor that facilitated the rise of bureaucracy was the growing dependence of the state on external assistance in the form of aid. The decline in the relative importance of the bureaucracy and its subsequent ascent can be described as the crucifixion and resurrection of the bureaucracy.

Extensive control over the policy-making machinery by the bureaucracy and their 'happy marriage' with the military regimes during the second colonial domination (1947-1971) made the bureaucracy a much hated word in the political lexicon of Bangladesh. In spite of the fact that in the 1960s, a large number of disgruntled Bengali bureaucrats sympathized with the Awami League and personally remained on good terms with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Awami League in its election manifesto of 1970 pledged a radical restructuring of the administrative machinery and replacement of the elitist Central Service of Pakistan (CSP) with specialized professional cadres (Awami League, 1970).

In the early post-independence period, the crucifixion of the bureaucracy began. Political leaders, including the PM himself, continued the denouncement of the bureaucrats in parliamentary debates<sup>37</sup> and public meetings<sup>38</sup>, as well in meetings with the officials<sup>39</sup>. Keeping in line with their election pledge and verbal assaults, the AL proceeded to 'reorganize the entire system of administration' in order to establish a machinery which could effectively meet the 'urgent task of national construction'. 'To give effect to the reorganization of the entire administration', government introduced a law: The Government of Bangladesh (Service) Order 1972 (i.e. the President's Order no 9 of 1972).

Contrary to their earlier pronouncements<sup>40</sup> the order maintained that no person had any claim to employment in the service or any other claim whatsoever against the Government on the basis of having been employed at any time in the service of Pakistan. This order also provided that if in the opinion of the government employees of the government or any corporation were not required in the interest of the Republic, the government could remove such persons 'without assigning any reason notwithstanding anything contrary contained in any law or in the terms and conditions of the service.' The law provided that no legal action can be brought against the government arising out or in respect of an act made under the Order.

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<sup>37</sup>For Sheikh Mujib's condemnation of bureaucracy in Constituent Assembly see the Proceedings of the CA Debate, Vol. 2, No. 12, October 30, 1972.

<sup>38</sup>Sheikh Mujib's speech in a public meeting held in Tangail see Bangladesh Observer, January 24, 1972.

<sup>39</sup>For Mujib's address to the officials at Bangladesh Secretariat, February 1, 1972 see Bangladesh Observer, February 2, 1972.

<sup>40</sup>The Laws Continuance Enforcement Order promulgated by the government in exile on April 10, 1971.



The President's Order No. 9 was followed by another Order in June 1972, The Government of Bangladesh (Service Screening) Order, 1972 (President's Order No. 67 of 1972)<sup>41</sup>. The law was made for establishing an administrative machinery whereby corporations, nationalized enterprises, local authorities and government-aided institutions would be free from corrupt persons, collaborators, officials, and other employees wedded to the ideology of Pakistan and for effectively carrying the urgent task of national reconstruction. The law was evidently self-contained and it excluded the force of any other law, rules, or terms and conditions relating to service which would otherwise give an employee certain protection. The established principles relating to the removal, dismissal or disciplinary punishment, particularly with regard to government servants, were done away with. The latter law (i.e. P.O. 67), however, was little better in the sense that it provided a procedure (i.e. setting up two Screening Boards) for punishment, including a right to be heard<sup>42</sup>.

These ad-hoc laws challenging the authority of the bureaucracy were followed by concrete and long-standing measures like the appointment of a Planning Commission without according the bureaucrats a prominent position; creation of constitutional provisions that took away their job protection; appointment of an Administrative and Services Reorganization Committee

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<sup>41</sup>The law was later amended under The Government of Bangladesh (Service Screening) (Amendment) Order of 1972, President's Order No. 92 of 1972.

<sup>42</sup>On the face, it seemed that these orders were promulgated to reorganize the administration. One can also say that given the extraordinary situation after the war, such moves were justified as temporary arrangements. But, significantly, there was no reorganization in sight, while the law took its own course. A large number of cases containing allegations of corruption were handled by the screening boards and a sizeable number of employees were punished under the law on charges of corruption. Whether or not all of them were just is difficult to determine. But it is indeed true that these laws, particularly P.O. No. 9, were used against the political opponents of the regime and to resolve petty conflicts among government employees. An example of such use is the removal of 24 Bus conductors of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation, the state controlled corporation for public transport. The most significant impact of these laws were not the actual removal or punishment, but the fear of being removed from services and the social humiliation associated with such removal.

(ASRC) headed by the Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University; and appointment of a National Pay Commission (NPC) .

The Planning Commission, as I have mentioned earlier, was headed by academic economists and manned by professionals drawn from various sectors of the economy but only a few from the traditional civil service and bureaucracy. The only key position that was held by a bureaucrat was that of Secretary. The position, however, lost its previous importance, because the commission members maintained a close contact with, and enjoyed the confidence of, the Prime Minister. The attitude of the Planning Commission members was quite hostile to the bureaucracy and vice versa. The Planning Commission, in this respect, became the battle ground of the old state and new regime represented by the bureaucrats and the professionals, respectively. As such, the experience of the Commission is indicative of the eventual winner in the battle. Further details of this experience is presented later in this section and will show that the bureaucrats succeeded in overpowering the professionals.

The constitution, enacted in 1972, not only incorporated the Presidential Orders promulgated as ad-hoc laws<sup>43</sup> but made a serious break with the past and denied the constitutional protection civil servants had enjoyed under the 1956 and 1962 constitutions of Pakistan<sup>44</sup>. The Bangladesh Constitution stipulated that civil servants 'shall hold office during the pleasure of the President'<sup>45</sup> and that 'the decision thereon of the authority empowered to dismiss or remove such person or to reduce him in rank shall be final.'<sup>46</sup> The principles

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<sup>43</sup>The Fourth Schedule, The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

<sup>44</sup>See Articles 179-183 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1956 and Articles 174-179 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1962.

<sup>45</sup>Articles 134, The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

<sup>46</sup>Article 135(3), Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

regulating recruitment and conditions of services which were incorporated in the 1956 and 1962 constitutions were also omitted.

The Administrative and Services Reorganization Committee (ASRC) recommended for a single classless grading structure covering all services in ten grades and maintained that the inherited structures of the services were neither adequate nor appropriate for fulfilling the needs of the government (GPRB, 1973a:10). It also recommended that the civil servants should be attuned to the hopes and aspirations of the people, and they were expected to create a kind of 'living fellowship' with the common people and a 'firm dedication to democracy and socialism.' The main theme of the recommendations of the committee was the abolition of the elite cadre: there would be no reservations of posts for any cadre; there would be adequate opportunities for talented persons to quickly rise to the top from any level of the service. Essentially, these recommendations were against the practices prevailing in the government services and was aimed at curtailing the legitimate roots of power of bureaucracy.

The National Pay Commission (NPC) recommendations concerned salaries and privileges enjoyed by the civil servants. The Commission, in its report, commented that, 'since the determination of (salaries) was essentially an administrative process, the pay structure was ever so much subject to intra-bureaucratic power struggle ending always in favor of the higher bureaucracy' (GPRB, 1973b:17). They recommended that instead of 2,220 existing pay scales, the pay and the salary of the civil servants be fixed into ten grades within the limits of Taka 130 to 2,000. The committee felt that a nine-tier administrative system with a corresponding pay scale would reduce the disparity between the highest and lowest incomes and meet the rational system for the country for the next 15 years.

While the new regime clearly favored a reduction of bureaucratic power and attempted to remove the bureaucracy from their preeminent position attained during the colonial era, they faced significant resistance from the bureaucracy. The latter either began to mount pressure to

prevent the former from implementing policies that would curtail their power and privileges, or pushed the regime to bring changes in the institutional structures where these policies were generated. The first instance of such resistance occurred within two months of independence. On February 1, 1972, the day the Prime Minister addressed the officials at Bangladesh Secretariat and severely criticized them, 53 senior civil servants were removed on grounds that they were conferred civil awards by the Pakistani military regime during the period of the liberation war (Bangladesh Observer, February 2, 1972). But the then-PM's office faced serious pressure from the other bureaucrats. Principal arguments advanced in support of these civil servants was that their removal would cause serious demoralizing effects on others and that the reconstruction effort of the government would be badly affected. The government took back some of the officials the next day and all of them except two were reinstated by the end of the month<sup>47</sup>. The reports of both the ASRC and NPC were 'accepted' by the government. But in the face of overwhelming pressure from the bureaucracy, no attempt could be made to implement the recommendations. The reports were shelved for ever.

The composition and structure of the Planning Commission in and of itself was disturbing for the established civil bureaucracy. The bureaucrats felt that they had been ostracized by the regime. Hence, from the very beginning there remained a lack of effective cooperation between the Commission and the civil service. As soon as the Planning Commission undertook the task of framing the First Five Year Plan, they ran into further difficulties with the bureaucracy. The administrative elites viewed the Planning Commission as a 'supra-bureaucracy' and looked upon them with serious suspicion. The attitude of the commission expressed in the First Five Year Plan accentuated the conflict. The Commission did not conceal its disdain towards the bureaucracy

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<sup>47</sup>This event has been mentioned by Ahmed (1983:73) and Ahmed (1980:146, fn 28). Failure to remove top-level bureaucrats, however, did not stop the regime from their anti-bureaucracy posture, only that lower cadres of the government service became the main victims. Maniruzzaman (1982:140, fn 14) reports that from July to November 1974, about 300 of them were removed.

and maintained that 'they (the bureaucrats) can be neither innovators nor catalytic agents for a social change' (GPRB, 1973c:4). The commission contended that the latter, by virtue of their training, habits of work and methods of approach, were on the side of the status quo and established traditions. Such harsh criticisms of the bureaucracy fueled their fury and made them more hostile to the Commission, whom they viewed as 'outsiders'.

The regime's antagonistic attitude towards the bureaucracy was not limited to the civil bureaucracy only, but also directed towards the military bureaucrats. Blair (1978) succinctly described it as follows:

"The military under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman did not receive the largesse it was accorded in India and Pakistan; in fact, the whole defence (sic) establishment amounted to less than 60,000 men at the beginning of 1975. Sheikh Mujib starved his military, seeking to prevent the relative autonomy it had obtained in most post-colonial societies" (Blair, 1978:70).

The available statistics regarding defense allocation of 1972 and 1973 support such an assertion. In 1972, the total amount of military expenditure was \$29 million. Corresponding figures for 1973 is \$15 million. In terms of its share in national wealth (i.e. GNP), the defense expenditure constituted 0.9 percent and 0.6 percent, respectively. In terms of its share in total government expenditure, it was 9 percent in 1972/73 and 7 percent in 1973/74.<sup>48</sup> In conjunction with decreased military budget, the regime practically stopped new recruitment and removed a large number of senior officers. The suppressed discontent of the military personnel is reflected in a statement made in 1973 by then-Col. Ziaur Rahman. Zia, while commenting on the role of the army in liberation struggle and their position in post-independence Bangladesh, stated:

"... In other countries soldiers have been glorified when they did not fight for a sacred cause as ours did in 1971. But I seek no glorification for our soldiers" (Weekly Wave, March 25, 1973).

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<sup>48</sup>Computed from World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1969-1978 (US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 1980). According to another account, defense expenditures in 1973 (US\$ at 1980 prices) was 55.8 million (0.5 percent of GDP) and in 1974, 65.5 million (0.6 percent of GDP) (Kukreja, 1991:135).

The statement, by implication, means that the army men were not awarded appropriate treatment befitting their sacrifice and services. It is at the same time that the government established a parallel para-military force named Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini (JRB, National Defense Force). The Bahini -- a 20,000 well-trained and well-equipped force irked the conventional armed forces and was viewed by the latter as an 'alternative army.' The plan to increase the strength of the JRB from 20,000 to 130,000 by the year 1980 as opposed to the gradual reduction of the army, and allocation of a large portion of the defense budget to the JRB, became sources of indignation for the military bureaucrats. To organize a force apparently no less powerful than them outside the control of the military command was a suspicious move in the eyes of the military bureaucrats in the first place. Then came the negligence towards the conventional military. This process of attempted marginalization of the conventional army did not last long but this initial gesture of the regime is illustrative of its attitude toward the existing military bureaucrats<sup>49</sup>. The general thrust to undermine the power of the existing bureaucrats -- both civil and military -- was the basis of these specific moves.

By 1973, the civil bureaucrats began to mount pressure on the regime in many different ways. In the case of economic planning, not only were they blocking the implementation of policies envisioned by the planning machinery, but reopening the issues in Cabinet meetings to repeat their point of view whenever they felt neglected by the Planning Commission. The political leadership was caught in between, for without the cooperation of the bureaucracy they could not implement the policies however good they may look; while without the intellectuals in the planning machinery the rhetoric of 'new golden Bengal' would have no concrete policy backing. Although there was an apparent dilemma for the regime, in reality there was none, because the structural imperatives left unaltered by the regime were working in favor of the bureaucrats.

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<sup>49</sup>The evolution of the JRB during the period 1972-75 is directly linked with the crisis of authority of the regime and the state. I will focus on this aspect in the next chapter while discussing the rising prominence of the coercive apparatuses during the period under review.

Therefore, whether the regime was willing or not, the bureaucrats were bound to reappear in their privileged positions. That is precisely what happened by late 1973 in the Planning Commission: "one of the most senior civil servants -- a generalist-administrator, who had experience over many years of working in development ministries associated agriculture -- was appointed as a member of the Planning Commission" (Islam, 1977:59). The appointment was the culmination of a process wherein considerable pressure was put on the Prime Minister to change the composition of the leadership of the Planning Commission. The new appointee replaced Anisur Rahman, who resigned in November 1973. In the following month another member of the commission, Mosharraf Hossain, also resigned tilting the balance of the leadership towards the bureaucrats. Remaining two members, Rehman Sobhan and Nurul Islam, left the Commission on August 11, 1974 and January 11, 1975, respectively.

With the aggravation of economic and political crises in 1973 and thereafter<sup>50</sup>, the shift toward reliance on the civil bureaucracy and the military accelerated. In the public corporations a large number of professionals were replaced by the bureaucrats<sup>51</sup>. From the middle of 1974

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<sup>50</sup>The political and economic crises of the regime and the state is discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>51</sup>The post-independence regime at its earlier stage favored the professionals over generalist bureaucrats in state apparatuses, but gradually the shift was towards the generalists bureaucrats. Such a shift is reflected in the appointments of chief executives in the public enterprises between 1972-75. According to the data culled by Sobhan and Ahmad (1980:533-536), 76 appointments were made during this period. Out of this total, 45 had private sector or professional background, 28 were generalists from the civil service and 4 had military background. What is interesting is that, of these 32 generalist-bureaucrats, only 9 were appointed initially to the position of chief executive. The rest replaced professionals who had been the first choice for the position of chief executive. Out of forty-four appointments, 35 of the chief executives appointed initially after the liberation came from a professional and/or management background. It is also necessary to note that of the initial 35 appointments, 16 were subsequently replaced. Of these 16 executives, 7 were replaced by generalists. In the cases where a generalist was replaced, he was succeeded by another one. For example, of the 9 generalists, 6 were replaced, of which again 5 were generalists. Thus of the 44 initial appointments, 22 were replaced, of which 12 were generalists. If tertiary replacements are considered, then out of 32 replacement appointments, 23 were filled by generalists.

Sheikh Mujib began to rely more on the bureaucrats for advice and implementations of policies. While appointing Deputy Commissioners, Ahmed (1980:160, fn 71) notes, Mujib favored civil bureaucrats more than others. The proclamation of emergency in December 1974 marks the final shift towards the abdication of political civilian authority. The regime's increasing dependence on the bureaucrats and bureaucratic system of governance continued in the subsequent year. The final days of the regime in 1975 can be best described as the zenith of the ongoing expansion of executive power and emasculation of the Parliament. On January 25, 1975, the Constitution was amended to provide for a presidential form of government and a one-party system. The single party authorized to operate in Bangladesh under the amended constitution, the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL), was constituted under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib in June 1975. The 115-member Central Committee of the party included 21 senior bureaucrats. Of them, 9 were former CSP officers, 1 police officer, 4 top military officers, and 7 senior members of other services (Bangladesh Observer, June 7, 1975). Though the proponents of the BAKSAL system claim that it gave preeminence to the political elements, there is evidence that it rather strengthened the power of the bureaucrats. As a matter of fact, a parliament member, (of course a BAKSAL leader, for there was no other party in the parliament), complained that the bureaucrats have become 'active again' after the introduction of the BAKSAL. 'These sycophants', he complained, 'are trying to make Bangabandhu an Ayub Khan' (Proceedings of the Jatiya Sangsad Debates, Vol. 2, No. 7, July 2, 1975, p. 168). The formation of the BAKSAL was followed by a restructuring of the civil administration wherein the existing 19 districts were reorganized into 61 districts and 61 District-Governors were appointed. Of these new Governors, 14 came from the bureaucracy -- 9 former CSP officers, 1 military officer and 4 senior members from other services (The Bangladesh Gazette Extraordinary, July 18, 1975. pp. 2181-2189). In order to further enhance the power of the civil and military bureaucrats, the government declared that along with political representatives, representatives of army, navy, air force, BDR, and



government employees will be included in the local-level (district level) administration ('The District Administration Act', Act No. VI of 1975. The Bangladesh Gazette Extraordinary, July 10, 1975).

The growing bureaucratic preeminence in the later years of Mujib regime was matched with the increase in the expenditure on Administration. In 1972/73, Taka 1321 million was spent in administration (2.61 percent of GDP), while in 1974/75, the amount raised to Taka 2462 million, i.e. 4.86 percent of GDP (Bangladesh Planning Commission, 1981:31).

The rise of the bureaucrats to their previous powerful positions was predicated by another important factor -- growing dependence on external assistance. As we will see in the next section, while discussing the extent, dimensions, and impacts of the external aid, the Bangladesh state, forced by internal and external pressures, gradually became dependent upon foreign aid during the period in review. The government had to rely on the civil bureaucrats for aid negotiations, which brought the bureaucrats to the center stage of economic planning and helped them in wielding power to allocate resources. Their control over and access to capital available for 'development' essentially made them more powerful than the political regime. Additionally, the injection of external aid ensured the necessary finances for the state machinery and relieved state functionaries from depending on indigenous social classes and their political representatives.

#### **Bangladesh State and the World Economic System**

Prior to 1971, the external linkages of the region called Bangladesh was always mediated by the colonial state. During the second colonial domination (i.e. 1947-1971), its primary role was to supply raw materials to, and serve as the captive market of, Pakistan. Thus, in spite of the fact that Bangladesh was producing cash crops like jute and tea which had a large international market, its linkage with that international market was indirect and insignificant in terms of its contribution to the domestic economy. Foreign investments were almost non-existent, due to lack

of natural resources<sup>52</sup>. These conditions, however, do not imply that the country was completely isolated from the world economic system. Instead, this points to the fact that its relationship was different from that of other countries, where there is an inordinate presence of external capital. In fact, the situation in Bangladesh was significantly different because of the presence of two conflicting sets of structural imperatives. On the one hand, there were two reasons for the post-colonial Bangladesh state to enter into a dependency relationship with core countries. Firstly, a large resource gap -- both internal and external; and secondly, the class composition of the ruling bloc. On the other hand, the pronounced ideals of the new regime created an obstruction on the way.

As I have shown in the previous chapters, two consecutive colonial dominations established and reproduced a social structure that contributed to the widespread poverty and underdevelopment of the country. In such circumstances a huge resource gap is bound to exist which compels the peripheral state to depend on external sources for basic needs such as food. As a matter of fact, this condition was prevalent even before the independence of Bangladesh. In 1959/60, for example, 5.9 percent of food available in Bangladesh was imported from international markets. Over the years, the dependency increased at a progressive rate. In 1969/70, 12.7 percent of available food was imported from external sources. In terms of external resource inflows to the economy dependency was on the rise. In 1959/60, the share of external resource in GDP was 0.7 percent, for 1969/70 the corresponding figure is 4.2 percent (IBRD, 1974). The colonial domination, for understandable reasons, stagnated the economy and very little capacity for internal resource generation existed. Thus, when Bangladesh emerged as an independent state there was a 'necessity' for turning to external sources, particularly in the form of aid.

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<sup>52</sup>At the time of independence foreign investments were limited to tea plantations and pharmaceutical.

The second factor was the class composition of the ruling bloc. Like in any other peripheral formation classes were still in the process of formation and the prominent classes did not emerge out of an organic growth process. The intermediate classes gained political prominence and captured the state with an aspiration to have a large share in the state resources. The class structure, therefore, was characterized by a high degree of instability inhibiting the potential for capital accumulation. In order to stabilize the situation for capitalist expansion, it was necessary for the core countries to boost the power of the bourgeoisie and the apparatus of the state through a complex network of 'aid' operations. Thus there were enough reasons for Bangladesh at the onset of its liberation to be a member of the world economic system as an aid-dependent peripheral state.

In contrast to these factors the pronounced ideals of the ruling alliance posed an obstacle in moving towards that direction. The alliance of the intermediate classes of Bangladesh which came to power in 1971, like many of its counterparts, proclaimed their cause to be socialist<sup>53</sup>. Notwithstanding the fact that this was a populist strategy to win broad support, it attempted to establish greater control over the investment of and surplus generated by capital and thus posed an apparent threat to overseas capital and foreign political interests. In such circumstances, it is usually the case that the foreign interests attempt to destabilize or disrupt the economy instead of helping out the regime.

It is therefore evident that, at the outset of the independence there were two sets of structural features of Bangladesh economy acting against each other in order to determine its future relationship with the world capitalist system. The conflict was, however, resolved within a very short time in favor of the forces predicating a closer relationship with the world capitalist system. A number of factors, including the dominance of non-productive rent-seeking

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<sup>53</sup>Similar situations can be found in Africa and Latin America. For a general discussion on this trend see Mafeje (1977).

intermediate classes in the polity and the regime; vested interests of the bureaucracy; and the pressure from the core countries to bring the country into the orbit of dependency, aided that process. The processes began with the relief efforts of the western countries as the massive destruction caused by the nine-month war was cited as the justification for asking help from the 'world community'. In addition to the massive destruction, the war severed the relationship with the former West Pakistan where 32 percent of Bangladesh's exports were directed and 35 percent of its imports came from in 1969/70 the last normal year of relationship with West Pakistan (IBRD, 1974).

Without denying the fact that war ravaged the country and caused a loss of about \$938 million (United Nations, 1972:11-14) (for details of damages see Table 5.2), it is also true that the country was virtually inundated with relief materials and aid poured in an unprecedented rate in the very first year of its existence.

In addition to the massive relief operation carried on by the United Nations Relief Operations in Bangladesh (UNROB) until December 31, 1973 there were a number of countries that came forward to help the country avert a famine and reconstruct the damages. For example, the United States, which supported and aided the Pakistani regime in 1971, committed \$287 million of reconstruction and relief aid in the first year (Franda, 1982:29).

Bangladesh's dependency, however, did not come to an end after the major reconstruction works were completed. Instead, dependency began to grow steadily over the years. In the first six months after liberation a total of \$612 million was committed to Bangladesh followed by a commitment of another \$886 million in 1972/73 (Sobhan, 1982:7)<sup>54</sup>. During the first two years, according to government sources, a total of \$1,377 million as grants and credits was injected into the country (Bangladesh Observer, March 26, 1974).

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<sup>54</sup>Compared to 1969/70, the peak of aid disbursement in the region after 1947, the amount was astounding. In 1969/70, \$320 million was disbursed in the then-East Pakistan (IBRD, 1974).

Table 5.2

Estimated War Damages to Bangladesh Economy  
(In million Taka unless specified)

Sector/Assets	Extent of Damage	% of GDP of 1972/73
Agricultural		
Output (mostly food)	2400	5.29
Capital Stock	127	0.28
Fishery	100	0.22
Forestry	33	0.07
Livestock	96	0.21
Industry/Public Sector		
Jute	70	0.15
Cotton Textile	32	0.07
Sugar, foods and allied products	31	0.06
Iron and steel, engineering & Ship building	25	0.05
Paper Board and Forest	23	0.05
Chemical, fertilizer, pharmaceutical, mineral oil and gas	27	0.06
Others	16	0.03
Total Public Sector	224	0.49
Private Sector	68	0.15
Total Industry	292	0.64
Housing	1600	3.53
Communication and Transport	1040	2.29
Others	3912	8.63
Total Damage	9600	21.19

Source: Government of Bangladesh.

The extensive aid infused into the domestic economy gradually established its unbridled control over the Bangladesh's economy. The dimension of aid dependency can be appreciated from two sets of statistics. The first set concerns the share of aid in GDP and role of aid in financing the gap in trade, investment and development financing. The second set concerns the pervasiveness of the impact of aid on Bangladesh economy and society. In 1972/73, aid constituted 9.5 percent of the GDP, financed 75.85 percent of total imports, was 126.09 percent of investments and more than total development budget was financed from the aid (107.77 percent). As a matter of fact, aid exceeded the development budget and financed part of the revenue budget. In 1973/74, the share of aid in GDP was 4.8 percent, 50.79 percent of imports, 65.57 percent of investments, and 120.39 percent of the development budget. The corresponding figures for 1974/75 was, 8.5 percent, 69.75 percent, 78.45 percent, and 203.38 percent, respectively (see Table 5.3).

**Table 5.3**  
The Dimension of Aid Dependence, 1972-1975

	1972/73	1973/74	1974/75
GDP	45,112	50,569	52,282
Aid Disbursed	4289.9	2451.7	4459
Aid as % of GDP	9.5	4.8	8.5
Aid as % of imports	75.85	50.79	69.75
Domestic Savings as % of GDP	1.5	1.5	0.9
Aid as % of investment	126.09	65.57	78.45
Disbursed Aid as % of Development Budget	107.77	120.39	203.38

Notes:

1. GDP at Market Prices of 1972/73 in millions of Taka.
2. Aid Figures in millions of Taka computed in 1972/73 prices using import index of the World Bank.
3. Imports in market prices of 1972/73. real value of imports taken from World Bank data.
4. World Bank estimate.

The impact of aid on Bangladesh economy and society can be understood from the fact that in 1973/74, project aid financed almost all development projects (the total was 21.36 percent), food aid contributed 10.6 percent of food consumed and commodity aid financed 47.9 percent of raw materials and intermediate goods consumed in the economy. In 1974/75, the share of food aid in total food consumption was 13.7 percent, and commodity aid financed 92.0 percent of import of raw materials and intermediate goods<sup>55</sup> (See Table 5.4).

These statistics reveal that the country became completely dependent upon foreign aid in order to feed its people, keep the economy running and take any development project in hand. It is nothing new to say that the degree of aid exposure inevitably influences the degree of leverage available to donors and 'the influence of donors is inevitably much greater, and the leverage that can be exerted correspondingly more intense, when a country is considered to be unable to function without aid' (Faaland, 1981:100). In such circumstances, aid conditionalities are used as a weapon to impose policy changes on the government of the recipient country. Bangladesh was no exception. With the growing dependency on aid, Bangladesh succumbed to pressure of the donors. Two separate events of 1973 and 1974 -- acceptance of pre-independence debt liabilities by Bangladesh and agreeing to form an aid-consortium -- illustrate how aid was used as coercive instrument. In both cases, Bangladesh was forced to accept aid-conditionalities under the threat of withdrawal of development assistance. These, however, constitute only a small segment of the whole story. In both cases the donors only threatened to withdraw their assistance in the event of failure to comply with their demands. In reality they did not go that far. In 1973-74, the United States, however, went far beyond such threat and used food aid as an explicit political instrument to teach Bangladesh a good lesson for its 'disloyalty'. The US decision to suspend its food aid to Bangladesh contributed to the worst famine in Bangladesh in twenty-five

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<sup>55</sup>If the petroleum products are excluded, for it was financed by cash purchase, then the entire import of intermediate goods was financed by commodity aid.

Table 5.4

The Contribution of Aid to  
the Bangladesh Economy 1972-1975

A. The % share of disbursed project aid to development expenditure in the Annual Development Plan in various sector	1973/74	1974/75
1. Agriculture	3.04	8.75
2. Rural Development	1.56	19.32
3. Water & Flood Control	22.87	15.38
4. Industries	25.81	43.17
5. Power, Scientific Research & Natural Resources	26.42	30.31
6. Transport	38.98	10.61
7. Communications	13.38	21.01
8. Physical Planning and Housing	11.63	0.00
9. Education	7.27	0.00
10. Health	16.94	32.18
11. Population Planning	82.89	64.58
12. Social Welfare	3.79	38.62
13. Manpower and Employment	0.00	27.32
14. Cyclone Reconstruction	7.97	54.46
<b>Total</b>	<b>21.36</b>	<b>24.25</b>
B. The % share of disbursed food aid to total food availability	10.6	13.7
C. The % share of disbursed commodity aid to import of intermediate goods	47.9	92.0

Source: Sobhan (1982:26)



years taking the lives of about 100,000 people. The cause of famine was not only the suspension of the US food aid that reduced the availability of food, but also problems of distribution, due primarily to government's decision to provide subsidized food to the politically important section of people while the poor section starved. The events leading to the famine do, however, show the extent of external control over the lives of Bangladeshi population and the survival of the Bangladesh state.

Acceptance of Pre-independence debt liabilities:

At the outset of the independence, Bangladesh officially took the position that it was in no way responsible for external debts incurred by the Pakistan Government during its period of colonial rule over Bangladesh. The fundamental rationale for the position were (1) that Pakistan had not recognized Bangladesh and claimed that Bangladesh was as yet legally a part of Pakistan, and thus should repay the debt it had incurred for what they were calling 'East Pakistan'; (2) that external aid liabilities incurred by Pakistan for projects in Bangladesh had been compensated by internal resources transfers from the East to West Pakistan on the export account and heavy imbalance in imports and accumulation of assets in favor of West Pakistan; (3) that it will force Pakistan to recognize Bangladesh and negotiate divisions of liabilities and assets between Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The World Bank, on behalf of the donor countries, deplored Bangladesh's position and insisted that Bangladesh accept all the debts incurred for the projects in Bangladesh completed prior to independence as well the projects on-going at the time of independence. Although Pakistan was responsible for the debt and under the laws of a number of donor countries could be penalized by cessation of all further external assistance, the Bank persuaded the donors that Bangladesh would agree to accept a share of the debt. The latent tension between the Bank and the Bangladesh surfaced in the meeting of the donor countries and Bangladesh held at Dhaka in March 1973. Bangladesh made it clear that it would rather go without pledges of assistance

than accept conditional ones. Yet, all delegations persisted in announcing conditional pledges, one of which was the acceptance of pre-independence debt-liabilities by Bangladesh. The World Bank took a back seat at the meeting, but played the key role behind the screen in mobilizing the leading donors to use the meeting to collectively pressure Bangladesh to accept the debt liabilities. Having failed to quell the resistance of the Bangladesh representatives in the meeting, the Bank arranged a meeting with the Prime Minister through the Bank's former connections in the bureaucracy. The PM himself also refused to accept any such condition for future development assistance.

But the situation began to change after August 1972, when Bangladesh became a member of the Bank. The Bank membership essentially brought the country into the immediate jurisdiction of the Bank pressure. By mid-1973, Bangladesh conceded to the pressure and accepted liability for the on-going projects. In order to sign new loans for twenty-three on-going projects, Bangladesh accepted liabilities to the extent of \$151 million for expenditure already incurred on the projects (GPRB, 1981a). This, however, was not satisfactory to the World Bank. The pressure continued. With further immersion into aid in the subsequent year, Bangladesh had very little strength to resist the pressure. Following recognition by Pakistan in early 1974, Bangladesh found a face-saving way to retreat. Hence in 1974, Bangladesh accepted a liabilities for \$483 million against completed projects visibly located in Bangladesh (GPRB, 1981a). The extraordinary act of self-assertion of the country and its leaders fell apart in the face of the pressure of the donor countries.

#### Formation of the Bangladesh Aid Consortium:

Early in 1972, it had been proposed by Western donors that an aid consortium for Bangladesh should be organized with the World Bank being the coordinator. The arguments in favor of the consortium were (1) that the donors should be given a shared perspective of the country's problems and should then effectively seek to find solutions to these problems; (2) that

a common review of aid operations would prevent duplication of efforts and encourage countries to concentrate on those activities they were best suited; and (3) that the presence of the consortium and a regular meeting of the forum would stimulate donors for contributing and keeping their commitments. Undoubtedly, these arguments were valid. But, Bangladesh had seen how Pakistan in the past had become a prisoner of the aid consortium as the donors met annually and found ample reasons to apply pressure for policy changes. Furthermore, it was quite obvious to Bangladesh that the formation of a consortium dominated by western donors would isolate Bangladesh from its war-time allies such as the USSR. Bangladesh did not want to identify itself with the western donors.

The proposal was advanced sometime in 1972. Bangladesh, pressed by its immediate need, did not reject the idea altogether, but indicated quite clearly that it would prefer bilateral negotiations with the donors. Bangladesh, however, proposed a meeting of the donors in Dhaka. After some initial objections from the World Bank, IMF and some other donors the meeting took place in March 1973. Attended by nineteen countries and agencies, this two-day meeting brought the donors and the planners of Bangladesh together, but achieved little success due to the inflexible attitude of parties concerned. Bangladesh maintained its position of not constituting a formal aid consortium, though 'it seemed to Bangladesh to be a moot point as to whether more aid, on better terms and in more convenient forms, would be forthcoming if a traditional type consortium were to set up than if it were decided to continue to do without it' (Faaland, 1981:111). In the subsequent months the debt issue became the focal point of the discussion between the donor countries and Bangladesh. But, the donors kept on pressuring for an aid consortium.

It is at this stage that the economic report of the World Bank on Bangladesh came out. The draft of the report not only used unnecessarily denigrating language, but also sweeping

generalizations about the administration and political leadership<sup>56</sup>. In the context of this report, Bangladesh's fear and intransigence about a consortium with the Bank in leadership increased significantly. 'The experience of the Report gave fuel to the fire of suspicion that in any enterprise dominated by the World Bank there would be pressures amounting to little less than attempts to determine the country's economic policies from the outside' (Faaland, 1981:117).

But in face of economic crises<sup>57</sup> and donor pressure, such an adamant attitude could not endure for a long time. In 1974, deterioration in the domestic economic situation, an unprecedented flood and run down in Bangladesh's external purchasing power drained much of Bangladesh's vitality. As a result, it became more vulnerable to the external pressure. Finally, in July 1974, the government ceded to the pressure of the donors and requested the World Bank to constitute an aid consortium. 'Also the IMF was approached and asked to give short-term assistance and to send a mission to Bangladesh for consultations. At the same time major Western donors were also contacted individually and a request for an early meeting of a consortium conveyed to them' (Faaland, 1981:118). On request from Bangladesh, two meetings of the consortium were scheduled, one on emergency basis in August, and another in October as a regular one. The emergency meeting enabled Bangladesh to receive first and second tranches of \$37.5 million each from the IMF to counter its immediate problems. At the same time some major changes in the domestic economic policies became obvious. For example, in July 1974, the

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<sup>56</sup>Two sentences from the draft report of the Bank, commonly referred to as 'Green Cover Report', are sufficient to illustrate the Bank's attitude: 'New men had access to political power for the first time with little conception of how to use it for purposes other than self-aggrandizement.' 'The example is set at the political level where scarcely a foreign exchange transaction takes place, either on import or export, without some funds being deposited in the foreign bank account of a politician, businessman or well-connected private individual.'

<sup>57</sup>The economic crises of 1974 are discussed at length in the next chapter. The economic crises are due to both domestic and external factors. In 1973, Bangladesh economy faced a major shock due to price hike in oil and food grains in international market. Bangladesh's import cost went up dramatically. The import price index rose 53 percent in 1973/74 and 115 percent in two years by 1973/75. Whilst export prices improved by 33 percent in 1974/75, there was a sharp deterioration in the terms of trade. The terms of trade deteriorated by 32.1 percent.

investment policy (enacted in January 1973) was modified to raise the ceiling on private investments from Tk. 2.5 million to Tk. 30 million and relax the restrictions on foreign capital investments.

Following the emergency meeting of the consortium, Bangladesh was 'advised' by the Fund to devalue its currency before the general meeting in October. Since Bangladesh refrained from doing so, she did not receive substantial commitments of assistance. In March 1975, a mission of the Fund visited Bangladesh and an agreement was reached to devalue the exchange rate by 58 percent. The necessity for further changes in the economic policy were underscored by the donors and as a sign of compliance Bangladesh demonetized 100 Taka notes in April 1975, just two months before the consortium meeting.

#### Food Aid and Famine<sup>58</sup>:

Following independence the government of Bangladesh, much to the annoyance of the donors, attempted to pursue a non-aligned foreign policy and work in solidarity with other Third World countries. In 1973, Bangladesh lined up with the Third World countries in international forums in support of a new international economic order despite the fact that the oil price hike by OPEC caused serious dislocation to its economy. Owing to the grievous consequences of the sudden escalation in oil prices the western countries, especially the US administration, considered using the dependence of the poorer LDCs such as Bangladesh on US food aid to exercise

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<sup>58</sup>A number of authors have discussed the relationship between the US food embargo and the famine of 1974 in Bangladesh. McHenry and Bird (1977) first brought the fact into light that the US government deliberately withheld food while a severe famine was taking its toll. Rehman Sobhan, who happened to be a member of the Planning Commission at that time, in an illuminating article based on unpublished minutes of relevant meetings between representatives of the governments of the US and Bangladesh and internal memos of the Government of Bangladesh provides a detailed account of the events (Sobhan, 1980). Molla (1990) also focuses on the issue. All three authors emphasize the role of US embargo, though they recognize that the distribution system of the government had a role in this disaster. Choudhry (1986) and Ben Crow (1987) feel that it is the domestic policies of the government and structural bias towards the urban rich that is to be blamed.

leverage on OPEC to reduce oil prices<sup>59</sup>. The strategy was, to put it in simple terms, that the poor nations affected by the hike in oil price would request the OPEC members to reduce the price. Bangladesh was hinted to accordingly. But she showed reluctance to join the western strategy and thus annoyed the US further. Unfortunately, this was a difficult time for Bangladesh in terms of its food reserves and reserves of foreign exchange.

In the summer of 1973, as Bangladesh was preparing its food budget for 1973/74 (i.e. July 1973 through June 1974), it was estimated that the country would face a food gap of 2.2 million tons even in a best case scenario. Bangladesh informed the US government and requested a supply of 300,000 tons of food grains by the end of the year under PL 480, Title I. Little attention was paid by the US to that request. In desperation the Bangladesh government requested the USSR government to divert 200,000 tons of grains under shipment to the USSR from its cash purchases in US and Canada. The delivery was completed between July and October 1973. It was agreed upon that Bangladesh would repay the Russian wheat loans out of shipments of PL 480 wheat which Bangladesh was due to receive towards the end of the year. Bangladesh accordingly requested the US to agree to this arrangement. No immediate response came from the US sources. In the face of dubious silence of the US government about making commitment of new aid or shipping committed aid, Bangladesh went ahead to buy grain on the open market. Meanwhile the price of grain in open market increased substantially (e.g. from \$115 per ton to \$199 per ton). This further depleted the meager foreign reserves of Bangladesh. By the beginning of the second quarter of 1974 the total foreign reserves went down to \$60 million. The amount in fact was less than outstanding claims on bills for imports. Which essentially meant

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<sup>59</sup>This was not an exceptional situation. According to Hopkins (1977) the US used food as political weapon to enlist India's support for the US in Vietnam, wring textile trade restraints from the Koreans, and to punish Jamaicans for raising prices. If one considers the broad policy of the food aid, these events are very much consistent with that.

the country went bankrupt. Having come to know this, US commercial grain exporters canceled two grain shipments to Bangladesh in summer of 1974.

The crisis was further aggravated as the monsoon season began in June of 1974. Massive flooding caused serious damage to the crops and a large number of people faced immediate unemployment. With only 56,000 tons of grain in stock, an imminent monsoon and a run down foreign reserve Bangladesh government came to know in late May that the US government was imposing a food embargo on Bangladesh due to its trade relationship with Cuba. Bangladesh was told that the agreement signed with Cuba to sell 4 million jute bags (worth less than \$5 million) was prejudicial to the further commitment of PL 480 food aid.<sup>60</sup> Bangladesh repeatedly requested a presidential waiver on humanitarian ground. But only in vain<sup>61</sup>.

Finally Bangladesh succumbed to the pressure and gave assurance on July 10, 1974 that Bangladesh would break off its trade relationship with Cuba. The assurance was not enough to make the US happy. Until the last shipment left Bangladesh in October, 1974 the US government remained silent about signing a new commitment. A new agreement was signed on October 4 and the first shipment under the new commitment reached Bangladesh in December, eighteen months after the initial request was made. In the intervening period a severe famine took lives of about 100,000 people<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup>The PL 480, as amended in 1966, disqualified any country which exported (sold or furnished commodities) to Cuba or North Vietnam, or allowed vessels under its registry to call at the ports of these countries, from receiving assistance under this act. The law permitted only limited exceptions to its stipulated provisions, but a presidential waiver might be made in respect of sales of non-strategic agricultural commodities and non-strategic raw materials for agriculture or medical supplies, provided also that waiver was in the national interest of the USA.

<sup>61</sup>Egypt, however, was granted such a waiver at the very same time. Although Egypt was trading with Cuba and exporting raw cotton, the USA signed an agreement with Egypt for purchase of 4000 tons of tobacco from the US under PL 480 Title 1 on June 7, 1974. Another agreement was signed on September 12, 1974 allowing Egypt to buy 100,000 tons of wheat under PL 480 (Dan Morgan, 'Dacca Aid Tied to Cuban Ban', Washington Post, September 30, 1974.)

<sup>62</sup>The figure is somewhat arbitrary. The official account of death was unbelievably low, about 27,500, while some unofficial sources put the figure as high as 130,000.

The description of the events leading to Bangladesh's acceptance of pre-independence debt liabilities, conceding to the donor's demand of an aid consortium and the devastating famine of 1974 reveal that the relationship between the post-colonial Bangladesh state and the world economic system changed substantially over the period in review (i.e. 1972-75). The regime, encouraged by its nationalistic sentiment and strengthened by its intermediate character, attempted to distance itself from the donor's dictation and in some cases attempted to muster a resistance against donor's wishes. But owing to economic crises, primarily because of its class inability to generate domestic resources, it gradually capitulated to the pressure of the donors and entered into a dependency relationship with the metropolitan countries. By 1975, the Bangladesh state essentially became a dependent state in terms of its relationship with world economic system.

Conclusion:

The Bangladesh state, over the period of its first three and a half years since independence went through incremental changes, though the ruling bloc remained the same. The change was basically in terms of a shift in the balance of power. At the outset of independence, in spite of the factionalism prevalent within the ruling party, the state was captured by an alliance of the intermediate classes represented by the Awami League. This was due primarily to the legitimate claim of the AL over of state power as they were the winners of the last elections held within the framework of Pakistan and their involvement with the liberation struggle. Commensurate with their class character, an intermediate state began to emerge. The fundamental task of the state was to dispense patronage to the intermediate classes and hence the economic policies of the state were directed towards that end. The policy of debourgeoisification pursued by the ruling alliance, initially, succeeded in edging out the nascent bourgeoisie. Attempts were also made to marginalize the military-bureaucratic oligarchy. But as the ruling alliance opted for the perpetuation of the existing structure of the state and augmented



the role of the state, the conditions for expansion of the power of bureaucracy to establish control over all social classes remained in place. The structural imperatives for the reproduction of the state apparatus and structures brought back the bureaucrats to the center stage within a short time.

Meanwhile, the state, in the face of severe economic crises gave in to the pressure of the donors and entered into a dependent relationship with the metropolitan countries. The unremitting flow of foreign aid helped the bureaucrats gain more power, because they became the principal functionaries in aid negotiations and additionally, they became freed from the slightest dependency on the indigenous social classes for generation of surplus needed for the functioning of the state. The trend reflected in the events during the period in review, therefore, reveal that the Bangladesh state gradually moved towards total bureaucratic control.

The gradual erosion of power of the ruling alliance and ascent of the bureaucracy to a prominent position during the period between 1972-1975 constitute one aspect of the effects of the multiple crises faced by the intermediate classes. The growing bureaucratic control over the state began to shift the balance of power towards executive. This trend was accompanied by growing authoritarianism. That is to say the ruling alliance was not only becoming dependent upon the executive branches of the state but also on the coercive apparatus of the state. The drift towards authoritarianism took place in a very gradual manner as the intermediate classes failed to cope with the multiple sources of crises -- rupture of hegemony, political opposition and internal feud, economic disarray and crisis of authority. In the next chapter I will discuss the nature and magnitude of these crises and the responses leading to the coup d'état of August 15, 1975.

**CHAPTER VI**  
**CRISES OF THE RULING ALLIANCE,**  
**CONJUNCTURE OF AUTHORITARIANISM**  
**AND PROMULGATION OF MARTIAL LAW: 1972-1975**

At the moment of triumph over the oppressive colonial power, the grant of authority given to the liberators is very broadly based and essentially unquestioned -- one might even say unexamined. But it does not take much time and change in circumstances to erode this grant. The problems inherent in the structure of post-colonial societies provide ample causes for such erosion. Additionally, the conjunctural factors, varied according to historical background and concrete circumstances of a given society, serve as the sources of crises that lead to an attenuation of power of the ruling class -- initially in favor of the civilian bureaucracy but ultimately in favor of the coercive apparatus. The speed at which this process unfolds and degree of its development depends on the nature and magnitude of these crises as well as the capabilities of the ruling classes to encounter them. Furthermore, the nature of the crises as perceived by the ruling classes determine the responses. The responses on the one hand involve policies of the ruling classes, while on the other hand determine their methods of rule -- which bring changes in the nature of the state as well.

In this chapter I will discuss the crises faced by the ruling alliance in post-colonial Bangladesh and the responses to these crises which changed their methods of rule gradually over a period of three and a half years, and finally led to military rule.

**Crises of the Ruling Alliance**

The ruling alliance of Bangladesh faced multiple crises -- from the rupture of the ideological hegemony they established during the anti-colonial struggle to the crisis of governability. The feuds and cleavages within the ruling party, the political opposition they faced from contending political forces, and the failings of economic policies to generate surpluses

necessary to maintain the dominant mode of production were significant. Without a proper appreciation of the nature and magnitude of these crises it is impossible to comprehend the responses of the ruling alliance.

Rupture of Hegemony:

The principal tool of intermediate classes for establishing ideological hegemony over the other social classes during the colonial era was Bengali nationalism -- a shared identity as Bengalis as opposed to a Pakistani identity. The development of this 'oneness' cutting across barriers of interests and social backgrounds, or in other words, the growth of a common sense of identity was not automatic. The rise of nationalism, as it happens in all other cases, was accomplished through a process of selection, standardization and transmission of specific symbols from a vast pool (Cohn, 1967). As I have shown in Chapter IV, the objective conditions prevalent in the society made it possible for a given class to manipulate the symbols to their advantage. The success was not entirely dependent upon the capabilities of the given class to manipulate the symbols and the objective conditions but also the failure of the other contending social classes to do so. Nevertheless, the willingness of the subjects of this hegemonic order to identify with the particular symbols and share the common identity was contingent upon whether or not it holds out hopes for their own well-being. Thus the hegemony of the intermediate classes during the colonial period was a fractured compromise among the social classes opposed to the colonial exploitation. The discourse of Bengali nationalism subsumed all other discourses including the one on class exploitation, and a 'unity' among the social classes was achieved through consensus. The unity, identity, and consensus was based on the objective conditions of colonial rule and was mapped out against the colonial rulers.

But the passing of colonial rule, especially the war of liberation, changed the objective conditions altogether. The 'enemy' against whom the nationalism was pitted disappeared. The post-colonial society required fashioning of a new social order. The emergent arrangements

threatened the very basis of social hierarchy created during the colonial rule. This created a tension. Such tension definitely undermined the so-called national cohesion. Unity was replaced with class conflict. This conflict was not limited to the ruling class and the subaltern classes, but also raged among members of the ruling class, as the ruling class was essentially an alliance. Thus, the relevance of nationalism as the hegemonic ideology was lost and the hegemony of the intermediate classes was ruptured. The rising popularity of an alternative ideology bears out this fact.

The Awami League declared that one of the objectives of the regime was to establish an exploitation-free just society and hence socialism was included in the constitution as one of the ideals of the state. But their concept of socialism was challenged by the radical elements of the party as well as by small leftist parties. At independence the radical fraction of the AL, mostly comprised of students and youth, contended that the liberation struggle was an unfinished revolution and called for the establishment of 'scientific socialism' under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman<sup>1</sup>.

But after being disenchanted with Sheikh Mujib and the party, they split in April 1972. The student leaders who played significant role in the liberation struggle initiated the split and their move was followed by the peasants' wing (May, 1972) and the workers' wing (June, 1972). Finally they launched their own party -- Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (JSD, National Socialist Party) in October 1972 under the leadership of two prominent freedom fighters, Major (Rtd.) M.A. Jalil and A.S.M. Abdur Rab. Within a brief period of time, the JSD not only drew attention of the public but became popular to such an extent that its leaders were compared with Sheikh Mujib

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<sup>1</sup>Kamal Hossain, a prominent AL leader and the-then minister of law and constitutional affairs, described the situation as follows: "The radicals had urged that the freedom fighters, instead of being disbanded, should have formed the nucleus of 'the party of revolution' headed by Sheikh Mujib. The party could then have led a 'class struggle' within the framework of a one-party system, and thus taken society forward towards the goal of social revolution" (Hossain, 1979:107).

who was still called 'Bangabandhu' (the friend of Bengal). What is significant here is that these leaders not only broke away from the ruling party but also took a position that was ideologically opposed to the ruling class. They insisted that the socialist transformation of the society can be achieved only through a revolution of the proletariat class. Furthermore, they maintained that the (nascent) bourgeoisie of Bangladesh had captured state power and were perpetuating the exploitative social structure; and that a revolutionary uprising of the proletariat was the only way to make independence meaningful to the oppressed classes. In spite of incoherence and inconsistencies in their ideological positions, they made the point quite clear that the principal contradiction in independent Bangladesh was between social classes, and that one's identity stems from one's class affiliation.

It is at the same time another underground radical left political group, Sorbohara Party (SP, Proletariat Party) under the leadership of Siraj Sikdar, a brilliant engineer, gained considerable support in rural areas. They considered the AL regime 'a puppet of Soviet social imperialist and Indian expansionists'. The Sorbohara Party engaged itself in armed conflict with the police and other para-military forces and began to annihilate 'enemies of the revolution' -- the rich farmers. On most matters, these two parties were pursuing different paths. But their rise clearly indicated that the ruling classes' hegemony over the subaltern classes was ruptured. The political discourses were not dictated by the ruling classes, at least not fully. As opposed to the 'consensual politics' of the ruling classes, the politics of 'class conflict' gradually occupied the center stage<sup>2</sup>. The rupture of hegemony of the ruling classes was accentuated by the internal feud within the ruling party.

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<sup>2</sup>The ruling party envisaged that it can either pursue a politics of consensus or a politics of class conflict. Hossain (1979:107) describes: "the alternative that had presented itself to the politics of 'class struggle' was the politics of 'consensus'. This policy would seek to accommodate all contending groups within the framework of the system. It was envisaged that the Awami League could continue to be a de-facto one party, a coalition of contending factions, representing different tendencies, ranging from militant social revolutionaries on the left to conservative 'status quoists' on the right."

Lack of Consensus, Internal Feuds and Corruption:

The cleavages prevalent within the ruling Awami League was intensified after liberation. Although the presence and charisma of Sheikh Mujib succeeded in containing open conflict among these groups, it could not resolve the differences. The most radical faction left the party in May-June 1972 and formed the JSD. But that did not bring an end to factionalism within the party. Instead, acute personal rivalries, factional struggles, and regionalism plagued the party. The differences were also ideological. Members of different ideological convictions began to push for implementation of their policies. They could not reach a consensus. Their differences regarding the introduction of socialism provides an example of ideological divergences prevalent in the party.

In accordance with the spirit of the liberation struggle, the Awami League regime declared that the high ideals of nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism shall be the fundamental principles of the constitution. But there was no consensus among different sections of the party regarding these fundamental principles and how these will be implemented. The differences between various factions began to surface in June 1971, during the height of the war. The government in exile appointed a research cell to prepare a position paper on the problems to be faced by the government after independence. The cell was wrecked by these differences and thus failed to make any substantial contribution. The final document was a statement with conflicting propositions. The section that dealt with the political situation after the independence aptly reflects the divergence. It reads: "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" (Ahmed, 1984:273). One can validly ask the question: how can a country achieve socialism while keeping the overall system a capitalist one? No one in the ruling party knew the answer.

The differences that resulted in such a self-contradictory document resurfaced in independent Bangladesh. The left-of-center faction led by Tajuddin Ahmed was in favor of introducing a socialist strategy of economic transformation, while the right-of-center faction led by Khandaker Mushtaq opposed such measures. Nurul Islam, then a member of the Planning Commission acknowledged the existence of such conflicts within the regime:

"The lack of consensus as to the nature of the socialist economy which Bangladesh should establish in the transitional phase as well as in the long run was not thus a matter of differences between the ruling party and the opposition parties; there existed differences of opinion between the factions of the ruling party and among the members of Parliament as well as of the cabinet" (Islam, 1979:26-27).

Islam further notes:

"In the rank and file of the ruling party and amongst its leaders ... there was no unanimity and no firm commitment to the extension of public ownership or the ultimate goal of socialism. On the one hand, the conservative elements in the party consisting of trading classes, the aspiring industrialists and the ex-owners of the nationalized enterprises were all pressing for a revision of the policy. On the other hand, the radical wing of the party, consisting of the militant factions of the students and trade unions, were pulling in the direction of a further extension of public ownership. The Prime Minister stood in the middle of the contending forces" (Islam, 1979:247).

It is not only the ideological differences that divided the party into different factions, but also the acute personal rivalry and jockeying for power that internally tore the party into small pieces. The younger leaders of the party -- Sheikh Fazlul Hoq Moni (a nephew of Sheikh Mujib and the President of the party youth front), Tofail Ahmed (Political Secretary of the Prime Minister), Abdur Razzak (Organizing Secretary of the AL) and Abdul Mannan (General Secretary of the party labor front) led contending groups and involved themselves in confrontations. They established their firm control over three front organizations of the party -- student, youth and labor and created different private forces. In 1973, the contending groups threatened to launch Suddhi Avijan (purification campaign) primarily to eliminate the other factions. The factionalism was accentuated in subsequent years and almost threatened the unity

of the party. At one point in this conflict Sheikh Moni declared that his organization had no connection with the AL and is loyal only to Sheikh Mujib (Banglar Bani, September 24, October 12 and 13, 1973). In the parliamentary elections of 1973, at least 40 AL members defied party decision and contested in the elections as independent candidates against their party nominees (The Morning News, February 13 and 17, 1973).

In the face of growing factionalism, the party council had to be postponed several times. The possibility of an open split was averted by a very unconstitutional measure: retaining Sheikh Mujib as President and surrendering powers of the council to select office bearers to its president<sup>3</sup>. The measure was unconstitutional and lacked legitimacy even in the eyes of the party followers because the party constitution bars a person to simultaneously hold the position of party President and the Leader of the House.

What made the situation worse was the rampant corruption of the AL leaders<sup>4</sup>. Notwithstanding the long-term economic consequences of the corruption, this was contributing to the erosion of people's confidence in the ruling party. In late 1972, a number of AL members, of whom 43 were the Members of the Constituent Assembly, were expelled from the party (The Dainik Bangla, Chronology of the year 1972, January 2, 1973). But this measure was nothing considering the extent of the involvement of the AL leaders in corruption. Those involved in all sorts of corruption were receiving patronage and support from the high-ranking party officials and thus were beyond control. The situation was aptly described by a weekly in November, 1972:

"In spite of the stern warnings to the black- marketeers by the top-leaders of the AL, black- marketeering is going on unabated. The 15 days' time limit has

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<sup>3</sup>This also reflects how the democratic practices were undermined and power was concentrated in the hands of a person who is the leader of the party, Prime Minister and the supreme leader of the nation -- 'Bangabandhu'.

<sup>4</sup>The scale of corruption can be understood from the description provided by Lifschultz (1974:51): "Corruption is certainly not new, but for many in Dacca the relative scale and open character of the plunder holds few historical comparisons. One perhaps, is China during 1930s and 1940s."



already elapsed, there is no positive response from the culprits. The reason for this continuous blackmailing is the protection given by the ruling clique to these elements. Even when they were arrested, they get release and they have become so powerful that they even threaten the government with resorting to strike. The hoarders and black-marketeers even admonished the local government officials that they will not tolerate the interference in their internal affairs. They have already established their rule in the country beyond doubt. These people will be financially backing the ruling party in the next election and as such any action against them is just a wishful dream" (Weekly Deshbangla, November 19, 1972).

While the cohesion of the party was declining opposition to the regime was growing gradually.

#### Political Opposition:

The first open political challenge to the ruling party came from the dissident faction who later formed the JSD in October 1972. But the growth of opposition to the regime was not limited to the rise of this party. Other left forces began to gain support from the public as early as mid-1972. Maulana Bhasani, a popular octogenarian leader and the President of the National Awami Party (NAP) first vented the growing frustration with the regime and its policies. On September 3, 1972 Bhasani led a hunger-march and called for resignation of 'the corrupt government'. He demanded that a national convention be called and that an all-party government be formed. He presented a 20 point demand to the government which was to be the program of an all-party government (Weekly Abhas, September 10, 1972).

In the following month, when the Awami League dominated Constituent Assembly met to frame the constitution, Bhasani declared that the MCAs elected during the Pakistani period had no such right. He demanded that a national convention of students, youths, lawyers and intellectuals, laborers and peasants, should be called to advise on the constitution (Weekly Sattyakatha, October 27, 1972).

After the constitution was framed, enacted and an election under the new constitution became imminent, Moulana Bhasani began an attempt to form an electoral alliance. By the end of the year a seven-party electoral alliance (All Party Action Committee, APAC) was formed under the leadership of Bhasani (Dainik Bangla, December 31, 1972).

On January 1, 1973 two student supporters of the National Awami Party (NAP, led by Muzaffar Ahmed, a pro-Moscow left political party and a close ally of the ruling AL) were killed in police firing on a procession protesting the Vietnam war and US aggression. Initially the NAP and the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB, the pro-Moscow communist party and close ally of the AL) took a stand against the ruling party and a wave of demonstrations including a spontaneous successful general strike rocked the cities.

The supporters of the ruling party took this opportunity to go after the opposition parties including this 'new opposition' with lightening speed and in an organized manner. The offices of NAP-M and JSD were attacked, ransacked and burned; the dais of a public meeting of the APAC was destroyed: and physical attacks on respected leaders like Aaur Rahman Khan was launched. Counter demonstrations were organized to 'foil the conspiracy of the foreign powers including China and the US and their agents in Bangladesh against the sovereignty of Bangladesh'. Although these two parties finally capitulated, the events made it clear that popular opposition against the regime was on the rise.

It was, however, true that some of the opposition parties (e.g., NAP and CPB) overestimated the popular discontent and went too far, while some of them (e.g., JSD, NAP-B) cautiously took a back seat to see whether the allies of AL were serious in breaking away from their friends. Nevertheless, the events of the first week of January 1973 also revealed how brutal and ruthless the ruling party could be in countering the opposition. A comment of Sheikh Mujib himself is enough to illustrate it. On January 4, 1973 while addressing a public gathering organized by the student wing of the AL he said, " If I wish I can finish these anti-social elements without police and Rakkhi Bahini. With the cooperation of the people I can finish them within five hours" (Gonokantha, January 5, 1973, emphasis added).

It is against this backdrop that the first parliamentary elections were held on March 7, 1973. A total of 1078 candidates contested for 288 seats<sup>5</sup>. Of them, 958 were nominated by 14 parties including the AL and the remaining 120 were independent candidates. The ruling party secured a landslide victory (292 seats, 72.4 percent of votes cast). Despite the fact that the elections were rigged and results were manipulated, the opposition parties failed to organize an united movement against the ruling party. But the discontent of the masses increased and pressure from opposition political forces intensified.

The progressive alienation of the ruling party from the student community was reflected in the student union elections held in latter part of 1973. The student community, considered to be the most sensitive and progressive section of the populace, rallied with the AL in pre-independence Bangladesh and played a key role in the liberation struggle. But by 1973 the student front of the ruling party lost almost all student union elections. The Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) election is usually judged as the barometer of popularity of the national political parties as they are represented by their student fronts in this election. The elections held on September 3, 1973 brought a humiliating defeat for the student front of the ruling party and its allies. Although the ballot boxes were seized by armed goons before the final results were declared, it was obvious from preliminary results that the student front of the JSD had taken a more-than comfortable lead.

Boosted by the election results of the DUCSU, the JSD began to organize demonstrations and mass agitations against the regime. After a successful general strike in

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<sup>5</sup>The total number of seats in Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad (the National Parliament) were 315. Of these, 300 members were to be elected through direct elections and the remaining 15 seats were reserved for women to be elected by the members of the parliament. In 1973 elections, 11 AL candidates including Sheikh Mujib was elected unopposed. Elections in one constituency was postponed due to the death of one of the candidates. A discussion on how the filing of nomination papers and the results of the elections were manipulated in favor of the ruling party is presented later.

February the JSD adopted a drastic program of mass upsurge beginning with gheraos<sup>6</sup> of several important government offices. On March 17, 1974 the JSD organized a massive public meeting and marched towards the Home Minister's residence. They were confronted by the police and para-military forces. Indiscriminate firing not only resulted in the killing of at least six persons but also the arrest of the top-ranking JSD leaders including its President and General Secretary. It was followed by an offensive by the ruling party and massive repression of JSD workers all over the country. The entire organizational network of the JSD was shattered and they were driven underground. As a matter of fact, following the incident of March 17 the JSD changed its strategy and decided to launch armed struggle against the regime. They raised their armed group 'Gonobahini' (People's Force) within a short time. Six other opposition political parties formed the United Front (UF) in April 1974 under the leadership of Maulana Bhasani and decided to launch a mass movement in July. The government made a preemptive move, arrested the leaders of the Front and suppressed the ensuing movement. In subsequent months of 1974-75 the political opposition to the regime turned primarily to violent armed conflict.

The opposition to the regime did not come from the political parties only, but also from a section of military and freedom fighters. As I have described in the previous chapter, during the war a section of the military vehemently opposed the war strategy pursued by the government in exile and the conventional army. Instead of raising a conventional army they insisted that the new army of Bangladesh should be raised from within the popular resistance and the army should be more integrated with the people. Differences over the war strategy took a new form in post-independence Bangladesh. Lifschultz (1977) succinctly described the situation as follows:

"Attempts to restore and rebuild an army in Bangladesh in accordance with the traditional concepts, practices and colonial pattern of conventional army began. At the command level Taher and Ziauddin actively opposed such measures. They argued that, in a poor and backward country like Bangladesh, only two choices existed for an army that adopted a conventional pattern. If the army remained

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<sup>6</sup>Gherao is a political action of encirclement of a person or office to realize a demand.

the defense and security force of the state, as it has always been, then in a poor nation the armed forces could only exist as a great economic burden, drawing off the small economic surplus necessary for investment and expanded production. Either that or such an army must ultimately compromise national independence and become dependent on foreign assistance or imperialist loans" (Lifschultz, 1977:38).

Both Taher and Ziauddin ultimately lost the debate and had to leave the army within a short time. But their protest and opposition to the regime made a long-lasting impression on other members of the army.

The opposition from the freedom fighters (FF) who did not belong to the organized conventional army took almost similar shape. After the liberation of Bangladesh and before the arrival of Sheikh Mujib, the-then Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed drew a plan to incorporate both the members of the conventional army and the freedom fighters raised during the war into a 'National Militia'. This force though trained to be future defense force of Bangladesh, would primarily be the agents for reconstruction of the war-ravaged country<sup>7</sup>. The plan was to bring all freedom fighters together, gradually disarm them and provide them with jobs for national reconstruction and development. Accordingly, an eleven-member 'Central Board of National Militia' with the PM as Chairperson was constituted on January 2, 1972. It included leaders of other political parties including Moulana Bhasani. But after the arrival and assumption of power by Sheikh Mujib, the primary concern of the regime was to disarm the freedom fighters without any delay. Although the plan for setting up the militia was not outrightly rejected. Sheikh Mujib ordered all freedom fighters to surrender their arms within ten days from January 17, 1972. He, however, mentioned that a national militia would be set up (Morning News, January 18, 1972). Within two weeks of the announcement a large number of freedom fighters laid down their arms through two ceremonies -- one in Tangail and another in Dhaka. But another large section of freedom fighters was disappointed to see that they were being disarmed while illegal arms

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<sup>7</sup>The Cabinet approved the plan to raise the National Militia in its meeting on December 18, 1971 -- two days after the war was over.

possessed by the members of different forces of collaborators of the occupation forces were yet to be recovered. Furthermore, they resented the scheme as it failed to provide for the specifics. They validly suspected that they were being disarmed without being incorporated within any program that would enable them to contribute to the reconstruction and development of the country. These disgruntled freedom fighters refrained from surrendering arms and later joined the radical opposition parties including the JSD. Having failed to convince the freedom fighters to surrender their arms, government banned the Mukti Fouz (Freedom Fighters) and all other Bahinis including Mujib Bahini on February 24 and 27, respectively (Morning News, February 25 and 29, 1972). Thus the political situation was in and of itself enough to keep the regime busy, but unfortunately economic crises were looming large to make the situation even worse.

#### Economic Crises:

In addition to the existence of underdeveloped economy, the liberation war ravaged the entire country and practically destroyed the physical infrastructure. Furthermore, ten million refugees who fled to neighboring India began to return after the war was over. Hence the regime was faced with three urgent tasks: providing immediate relief to the returning refugees; reconstructing the economic infrastructure; and ensuring the future development of the country. The massive flow of aid into the country in the early days of independence helped the regime to avert an imminent famine and mass starvation even though the level of consumption went down considerably. The food situation did not improve much in the following year due to a shortfall in agricultural production caused by a drought. Nevertheless, the United Nations Relief Organization in Bangladesh (UNROB) and other affiliated organizations helped the regime face the situation. The initial performance of the regime in terms of reconstruction of overhead was commendable. The largest sea port of the country (Chittagong) was cleared, all damaged big bridges, with the exception of one, were repaired, industrial production began to make a recovery, and exports were up. But by the end of 1972, the situation began to take a turn for the

worse. The cost of living jumped from Taka 208 in January to Taka 297 in October -- by nearly 50 percent. According to one account, the cost of living index of an industrial worker rose to 200.31 from the base of 100 in 1969/70 (Bose, 1973:244).

In 1973, the failings of the economic policies of the regime began to appear. Production in both agriculture and industry failed to reach the level of 1969-70, the most recent normal year for Bangladesh. In the first year of the Five Year Plan, the total output in the industrial sector was 25 percent lower and in the agricultural sector 12-13 percent lower than 1969/70 (Islam, 1978:4). The food grain production surpassed the 1969/70 level (11.8 million tons compared to 11.2 million) but was well below the target (12.5 million tons). The balance of payment situation reflected a similar trend. It surpassed the projected deficit by 23 percent. The import bill was higher than projected estimate by Taka 635 million (\$79 million) and export receipts fell short of the projection by Taka 220 million (\$27 million). Foreign aid flow fell from the projected amount of Taka 3700 million to Taka 3070 million (\$463 mn to \$348 mn) resulting in short term borrowing and drawing from the resources to the tune of \$217 million (GPRB, 1974a:9). Export volume of raw jute and jute goods, the principal foreign exchange earning commodities, were far below targeted levels -- 2.7 million bales compared to 3.6 million bales (ibid).

The production level of the nationalized sector was decreasing causing a huge loss. In the first eighteen months after independence, 12 corporations in this sector incurred a loss of Taka 930 million (Daily Ittefaq, June 3, 1973). The total liabilities of the sector stood at Taka 5375.8 million (Daily Ittefaq, July 23, 1973). Total money supply increased from Taka 387 crore to 696 crore, causing massive inflation. The prices of essential consumer goods rose by about 40 percent over the average price of previous year. Large scale smuggling from Bangladesh to India played a key role in driving up the prices of essential consumer goods. During the fiscal year 1973/74 an estimated 1.5 million tons of paddy and 800,000 tons of rice were reportedly smuggled to India (Daily Banglar Bani, September 29, 1974).

The economic condition further deteriorated in 1974/75. The GDP registered a growth of 2 percent while population grew by nearly 3 percent resulting in a negative per capita growth rate (Bangladesh Observer, July 12, 1975). The total production of food grains was 11.5 million tons which was lower than the previous year and 12.6 percent less than the targeted amount. The production in jute sector declined by 8 percent (GPRB, 1975a:6). The balance of payment position worsened rapidly. Actual imports were valued at Taka 9710 million as opposed to the estimated amount of Taka 7660 million. The value of actual exports was Taka 2960 million while the target was Taka 3480 million. The price levels in 1974/75 increased by about 35 percent over the previous year while there was a declining trend in the index of real wages.

The regime reached the height of the economic crises in middle of 1974 when an early flash-flood was followed by a devastating country-wide flood in July-August, which was considered to be the worst in the history of this region. The flood wiped off a considerable amount of food grains (estimated to be 1.2 million tons) leaving the country with a deficit of 2.9 million tons. On the one hand, the Government's internal food procurement policy totally failed while on the other hand, the Government did not have enough foreign exchange reserves to procure food from international markets with higher prices. Additionally, the United States declined to supply food grains for some political reasons (see the previous chapter). Under such circumstances the regime faced a difficult choice: either continue supplying subsidized food grains to the most articulate and volatile pressure groups (e.g., military, police, government employees, students etc.) through Public Foodgrain Distribution System (PFDS)<sup>8</sup> or reduce the amount and

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<sup>8</sup>The Public Foodgrain Distribution System (PFDS) is a system of food distribution through which the government supplies food grain to some selected groups of population at heavily subsidized prices. This system was introduced during the Bengal famine of 1943 and expanded rapidly in post-independence Bangladesh, both in absolute and relative terms. The system comprised of three rationing channels, and two distress targeting channels. The rationing channels are Statutory Rationing (SR), Essential Priorities (EP) and Modified Rationing (MR). The fourth is a disaster relief channel. The fifth channel comprised food-aid grains being monetized, the proceeds then being used to support infrastructural building under Rural Works Program (RWP). Under this system SR and EP receives the largest share. Food grains are



divert some of it to the most vulnerable and poorer sections of the rural population. Faced with such a difficult choice the regime opted to continue to deliver food to the politically expedient groups, mostly from intermediate classes. Hence, a large number of the poor, about 100,000, were pushed to starvation and death.

The famine added fuel to the growing opposition to the regime and corroborated the opposition's claim that the regime was failing in all areas. The common people, however, did not wait for the opposition to make them understand the situation. Those who suffered the famine and barely survived knew it through their experience, while those who were fortunate enough to avoid the misery were learning it in their daily life due to deterioration of the law and order.

Deterioration in Law and Order:  
Crisis of Governability

Experience shows that major revolutions are followed by combinations of civil war, political turmoil, and general chaos. The civil war after the Bolshevik revolution, political turmoil after the Chinese revolution and chaos and disorder after the Iranian revolution are illustrative in this regard. Although the nature of the liberation war of Bangladesh was entirely different from these revolutions, one thing was very much common: the easy availability of firearms and absence of the so-called civil administration. This availability created serious hindrances in restoring peace and order in society. What made the situation worse in Bangladesh was the absence of a single command of the freedom fighters and presence of the armed collaborators

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provided to the urban middle classes through the SR at an incredibly low prices. For example, the ration price for coarse rice was less than one-half of the open market price during 1972-76. Several studies including one done by the government have shown that the primary beneficiaries of this system were the urban middle classes. The poorer population of the urban areas hardly get any benefit from this system (GPRB, 1978). Those who are included in the EP are the police, the armed forces (including para-military forces), students living in dormitories, jails, hospitals and orphanages. In 1973-74 the urban population (comprising of 9.2 percent of population) received 55 percent of rationed food grains. The remaining 45 percent went to rural areas. If priority groups living in rural areas are excluded the share of rural consumers were only 34 percent (Ahmed, 1978:6 and Ahmed, 1979:40-41). For further study on food policies of Bangladesh see Molla (1990) and Bangladesh Planning Commission (1989).

of the Pakistani occupation forces. Although the government in exile provided leadership during the war, they did not have total control over the guerilla forces who had fought against the occupation forces. In fact, resistance forces evolved spontaneously all over the country. Most of them were neither organized hierarchically nor had any command structure. As a result, no one was sure about the total number of the freedom fighters and quantity of the firearms under their control.

Furthermore, during the war a number of armed para-military forces (e.g., Razakars, total number of about 10,000) were organized by the occupation forces. The occupation forces also supplied arms to the members of the fundamentalist political party, Jamaat-i-Islami which organized at least two politically motivated forces -- Al-Shams and Al-Badr. The latter was the most ruthless one which killed at least 50 intellectuals in a very planned manner during the last three days of the war (i.e. 14-16 December, 1971).

While hundreds and thousands of people --- unlisted, unregistered, unknown and unaccountable --- were possessing all sorts of firearms, the so-called law enforcing agencies such as the Police and the Bangladesh Rifles were in complete disarray. The situation was further complicated due to government's unwillingness to involve freedom fighters in post-independence reconstruction measures. When Sheikh Mujib called upon the freedom fighters to surrender their arms a large number of them did so but a section of them declined. Not all of them had political reasons for doing so. The firearms left with the collaborators remained unrecovered. In an adverse political situation a number of them became involved in anti-social activities. The armed members of underground left political parties, though small in numbers, also became a threat to the restoration of peace.

It is against this background that the government began to operate. In the initial stages they achieved commendable success in establishing their control. In spite of the fact that large numbers of firearms remained in the hands of people with contending ideological convictions as

well as people with no political convictions at all, the government restored its control over all parts of the country. The presence of the Indian defense forces helped them to a great deal<sup>9</sup>, but it was the ruling party and the feeble civil administration who ran the day-to-day administration. The government also succeeded in containing any possibility of a civil war. There is no doubt that without the support of people from all walks of life, it would have been impossible for the fragile government to restore any order.

Soon the situation began to change dramatically. The law and order began to deteriorate in an unprecedented manner. Although there is no reliable study on the extent of increase in crime rate during this period, reports published in different newspapers based on government and other sources give us a sense of the situation. According to the official estimate, in the first sixteen months (i.e. January, 1972 - April, 1973) 4925 persons were killed by miscreants, 2035 secret killings of political nature took place, 337 women were kidnapped and 190 women were raped (Bangladesh Observer, July 7, 1973). These figures were mentioned by the Home Minister while making a statement in parliament on the law and order situation of the country.

Another newspaper reported on August 3, 1973 that 23 police stations and outposts were attacked by the 'anti-social elements' since independence (Morning News, August 3, 1973). The number of attacks on police stations increased substantially in subsequent months. In October 1973 alone, 11 police stations and sub-stations were attacked and looted (Daily Ittefaq, November 1, 1973).

According to the daily newspaper of the JSD, 32 banks were looted in the year 1972 (The Gonokantha, January 29, 1973). The same newspaper quoted the parliamentary proceedings of February 1, 1974 where the government apprised parliament members that some 400 firearms had been looted by miscreants during the first 18 months of independence. In the first two years of independence, the government reported, some 10,280 robberies took place (The Gonokantha,

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<sup>9</sup>The Indian forces were withdrawn from Bangladesh on March 12, 1972.

February 2, 1974). In the first year of independence, 17,341 cases of hijacking were reported (The Gonokantha, January 29, 1973).

Incidence of political murders also increased significantly. In February 1973, within 28 days 20 Awami League workers were killed (Daily Ittefaq, March 2, 1973). On November 5, 1973 a daily newspaper reported that in the first twenty months after the independence more than 6,000 political murders had been committed (Morning News, November 5, 1973). The JSD and its party newspaper claimed 60,000 killings during the two years since independence (The Gonokantha, 19 and 26 December, 1973). The AL claimed five of its parliament members and 20,000 supporters were killed by 'extremists'. Sheikh Mujib himself admitted that four of his parliament members and 3000 AL supporters were killed (Sheikh Mujib's televised speech to the nation, December 16, 1974). There is no way to evaluate the charges and counter-charges of the Awami League and the opposition as to who was responsible for the violence. While the government controlled mass media carried accounts of opposition violence and the killing of AL supporters, the only opposition daily and almost all the weeklies were full of reports of establishment violence. All of these created a grave sense of insecurity in the minds of common citizens and increasingly became a threat to the normal affairs of the state.

These crises did not appear overnight, instead one led to the other. In many cases, failure to resolve one crisis paved the way for the rise of another -- more complicated and more intense than the previous one. Yet, it would not be fair to suggest that it is only the ruling party or for that matter the ruling alliance who is to be blamed. There were circumstances beyond the control of the ruling classes: some deeply embedded in the social structure of the country, some deliberately created by the opposition forces. Two examples will make this point clear.

First, let us take the issue of economic crisis. In the early seventies, the world capitalist economy itself faced some unanticipated shocks. The recession and inflation of 1973-74 had its impact all over the world including the metropolitan countries. These were passed on to the

peripheral countries making the latter subject to severe fiscal crisis. Two prominent methods practiced by the metropolitan countries to pass on the burden were charging increased price for goods imported by the peripheral countries and imposing unfair terms of trade. These two features of trade are always present in the relationship between periphery and the center, but they are usually kept disguised. At times of crisis in the center these become obvious.

In 1973, Bangladesh suddenly faced both of these in a blatant way. Bangladesh economy facing major blows due to price hikes in oil and food grains in international market, import costs went up dramatically. The import price index rose 53 percent in 1973/74 and 115 percent in two years, 1973/75. Whilst export prices improved by 33 percent in 1974/75, the terms of trade deteriorated by 32.1 percent, primarily due to rise in the price of food grains, not due to oil price hike as it may appear to some. The price of food grains -- for which Bangladesh was dependent upon metropolitan countries, was more crucial than the price of oil. Over a period of four years, purchases of food from Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves accounted for \$488 million compared to an expenditure of \$388 million for oil and petroleum products (Sobhan, 1980:161). According to the same estimate, Bangladesh on average had to spend an additional \$227 million to cover its food gap compared to an increment of \$84 million in its petroleum and crude oil bill. This pressure along with the serious lack of resources, again a general characteristic of a peripheral country, compounded the problem. Bangladesh's situation is in this respect a glaring example of this unavoidable predicament of any peripheral country. What made the situation unbearable was the massive corruption of the regime and the patronization of certain classes at the cost of the majority of the population.

The second example relates to the crises involving the political opposition. It is indeed true that the actions of the ruling party accentuated crises. But the drastic increase of violence was also due to the actions of the leftist political parties, especially the underground pro-Peking leftists. In post-independence Bangladesh, the left political parties attempted to do what they

failed to do during the liberation war: emerge as the champions of the people's cause. The members of the newly converted left (e.g., the JSD) attempted to gain prominence while being within the AL since 1966, but they failed miserably. Now they wanted to have power overnight.

The case of pro-Peking leftists was more complicated and requires some elaboration. In the mid-sixties following the split with the pro-Moscow cadres, the pro-Peking leftists drew the attention of radical youth and students. They became the principal organization within the student community. Their efforts to unite and arouse the people culminated in the mass upsurge of 1969. But ironically they completely lost control after Mujib was released from jail in February 1969. The leftists wanted to further radicalize the movement while Mujib and the AL wanted to bring the movement within 'constitutional politics'. The question whether or not to join in negotiations with the Ayub regime (the Round Table Conference, RTC) was the turning point in terms of the leadership of the future movement. Mujib joined the RTC and carried the people along with him. The leftist parties opposed to the negotiations correctly pointed out that RTC will reap no benefits, but failed to suggest an immediate viable alternative. This failure was followed by the disintegration of the pro-Peking left. In 1970, when political activities resumed under the military regime of General Yahya Khan, the underground pro-Peking left was split into at least five small parties/groups<sup>10</sup>. Subtle theoretical differences and craving for leadership are to be blamed for these divisions. While the pro-Peking left leaders were engaged in bickering, the AL consolidated its support and finally won the elections of 1970.

Although most of the pro-Peking left parties were convinced that a revolutionary uprising in East Pakistan would eventually lead to the secession of East Bengal, they put it as a secondary issue on their agenda. Thus, in spite of the fact that the pro-Peking left were the only political

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<sup>10</sup>These are the East Pakistan Communist Party -- Marxist Leninist (EPCPML); the East Bengal Communist party (EBCP); the Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (CCCR); the East Bengal Workers Movement (EBWM); and the Mythi Group. For details see Maniruzzaman (1973:242-249).

force talking about the inevitability of an independent Bangladesh, they remained outside the nationalist movement that was gradually moving towards a secessionist uprising. The results of the elections of 1970 boycotted by the left moved the leftists further away from the people's vision. It is, however, true that the boycott strategy of the left helped the AL to secure a landslide victory, even though this was not intended by the left in any way.

Soon after the liberation war began the pro-Peking left faced another wave of disintegration. Some members of the East Pakistan Communist Party Marxist Leninist (EPCPML), East Bengal Communist Party (EBCP) and Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (CCCR) crossed the border and formed the Coordination Committee of the Bangladesh Liberation Struggle with the support of Communist Party of India -- Marxist (CPI,M). Some other members remained inside the country. When China overtly sided with Pakistan and showed no sympathy for the liberation struggle of Bangladesh, the pro-Peking left became utterly confused. Those who fled to India disavowed the Chinese attitude and kept trying to carve out a position in the war. A section of the EBCP (led by Abdul Matin and Mohammad Alauddin) who remained within the country and initially joined the war, changed their views to conform with the Chinese line. A section of EPCP (led by Mohammad Toaha) disagreed with the Chinese line but considered the war 'a conspiracy of Indian expansionism and Soviet social imperialism' and hence engaged themselves in fighting with the AL-led Freedom Fighters as well as Pakistani soldiers. The East Bengal Workers Movement (EBWM led by Siraj Sikdar), who declared a national war of liberation against the Pakistani military junta as early as March 2, 1971, reorganized their party (named themselves Sorbohara Party) and fought against the Pakistani soldiers separately.

Nevertheless, the mutual recriminations during the late-1960s followed by disorganized and confused actions of the pro-Peking leftists during the war made it impossible for them to

appear as a formidable political force and play any leading role. They made very little impression on the guerrilla forces as well.

Now faced with the new reality of Bangladesh where they were a marginal political force, the pro-Peking leftists attempted to unite<sup>11</sup> and began to look for an issue which will enable them to appear as a better alternative to the ruling party. Calling the war of liberation 'an unfinished and truncated revolution' they urged the people to join them and complete the remaining task of the unfinished revolution. To them the war was yet to be over and thus an all out effort was made to destabilize the government. As such, their opposition to the ruling party was not entirely determined by the actions of the regime but guided by their goal to take over the state. The crises as well as the failure to contain them by the ruling party only served as the precipitating factor.

This, however, does not mean that the ruling alliance made no effort to counter the problems. Instead, the ruling party desperately searched for solutions to these problems. Their search was constrained by their class character and specific historical situation (e.g. post-war rising expectation and frustrations). Their failure to contain the proliferation of crises and bring about a solution to them resulted in a gradual decline in social cohesion and hence increasingly the threat to the perpetuation of the capitalist mode of production became evident.

#### **Responses to the Crises and Quest for 'Spontaneous' Consent**

In agreement with Gramsci (1971), we can assume consent and coercion co-exist in all societies. The coercive elements inherent in a hegemonic system are laid bare, if and when the ability of the ruling classes to organize the consent weakens. Under normal circumstances, the elements of coercion are kept latent, concealed. The ruling classes seek and of course, prefer

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<sup>11</sup>In early 1972 four pro-Peking left groups formed the Communist Party of Bangladesh--Leninists. These groups are: the Coordination Committee of the Communist Revolutionaries, the East Pakistan Communist Party (ML), some Communist workers of Khulna district led by Sayeed-ud-Dahar; some communist workers led by Nasim Ali.



active and voluntary consent of the subordinate masses. But when the masses "do not 'consent' actively or passively" or the consent is not sufficient to reproduce capitalist relations, the apparatus of state coercive power "legally enforces discipline on those ... who do not consent" (Gramsci, 1971:12). That is why the ruling classes attempt to impose a general direction on social life through their ideology and ensure social conformity to it. In responses to the crises (described in earlier section) the ruling classes of Bangladesh made that attempt through devising a new ideology and striving for conformity within the party and its allies and when necessary through making changes in their policies.

#### In Search of New Ideology: Mujibism

In order to counter the growing popularity of the radical left and their ideology of 'scientific socialism', the ruling party evolved a new ideology of its own -- Mujibbad (Mujibism). Named after Sheikh Mujib, the ideology lacked any philosophical thesis and, as a matter of fact, the promoters of the 'Mujibbad' at first did not know what it stood for. The ideology was essentially an admixture of populism and a personal cult and advocated 'consensus' among the subjects as opposed to 'class conflict'. The promoters insisted on the supra-class nature of this ideology, and integration and accommodation of the various elements of the social formations within a dominant party structure as its primary goal. The new 'ism', the advocates claimed, sought to correct the deficiencies of capitalism and socialism. In their view, it was the nationalist reaction against the 'foreign isms' and deeply imbedded in the social, political and cultural traits of the country.

The principal components of the new ideology were nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism. These were enshrined in the constitution as the principles of Bangladesh state. But interpretation of these ideals remained open as no specifics were ever provided by the ruling party. Mujib's own description only enhanced the scope of multiple interpretations. Sheikh Mujib said on one occasion:

"If 'Mujibism' is to be considered an ideology, then it ought to be explained by philosophers. I can give my own understanding of what has come to be known as 'Mujibism'. In the first place, I believe in democracy -- in the triumph of the will of the people, in the freedom of thought, of speech and in other freedoms which ennoble mankind. Together with faith in democracy, I am convinced that the development of democracy is possible only in conditions of a society which is free of exploitation. That is why in addition to democracy I speak of socialism. I also believe that all the religions that exist in Bangladesh should have equal rights. By this I mean secularism, the right to profess one's faith. And last, but not least, is the necessity for people to derive inspiration from Bengali culture, language and folklore and from the entire Bengali environment. This inspiration will rouse the Bengalis to work better for the sake of Golden Bengal. This is how I understand nationalism" (Mujib as quoted in Khan and Zafarullah, 1980:86-7).

In spite of divergent interpretations, the state-controlled media began to propagate the ideology of Mujibism and gradually became the sole medium for the propagation of this ideology. But interestingly, these equivocations did not look into the substance of this new ideology.

Nonetheless, one could deduce the meaning of this ideology from the actions of the ruling party and the regime. For example, the economic policies of the regime demonstrated what the ruling party meant by socialism. As I have pointed out in the previous chapter, the socialism of the ruling party was only beneficial to the intermediate classes through the extension of state property. The state enterprises were used by a small segment of the society to accumulate wealth at the expense of the larger section.

The ideology of Bengali nationalism as envisaged and practiced by the ruling party was to marginalize the non-Bengali minority in general and the tribal nationalities in particular. The debate in Constituent Assembly on November 2, 1972 concerning the ethnic groups of Chittagong Hill Tracts, especially the reactions of the members of the ruling party, is indicative of this attitude. The Constituent Assembly was discussing the proposed draft of the Bangladesh Constitution. Article 14 of the proposed Constitution provided that one of the fundamental responsibilities of the state would be to be free the working population -- peasants and laborers - -and the 'backward sections' of the population from all kinds of exploitation. The provision did not specify these 'sections' or the specific means by which this could be achieved. M.N. Larma,

an independent member from the Chittagong Hill Tracts -- the home of the ethnic groups with culture, language and tradition different from the Bengalis -- moved an amendment to the above article proposing that:

- "a) the lawful rights of the minority and backward nations<sup>12</sup> (nationalities) should be preserved;
- b) in order to improve their educational, cultural and economic standards they should be given special rights;
- c) full opportunities should be given to them by the state to enable them to be at par with the advanced nations (nationalities)."

In another amendment he proposed that, since the Chittagong Hill Tracts are a tribal area, in order to ensure that its political, economic and religious rights are not infringed upon, it should be an autonomous tribal region.

Larma's proposed amendments caused a furor among the members of the Assembly. They were construed as a challenge to Bengali nationalism and as a conspiracy against the sovereignty of Bangladesh. The amendments were considered as outside the rules of the House and were thus rejected by the Assembly (The Gonokantha, November 3, 1973). The members of the ruling party clearly equated opposition to their version of Bengali nationalism with the opposition to the independence of Bangladesh.

The fourth component of the ideology of Mujibism was secularism. The exploitation of Islam by the Pakistani colonial rulers to legitimize the perpetuation of the colonial rule and the excesses committed by the Pakistani Army and the collaborating Islamic parties 'to save the integrity of Islamic Pakistan' created bitter resentments among the people against the use of religion in politics. It is against this backdrop that the ideals of secularism gained support in Bangladesh. The Article 12 of the Bangladesh constitution reflected these secular aspirations when it stated that,

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<sup>12</sup>Although Larma used the term 'nations' and 'nationalities' unwittingly he was only referring to ethnic groups.

"in order to achieve the ideals of secularism,  
 a) all kinds of communalism  
 b) patronization by the state of any particular religion  
 c) exploitation (misuse) of religion for political purposes  
 d) discrimination against, and persecution of, anyone following  
 a particular religion  
 will be ended" (Constitution of Bangladesh, 1972:4).

In line with this principle, all religious political parties were disbanded after the independence. On the one hand the regime took such bold and commendable steps while on the other hand, Sheikh Mujib categorically declared that he was proud to be Muslim and that his nation was the second biggest Muslim state in the world (Bangladesh Observer, January 11, 1972). He not only frequently made use of Islamic expressions in his speech but repeatedly insisted that his vision of 'secularism does not mean the absence of religion' (Mujib's speech on January 18, 1974). Mujib also led the Munajaat (Islamic prayer) on November 4, 1972 inside the Parliament after the passage of the Constitution Bill.

The state-controlled media, especially radio and television, began to undercut the spirit of secularism when they adopted a policy of equal opportunity for all religions. Instructed by the government, they began citations from the holy books of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Their policy of distributive justice in terms of allocating time among the different religions, according to one newspaper, slowly poisoned the concept of secularism and injected religious fanaticism into the minds of the people (Wave, December 2, 1972). The government not only extended indulgence to all religions but also subjected itself to religious pressure. It was under this kind of pressure that the government increased funding for religious education in 1973. The budgetary allocation for Madrassa (Islamic educational institutions) was increased from Taka. 2,500,000 annually in 1971 to Taka 7,200,000 in 1973. Furthermore, government inaugurated an organization called Islamic Foundation in 1975 to help propagate the ideals of Islam.

The inherent self-contradiction of the ruling party in terms of its policy of secularism became evident when Mujib joined the Islamic Summit held in Lahore in February, 1974. Two months later Bangladesh took the lead at the Islamic Foreign Ministers' Conference held in Jeddah in establishing the Islamic Development Bank. Thus the ideology that was invented and propagated by the ruling party to counter the growing popularity of the radical left and the ideology of scientific socialism was inherently self-contradictory and essentially barren. These drawbacks hindered the ideology of Mujibism from making any appeal to the general masses, let alone becoming hegemonic.

It is true that Mujib's name and charisma was not much of help for the ruling alliance in creating a new legitimizing ideology, but it surely did help the ruling party remain intact. Most of the time the presence of Mujib and his paternal form of leadership successfully contained the internal feuds and cleavages. Yet, internal dissension was proliferating and hence forcing the party to take some measures in this regard. The party basically devised their version of a carrot and stick policy -- patronage and purge -- to subdue the dissension.

#### Patronage and Purge Within the Party:

What was done to pacify the disgruntled sections was to extend patronage in some form or the other, but if the differences were too much or the group became a threat to the party hierarchy, they would be purged. The cabinet membership was one of the most significant forms of patronage the party could offer to any of its members. That is why cabinet members were always chosen from different groups to maintain a judicious balance between the rival factions.

In September 1973, when factional tension within the party became acute, the cabinet was expanded drastically. Fourteen state ministers were appointed to keep support of some of the factional leaders. But this failed to satisfy all groups and some disgruntled factions kept on pressuring the party for their representation in the cabinet. Two months later two more ministers were added. During this reshuffle a prominent cabinet minister Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury was

asked by Mujib to resign and he did comply with the request without any question. Chowdhury neither joined the opposition nor made any public statement about his removal. The ruling party never explained why he was removed from the office.

Such an act of balancing between the different factions reaped some immediate benefits, but had adverse long-term effects. The cohesiveness of the party became the first casualty. The prime act of the party leaders became maintaining groups of their own and dispensation of patronage to their supporters. The party as a whole became engaged in this kind of activity.

In the middle of 1974, an open conflict between the left-of center faction led by Tajuddin Ahmed and the rest of the party surfaced on the question of dealing with urgent socio-economic problems of the country became obvious. Tajuddin made several critical remarks about government policies. He publicly stated that government policies were responsible for the famine and urged it to convene an all-party conference to solve the food crisis. He also stated that the implementation of the development plan of 1973/74 would be impossible and that the economy of the country had almost broken down (Weekly Holiday, June 9, 1974). As a result, six ministers and three state ministers of the Tajuddin group were asked to resign on July 7. Tajuddin Ahmed was asked on October 26, 1974 to resign from the cabinet 'for the sake of national interest'. He complied with the directives of the Prime Minister silently.

The rebellious statements of the former PM and the then Finance Minister was only an excuse for his removal. The differences between Tajuddin and Mujib were much more than the question of dealing with the imminent food problem. The regime at this point was gradually moving away from its socialist policies. Insiders of the AL reported that Tajuddin opposed the revision of the investment policy in July 1974. He was altogether opposed to the unconditional acceptance of foreign aid and surrendering to the pressure of donors to constitute an aid consortium. As a matter of fact, after independence while Tajuddin Ahmed was still the PM, he declared that Bangladesh was not eager to accept US help due to the latter's opposition to the

liberation struggle (Tajuddin Ahmed's speech over clandestine Bangladesh Radio, December 19, 1971; reported in Financial Times, December 20, 1971). Some sources close to the AL allege that Tajuddin Ahmed was removed from his office due to external pressures, especially by the US. Pointing to the fact that Tajuddin was removed from the office only a few days before Henry Kissinger paid his first visit to Bangladesh, they contend that it was a hint from the part of Mujib to the western world that he is reducing the Indo-Soviet weight in his cabinet.

Thus the ruling party faced with internal feuds and dissensions attempted to contain these by pursuing a policy of patronization and purges, instead of having an open debate and attempting to build a consensus. The delicate balance between the different sections of the party definitely served the need of running the party's day-to-day affairs but fell far short of keeping the party in a leading position. But the ruling party was so content with the immediate success of the policy that it became the cornerstone of the political strategy of the ruling party, not only to deal with the internal crisis of the party but also to combat the growing opposition political forces.

#### Complex Balance of Right and Left:

Having failed to mobilize the masses against the radical political parties the ruling party moved to form a broad alliance with the moderate leftists on the one hand, while it taking a conciliatory attitude towards the rightists, especially the Islamic fundamentalists on the other.

In October 1973, the ruling Awami League formed an alliance with two pro-Moscow leftist parties -- the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and the National Awami Party (NAP) led by Muzaffar Ahmed. A Central Committee of the alliance known as 'Gono Oikya Jote' (Popular United Front) was formed with the representatives of three political parties in the proportion of 11:5:3. Close cooperation between these three parties was nothing new. Barring the brief split and confrontation in the beginning of 1973, these three parties maintained a closer relationship since mid-60s, although the AL never showed a great enthusiasm in this regard.

There were two previous attempts to build an alliance among these parties. Both of these initiatives came from the CPB and the NAP. The first one was in 1971 during the liberation war<sup>13</sup>. The second attempt was made in May 1972 which led to the setting up of 'a National Committee of Three Parties'<sup>14</sup>. But the committee failed to get off the ground due to 'Awami League's sectarian policy of working single-handedly' (CPB, 1974:256). After these two abortive attempts came this third initiative, surprisingly from the Awami League<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup>Despite the insistence of the left parties to form an alliance the Awami League deliberately excluded the members of the left political parties from recruiting in guerrilla forces during the liberation war. Some 6,000 members of the NAP and CPB, however, made their way through. The Communist Party of Bangladesh also tried to raise a large guerrilla force of their own. With the help of the Communist Party of India (CPI) they opened separate youth camps and made arrangements to train their cadres. But these parties followed a political strategy which calls for close cooperation with the government in exile. In pursuance of this strategy on May 21, 1971 the Central Committee of the CPB urged to form a National Liberation Front, consisting of the AL, the CPB, the NAP and other parties participating in the liberation struggle. Most of the AL leaders reacted adversely, though the PM was in favor of including other political parties in the process of raising the guerrilla forces as well as political mobilization. Pressure also came from Indian authorities in late-August to build a broader forum where all other political parties could be included. Indian representative D. P. Dhar suggested to his Bangladesh counterpart Muyeedul Hasan that a national alliance should be built (Hasan, 1986:85-9). The goal was to draw pro-Moscow forces into the decision-making process in order to gain support from the Soviet Union. The cabinet refused to do so, but authorized the PM to form an all-party consultative committee. The consultative committee was formed on September 8, 1971. The members of the committee were Tajuddin Ahmed and Khandaker Mushtaq of AL, Moni Singh of CPB, Muzaffar Ahmed of NAP, Monoranjan Dhar of Bangladesh Congress, and Maulana Bhasani. Due to the absence of a clear terms of reference and reluctance of the AL leaders, the committee could not play any substantial role. In subsequent months some of the leaders of these two parties were included in delegation teams that went abroad to mobilize international public opinion. Soon after the liberation, NAP leader Muzaffar Ahmed urged the government to form an 'all-party interim cabinet' (*Statesman*, December 23, 1971). The AL paid very little attention to that call.

<sup>14</sup>In post-independence Bangladesh, both the CPB and NAP (Muzaffar) decided to lend all-out support to the AL regime. In its First Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPB held on February 4, 1972 the party decided to 'pursue a policy of cooperation with the government and the Awami League for the solution of the problems of people's life and for the reconstruction of country along the progressive line' (CPB, 1974:256). The NAP in its first National Conference held in May 1972 adopted a program underlining the necessity of supporting the positive steps taken by the government (NAP, 1972:24).

<sup>15</sup>Awami League called for unity of all patriotic forces in its public rally held on June 7. The CPB quickly responded to the call in its rally on June 10. On August 9, Sheikh Mujib called for the formation of an alliance of AL, NAP, and CPB. Leaders of these three parties met on September 1. Two days later Mujib met the leaders of the parties concerned and approved the



The joint declaration of these three parties issued on October 14 claimed that "the purpose of the alliance would be to mobilize the working people, laborers, peasants, middle class intelligentsia, students and youth for continuing consistent struggle against all barriers on the way of Bangladesh's advance towards socialism" (CPB, 1974:302). The declaration also noted that the immediate tasks of the alliance is "the establishment of law and order in the country; putting an end to the terrorism and robberies; struggle for the effectiveness of production; struggle against profiteering, smuggling and corruption; cleaning up the government machinery of corrupt pro-imperialist and anti-people elements" (Bangladesh Observer, October 15, 1973).

The principal objective of this newly formed alliance was to combat the radical left parties. It was quite unequivocally stated in the joint declaration:

"It has become an urgent political task to resist, in the interests of the country's independence and progress, those parties and individuals within the country who are trying to foil the progressive domestic and foreign policies of Bangabandhu's government and are trying to mislead the people by carrying on vile propaganda against our friend-states particularly India, the Soviet Union and other friendly countries. In reality, these circles have taken up the role of the enemy of the country, nation and the interests of the people. They are engaged in conspiracies against the national interests in connivance with those foreign powers who tried to foil our struggle for independence. This evil clique is conspiring to destroy the basis of progressive nationalism of Bangladesh and re-establish reactionary communalism. Actually they, in the interest of their foreign masters and national reactionaries, want to foil our national independence achieved at the cost of the blood of three million martyrs. So a countrywide intense struggle has to be developed to uproot these enemies from the sacred soil of Bangladesh" (CPB, 1974:302-303).

The efficacy of the alliance was not as strong as the rhetoric. But it did send a clear signal to the radical left about the ruling party's feeling and their strategy to combat them.

The formation of the alliance signaled the ruling party's inclination towards the moderate left, but they did not want to isolate themselves from the rightists as well. The rightists, especially the religious forces, were also perceived as a strong force that could neutralize the growing

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decision of the formation of an alliance. After hammering out the differences and drafting the declaration the formation of the alliance was declared on October 14, 1973.

influence of the radical left (Umar, 1973a). Furthermore, with the government's increasing relationship with the Muslim world there was a need on the part of the ruling party to improve its Islamic image. Faced with this situation the government embarked on a policy of conciliation towards the pro-Islamic forces. In addition to steps such as an increasing emphasis on Islamic values and the use of Islamic symbols, the government declared a general amnesty on November 29, 1973 for all the prisoners held under the collaborator's act. Exceptions were made only in cases where there were specific criminal charges. Due to limitations of the Evidence Act and the inadequacies in provisions of Collaborator's Order specific charges could be brought against only a few persons. Thus almost all alleged collaborators were granted amnesty. Some 33,000 detained collaborators were released in the next couple of days. Such a conciliatory gesture from the ruling party was welcomed by the rightists.

Thus by the end of 1973, the government was playing a political game with two distinctly different sources of support: the secular moderate left and the pro-Islamic right. All of them were, however, directed against the radical left forces, who, according to the ruling party, 'the enemy of the country, nation and the interests of the people', 'engaged in conspiracies against the national interests in connivance with those foreign powers' and were trying to 're-establish reactionary communalism'.

To combat the crises and adapt to the pressure that came from both within and outside, the ruling party gradually drifted away both from their previously stated political position and their economic policies.

#### Move Towards 'Open Economy':

The first major revision of the economic policies of the regime came in July 1974. The investment policy was drastically altered. The revision of the policy not only raised the ceiling for private investments from Taka 3.5 million to Taka 30 million and extended the moratorium on nationalization from ten to fifteen years, but also allowed foreign investments in Bangladesh. The

principal factors for the revision, as I have discussed previously (Chapter V), were the need to accommodate the emerging new-rich class which appropriated the potential surplus from the public sector, and/or accumulated wealth through a number of illegal means under the patronage of the ruling party; and accommodate the pressures that came from both international agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank and foreign businesses. It was expected that a revision of the policies would help expand the private sector and thus be beneficial to the state through generating surplus. But it did not bring any considerable change in the failing economic condition.

This action was not, however, the first move of the government that reflected their tacit dependence on external resources to bring about a change in economic conditions. In the early days of independence the regime became extremely dependent on external resources in the form of aid, grant and loans for economic recovery. But, as the economy faced a tougher situation, due to a combination of factors both internal and external -- policies pursued by the regime, their inept management and massive corruption as well as oil shock, increase in food grain prices etc., availability of aid became more difficult. The donors began to attach strict conditions that were evidently antithetical to the policies of the ruling alliance. The revision of the investment policy was the first clear indication that the regime has begun to succumb to the pressures. This was immediately followed by signing of an agreement with four multinational corporations for off shore oil exploration in the Bay of Bengal. The agreement signed with these companies (Atlantic Richfield and Ashland of the United States, Canadian Superior of Canada and Japan Petroleum Corporation of Japan) was for six years and the total outlay was \$1.5 billion (Weekly Holiday, September 29, 1974). The government also agreed to the proposal of constituting an international aid consortium of the donor countries and agencies. Then came the devaluation of Bangladesh currency by 58 percent in March 1975 and demonetization of Taka 100 bills in April 1975. All

these actions were construed by the regime as logical steps towards resolving the economic crises faced by the nation. But none of them could bring an end to the crises.

The reforms in the policies indicate that the ruling alliance was trying to adapt to the changing situation by making modifications they deemed necessary. But their responses to the crises were not limited to the policy changes only, rather this constituted one of the two lines of responses. The other line of their response was associated with the use of force, coercion instead of consensual incorporation. The ruling alliance was moving towards forcible subjugation of the masses -- towards authoritarianism.

#### **Presage of Authoritarianism**

Authoritarianism as a method of rule does not arise abruptly, rather it is a process that culminates into this specific form of governance. As such authoritarianism becomes visible long before it turns out to be the principal mode of articulating state power. Bangladesh was no exception. The trend toward authoritarianism was discernible in the behavior of ruling classes in the early days of independence. Informal concentration of power in one or two institutions; manipulation of the electoral process and constitutionality in general to give some semblance of legitimacy to their actions, curtailment of fundamental rights such as the freedom of expression are most significant indications of the rise of authoritarianism. The entire process, nevertheless, began with concentration of power in the hands of the Prime Minister.

#### **Concentration of Power in the Hands of PM:**

Like many other nationalist leaders the charisma of Mujib became the principal source of authority in the early days of post-independence Bangladesh. It is also true to some extent that immediately following independence the overwhelming and charismatic leadership of Mujib provided badly needed unity and direction for the country. But no attempt was made to institutionalize the charisma and decentralize power, nor to break the exclusivity of the decision-making process. The experience of the Planning Commission, as narrated by Nurul Islam is

illustrative in this regard. The Planning Commission members did not actively seek support among individual members of the Cabinet or in the party leadership for its policy recommendations in spite of the fact that the commission never had a full-time political leader involved in its deliberations. Because "in actual decision-making nobody excepting the Prime Minister really mattered" (Islam, 1979:48)<sup>16</sup>. The Commission members maintained a close, intimate and personal contact with the PM and make their recommendations accepted by the Cabinet.

The PM was the supreme authority in making decisions. Only those who had access to PM could influence him, because,

"even though the Prime Minister did not appear to rely exclusively on any group or any person for advice in decision-making, he, however, discussed important policy issues whenever he felt it necessary with many groups of people ranging from the individual ministers to the individual civil servants, as well as various individuals inside and outside the government and the party, who in his judgement did reflect the views of the various interest groups. This process of consultation and deliberation was conducted in an informal, ad hoc, and often on bilateral basis" (Islam, 1979:48).

This process of deliberation and consultation played so significant a role that the cabinet and the parliament became forums needed only to provide the legitimacy required for execution of the decisions.

Over time the situation aggravated remarkably. As Islam further points out, "The importance of the deliberations of the Cabinet in the decision-making process declined over time. The need to intervene in the matters which were within the jurisdiction of the individual ministers was considered by the Prime Minister as having been thrust upon him by the inefficiency and lack of initiative of the ministers" (Islam, 1979:49). The situation involving the Parliament was no different. With a near monopoly in the National Assembly and a constitutional

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<sup>16</sup>Islam (1979), however noted in retrospect that this assumption was a miscalculation. Not because the ministers really mattered but because the ministers could delay or nullify the effects of the decisions made at the top.

restriction imposed on the members barring the right to dissent and vote against the party in the Assembly<sup>17</sup>, the Parliament became a place where one can only expect applause for the policies of the AL and its leader Mujib. The freedom of its members to discuss, debate, and formulate policies reflecting the aspirations of the electorate was thus curtailed.

While the cabinet and the parliament were being downgraded to the role of legitimizing what the party and essentially its supreme leader had already decided, the office of the PM was becoming increasingly powerful. In addition to having head offices and ministries for which the Prime Minister had specific responsibility, his secretariat comprised offices of Principal Secretary, Private Secretary, Political Secretary, Economic Secretary and Invigilation Director. The overall coordination of the governmental activity at the administrative level, which was provided by the Chief Secretary before the independence, was provided by the Principal Secretary to the PM. Not surprisingly, the position was held by a bureaucrat. The Prime Minister's office thus became the nucleus of the administration and the PM acquired an enormous amount of power. Given the method of decision-making and role of the cabinet and the parliament, described above, he enjoyed it without any accountability, not even to his electorate. Because the events surrounding the parliamentary elections of 1973 made the question of accountability a moot one. It was public knowledge that the results were tampered with and the process had been manipulated.

#### Manipulation of Electoral Process:

The constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly (CA) went into effect on December 16, 1972. On the commencement of the constitution the CA was dissolved and the government announced that the first parliamentary elections under the new constitution would be held on March 7, 1973.

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<sup>17</sup>The Article 70 of the Bangladesh Constitution put severe restriction on the members of the Parliament against making any move against the party. The provision reads as follows:

"A person elected as Member of Parliament at an election at which he was nominated as a candidate by a political party shall vacate his seat if he resigns from that party or votes in Parliament against that party."

Following the announcement almost all political parties expressed their willingness to contest the elections. But at the same time they alleged that conditions for holding a free and fair election were completely absent. They maintained that the opposition parties were enjoying very little freedom and opportunities in presenting their programs and viewpoints to the electorate. They further noted that the intolerant attitude of the ruling party towards criticism by the opposition was a serious obstacle in participating in the upcoming elections. In order to remove these obstacles the NAP-M leaders Muzaffar Ahmed and Pankaj Bhattacharya demanded that the present government should resign (Dainik Bangla, November 22, 1972). Awami League leader A.H.M. Kamruzzaman responded quickly saying that there was no need for the ruling Cabinet to resign (Dainik Bangla, November 23, 1972). The All Party Action Committee (APAC) led by Maulana Bhasani however reiterated the opposition demand in their 15-point charter and called for 'the formation of an all-party government' (Dainik Bangla, December 31, 1972). Responding to the opposition parties' demand to resign Mujib later said: 'I have obtained votes for remaining in power for five years. Why should I resign? An all-party government could be formed but with whom should I form such a government?' (Gonokantha, January 5, 1973).

Election politics took a different turn after the incident of January 1, 1973. As I have described earlier the close allies of the ruling party (the NAP-M, the CPB) engaged themselves in bitter conflicts with the government. The storm troopers of the ruling party went against the opposition parties including their former allies with lightening speed. As a result, the country plunged into an unprecedented tense atmosphere. The opposition alleged that the ruling party was trying to sabotage the conditions of a free and fair election, while the ruling party charged that the opposition is responsible for the reign of terror. They also accused the opposition of trying to disrupt the election process (Mujib's speech in a public meeting in Pirojpur, Bangladesh Observer, January 3, 1973) and foreign conspiracy was at work to create disorder in the country (Mujib's speech in a public meeting in Barguna, Bangladesh Observer, January 4, 1973).

Nevertheless, the situation began to ease after the NAP-M and CPB capitulated in the third week of the month. In the meantime, the election schedule was announced: January 31 -- last date for applications to obtain nomination papers, February 5 -- last date for filing of nomination papers, February 6 -- scrutiny of the nomination papers, and February 8 -- withdrawal of candidature. Given the experiences of the preceding three weeks, APAC called for a greater electoral unity among the opposition parties to combat the ruling party in the elections, but in vain. The JSD, expecting a handsome victory, decided to follow a 'go alone' strategy. The opposition parties failed to forge a unity for a limited time and for a limited purpose in spite of the fact that they were subjected to the attacks of and repression by a common adversary -- the Awami League. This raises an important question: why the opposition could not come to terms with each other, especially when it became clear even to the critics of Awami League that 'it was rivalry between the opposition parties which was going to help the Awami League win the election' ? (Weekly Holiday, February 4, 1973) The most favored answer by the opposition was that they were not interested in a United Front victory because of the difficulties of governing a problem ridden country with a heterogenous and ill-assorted United Front. This explanation indeed had some merit. But if the actions of the opposition were indicative of their mind, the reason was definitely quite different: they had an exaggerated notion of the discontent among the electorate against the AL and thus expected that they would do extremely well. None of the parties was ready to share the glory of victory over the AL. Beyond this immediate reason of disunity there existed a deeper cause: class affiliation of the party leaders. Badruddin Umar while summarizing the reasons for the ineffectiveness of the opposition parties pointed to the fact,

"These parties, inspite of their pretensions represent the interests of various sections of the same classes that form the basis of the ruling Awami League. Being pushed out of power by the ruling party and aspiring to be what the Awami League has become, they could neither formulate a policy nor gain the confidence of the people, nor mobilize their resources in a manner which could maximize their strength as an electoral opposition. Thus they were in a very weak position, and the attack of the ruling Awami League has quite expectedly thrown



them into a state of utter confusion. This confusion is again nothing but a clear indication of the extent of the impotence of the parliamentary Opposition" (Weekly Holiday, March 18, 1973).

Umar's conclusion is very contentious and debatable. But he is correct in assessing the class basis of opposition political parties. Excepting a few involved with underground radical left political parties, the leadership of the opposition came from the intermediate classes. Additionally, their support base was primarily within the urban middle classes. The JSD, for example, relied heavily on the middle class youth and students. It would not be a mistake to say that their radical rhetoric was some sort of 'petty-bourgeois adventurism'.

Nevertheless, apart from the disunity among opposition political parties and their failure to present any pragmatic alternative program to that of the AL, the ruling party had a clear edge over its opposition. The entire administrative machinery was on their side, the state-controlled mass media including radio and television was being utilized almost like party-spokesman, public transport such as buses, cars, trucks, jeeps, helicopters were available to the AL candidates. Finally, they had an asset no other political party could have: Sheikh Mujib. Although the Awami League was rapidly losing its popularity, Mujib still enjoyed the enormous confidence of the people. To the common people Mujib was still their dream child who could do a miracle given a chance. In their view, it is the party cadres and the men around Mujib who should be blamed for their misery, not Mujib; he was still their friend: 'Bangabandhu'. Yet, as the elections approached,

"the Awami League took a course of intrigue and intimidation. The leaders of the Awami League plunged into a competition to prove their popularity to impress their leader. A rage of arrogance dominated their thoughts and an element of intolerance crept in their mind and they maintained an egoistic jingoism that they and they alone had the right to rule the country. So when the election strategy was worked out, democratic practices and norms were disregarded and sometime deliberately violated on petty personal motivations with a general but erroneous notion there was actually no opposition in the country.... They became irritant, intolerant and arrogant despite all the advantages they had on their side for a sure victory" (Ahmed, 1984:141).

The first open conflict between the opposition and the ruling party arose on February 5 -- the day of submitting nomination papers. Opposition alleged that in different parts of the country the AL workers did not allow candidates from opposition parties to submit their nomination<sup>18</sup>. It was reported by the Election Commission next day that five AL candidates (including Sheikh Mujib) in constituencies had been elected unopposed. On the date of withdrawal five more AL candidates were found without contestant<sup>19</sup>. Opposition parties claimed that threat of life, intimidation, kidnapping and every other coercive measures were taken to make sure that their nominees withdrew from the contest. Excepting perhaps the case of Mujib, there were ample reasons to believe that the oppositions' allegations were true.

The high-handedness of the ruling party was far from over. Instead this was 'the auspicious beginning of the AL's victory march'. On the election day (March 7, 1973) a reign of terror was let loose. According to the newspapers (Daily Sangbad, March 8, 1973; Daily Gonokantha, March 8, 1973; and Weekly Wave March 10 and Weekly Holiday, March 11, 1973) and other informed sources there was organized false voting throughout the country in favor of the government party, large-scale intimidation was resorted to by the supporters of the ruling party to prevent opposition parties and their polling agents from operating in the voting centers, the opposition party polling agents were driven away from the polling booths under threats of being shot, voters were terrorized and gunfire by the ruling party's armed bands created panic and fear among the voters, while law-enforcement agencies were rendered helpless in the face of directives and threats from the highest level. The outcome of such massive rigging became obvious when the results began to come in: AL embarked on a landslide victory.

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<sup>18</sup>The motor launch of the President of the JSD, Major (Rtd.) Jalil, was reported to have been seized on the way to his constituency in Bhola by AL supporters and fired upon. The JSD leaders alleged that 18 of the party nominees were not allowed to file their nomination papers.

<sup>19</sup>Those who were elected unopposed were: M. Sohrab Hossain, Tofail Ahmed, Mohammad Motaharuddin, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (from two constituencies), A.H.M. Kamruzzaman, Rafiquddin Bhuyian. Monoranjan Dhar, Syed Nazrul Islam, and Zillur Rahman.

But 'problems' remained in some constituencies. Despite the scare-tactic, voters in some areas somehow managed to speak their minds. In about 25 constituencies opposition nominees maintained their lead over the AL candidates. Some of them were unofficially declared elected by the local officials and at least three of them -- the JSD President M.A. Jalil, prominent JSD leader Shahjahan Siraj, and NAP-M nominee Mustaq Ahmed Chowdhury were announced by the state-controlled television commentators as being elected<sup>20</sup>. But soon 'helicopters were flown out to render assistance and at least in half a dozen constituencies entire ballot boxes were removed and replaced with new ones' (Ahmed, 1983:144) allegedly at the instruction from the 'Gonobhavan' -- the official residence of the PM where an 'election control room' was established beyond the jurisdiction of the Chief Election Commissioner. When all was over the results of the election showed a landslide victory for the Awami League. Out of 288 seats contested AL won 281 seats and the opposition including the independents secured 7 seats<sup>21</sup>.

The exact magnitude of the rigging and manipulation was difficult to determine, for the opposition parties in some cases exaggerated the facts while the ruling party completely rejected any such charges. The polling officials who could be the best source remained silent for the same reasons they had to allow the malpractice -- fear of their lives and jobs, and because most of them were government officials. Nevertheless, by the estimation of a government-controlled newspaper, allegations of AL allies, numbers of votes secured by some AL leaders and the Awami League's attitude towards the opposition manifested in the post-election discourse reveal a trend that helps us understand the situation.

It was a foregone conclusion even before the elections that the ruling party will secure a respectable majority despite the growing discontent among the masses. The disunity of the

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<sup>20</sup>Mustaq Ahmed Chowdhury's name had been published by the state-controlled daily Bangladesh Observer on March 9, 1973 as being elected.

<sup>21</sup>Following the bye-elections and elections in the reserved seats for women the composition of the parliament stood as follows: AL:306; JSD:2, BJI:1; Independent:6.

opposition as well as the charisma of Mujib were working heavily in favor of the ruling party, but not to the extent represented by the election results. Three days before the elections a correspondent of government-controlled newspaper suggested that the opposition would secure at least 30 seats (Bangladesh Observer, March 4, 1973). The estimates were, of course, very much conservative. Ahmed (1983:144) feels the same way: "at the most, if the central leadership of the Awami League had not intervened, the opposition would have won an additional 20 seats over the 9 they had already won." Barua (1978:168) maintains that "a reasonably free and fair election would have returned to the first Parliament about 50 to 60 opposition members, and these would have included 15 to 20 major opposition party leaders." One day after the election the President and General Secretary of the NAP, Muzaffar Ahmed and Pankaj Bhattacharya, alleged that the government had forcibly defeated opposition candidates. The recognition from the leaders of the party that maintained an excellent relationship with the AL that at least 70 opposition candidates would have won if the government party had not resorted to rigging (Daily Sangbad, March 10, 1973) definitely carries some weight.

The average percentage of total votes cast in the elections was 55.62 and the ruling party secured 72.4 percent of the total votes cast. But in some constituencies not only was the total number of votes cast amazingly high but also these were also only in favor of the AL candidates. For example, Abdur Razzak (Faridpur XVI) secured 95,114 out of 129,251; Shah Muazzem Hossain secured 107,689 votes out of total 130,111; and Gazi Golam Mustafa (Dhaka XIII) secured 110,248 out of total 285,120 (the total number of votes cast was 162,306). They were, not to mention, the central leaders of the ruling party.

What goes beyond these estimations, allegations and statistics is the discourse of the ruling party after the election. Two examples are enough to show the trend. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in his post-election press conference on March 8, 1973 not only claimed that the elections were free and fair but unequivocally stated: "the results of the election have amply

demonstrated that there is nothing like an opposition party in Bangladesh." Additionally, he said, "the political parties expressed their views freely and openly. They could not prove their bonafides and they will disappear by themselves" (Dainik Bangla, March 9, 1973). The statement clearly reflected an attitude of intolerance towards the opposition, which was very antithetical to the spirit of democracy. Furthermore, this statement was clearly an indication as to how the government was going to view the opposition politics. Badruddin Umar noted that trend and commented:

"To say that there is no Opposition worth the name inside the newly elected National Assembly is one thing, but to say there is no political opposition in Bangladesh is quite another. The Prime Minister has left no doubt about the sense in which he publicly denies the existence of any political opposition. The statement was a prelude to making Bangladesh a one-party state where no party other than the Awami League would be allowed to function."

Umar further noted,

"If no Opposition is recognized as political opposition then it is most likely opposition to the ruling party, and the ruling classes which are represented in the government will be declared anti-people, anti-social and criminal. And once the ruling party takes such decisions about the political opposition the methods of handling that opposition will definitely follow a routine which has been historically charted."

He went on,

"The statement made by the Prime Minister is not out of harmony with the other statements which are being made by 'important personages' belonging to the ruling party concerning 'purification of the political and social life of the people of Bangladesh. And this is what seems to be quite important. Because in the history of man a 'there is no opposition' type of statement has always betrayed a determination on the part of the ruling party. And this determination can be expressed in the following terms: there shall be no Opposition" (Umar, 1973b).

The second example is a comment made by a youth leader of the ruling party. On March 11, three days after the election and two days after Mujib made the remark about the opposition, Nur-e-Alam Siddiqui said in a public meeting that "those who have voted against the Awami

League in last election are Razakars and Al-Badrs<sup>22</sup>. These enemies of independence will be weeded out with the tool of Mujibism" (Gonokantha, March 12, 1973). Statements such as these, as Umar noted, were not incongruous with their previous statements. As a matter of fact, AL leader Shah Muazzem Hossain maintained in early January that those who were trying to oppose the AL in the forthcoming election were the same collaborators who had sided with the Pakistani military junta (Bangladesh Observer, January 12, 1973). Thus in view of the AL leaders, opposition to the ruling party means opposition to the sovereignty of the country and hence severe punishment should be meted out to those 'anti-state' elements.

With such perceptions, the Awami League established their overwhelming control over the Parliament. So great was their control over the Parliament that it gave them the leverage to manipulate the constitution, if necessary, to consolidate and perpetuate their power and privileges and silence the opposition in a very 'legitimate' way. And that is what they did in subsequent days.

#### Manipulation of Constitutionality:

One of the major accomplishments of the AL regime in the early days of the independence was framing the constitution in a period less than seven months.<sup>23</sup> They should also be given credit for framing a constitution with an extraordinary democratic facade despite

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<sup>22</sup>These are the two para-military forces organized by the Pakistani occupation forces during 1971. In post-independence period these terms were used to denote anyone who was against the liberation struggle and hence people's enemy.

<sup>23</sup>The Constituent Assembly comprised of the representatives elected to the-then National Assembly of Pakistan and those who were elected to the Provincial Assembly in East Pakistan in 1970 was formed through the Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh Order 1972 (i.e, President's Order No. 22 of 1972). The Assembly had no other function save the framing of the Constitution (Article 7, P.O.22). The Assembly first met on April 10, 1972 exactly one year after the Proclamation of Independence and appointed a 34-member Constitution Committee headed by Dr. Kamal Hossain. Its second session began on October 12, 1972. A 91-page draft Constitution Bill with 153 Articles was presented on October 18, 1972. After three weeks of discussion the Assembly adopted the Constitution on November 4, 1972. The Constitution was authenticated by the Speaker on December 14 and was signed by 357 members. The three opposition members declined to sign. The Constitution came into effect on December 16, 1972.

inclusion of some highly undemocratic provisions that essentially took away the fundamental rights of the people. The salient features of the Constitution were the introduction of the Westminster-type parliamentary system and according the Parliament a supremacy in important issues like declaration of or participation in war, and imposing and collecting taxes. Additionally, the Constitution apparently made provisions 'guaranteeing' the fundamental rights of the people and 'ensured' the separation of judiciary from the executive organ of the state. But it is interesting to note that alongside these provisions there remained other provisions which could enable the government to 'legitimately' act to the contrary. Few specific examples will bear out this point.

Let me begin with the example of fundamental rights of citizens. Contained in Part III of the Constitution, Articles 27-29 and 31-43 provide a long and comprehensive list of the rights of the citizen guaranteed by the state<sup>24</sup> including freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of thought and conscience and speech. Furthermore, in Article 44, a right has been guaranteed to move the Supreme Court for the enforcement of all the rights conferred in this part of the Constitution. The list is, of course, comprehensive enough to cover almost anything one could think of. But the problem is not that some rights were excluded, but the conditions included with those.

Article 35 grants the right to every citizen to have open, fair and impartial trials in courts of law. But the explanatory paragraph that immediately follows the provision says that on grounds of public safety, morality and on any other reasonable ground such trials may be held in camera

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<sup>24</sup>These are: equality before the law (Article 27); protection against discrimination on ground of religion etc., (Article 28); equality in public employment (Article 29); right to protection by law (Article 31); protection of right to life and personal liberty (Article 33); safeguards against arrest or detention (Article 33); prohibition of forced labor (Article 34); right to have an open, fair and impartial trial in the court of the law (Article 35); freedom of movement (Article 36); freedom of assembly (Article 37); freedom of association (Article 38); freedom of thought and conscience and speech (Article 39); freedom of profession or occupation (Article 40); freedom of religion (Article 41); right to property (Article 42) and protection of home and correspondence (Article 43).

through appropriate legislation of the Parliament. Articles 35, 36, 37, and 38 guaranteeing the freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of thought and conscience and speech are the most significant provisions in terms of democratic practice. All of these rights can be taken away on reasonable grounds. Who would decide what is reasonable and what is not? The answer is not unknown to anyone. Article 39 guarantees the rights of freedom of speech and press, which is again very much conditional. According to the sub-clause (2) all of these rights will be suspended if any attempt is made to disrupt friendly relations with foreign countries, which essentially means that the foreign relations of the government can not be discussed by the citizens. This point assumes further significance if we take into consideration that a treaty had been signed with India for 25 years before the Constitution came into effect<sup>25</sup> and there was a growing suspicion in many quarters that another 'secret pact' was signed during the war<sup>26</sup>. Besides, foreign relations of a government is not and cannot be, something of a static nature. With the change of time friends changes. Does this mean nothing can be said about anyone?

A second example relates to the suspension of the constitution. It is indeed true that there was no such provision per se that the constitution can be suspended by anyone at any time,

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<sup>25</sup>On March 19, 1972 a 'treaty of friendship, cooperation and peace' was signed between India and Bangladesh during the visit of the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Ms. Gandhi and Bangladesh PM Sheikh Mujib signed the treaty on behalf of the respective countries. The treaty barred the countries involved from entering into or participate in any military alliance directed against the other (Article 8). The treaty also included a provision that in case either party is attacked or threatened with attack by a third party, the participants of the treaty will enter into mutual consultations 'in order to take appropriate effective measures to eliminate the threat' (Article 9).

<sup>26</sup>Lt. Colonel M. Ziauddin voiced that suspicion in August, 1972. He wrote: "This country is on the verge of falling into abyss. Everyone has to be united, infused with pride and made it move. Talking about pride, what has happened to our pride? Did we have it? Have we lost it or is it hidden? In this case, the nations pride remains hidden in 'secret treaty'. We had pride and we found it on 26th March. Those who are signatories to it must give it out to the people. The prize belongs to them. Those who know of such a treaty must tell the people that there is such an act of 'betrayal'. If they do not do it, they are enemies of the people and the freedom fighter have the right to demand it" ('Hidden Prize', Weekly Holiday, August 20, 1972).



rather the constitution was perceived to be the supreme law of the land. But interestingly, a unique provision was inserted into the Constitution that practically empowered the Parliament to suspend the Constitution altogether. Article 63(3) made a provision that for public safety and the protection of the state during war, aggression, and armed revolt, the Parliament will be able to enact any law and during such enactments the other provisions of the constitution will not, in any manner, restrain the Parliament from making any such laws. What this essentially means is that the constitution can be suspended and rights enjoyed by the citizens can be taken away if the Parliament feels it necessary to do so. The most disturbing element of this provision is the inclusion of armed revolt. There is no clear definition of the term 'armed revolt'. Additionally, it remained a matter of interpretation when such armed revolt will become a national emergency and give unlimited power to the Parliament.

Apart from taking away the basic rights of the citizen, provisions were made to concentrate power in hands of the Prime Minister. Apparently there is nothing wrong in providing constitutional power to the PM under a parliamentary system. But here the situation was somewhat different as manifested in the juxtaposition of Articles 55(4-6), 48(3) and 70(1-4) of the Constitution. Article 55(4-6) described the power and authority of the President. It is provided that the President shall be the highest authority for issuing executive orders on behalf of the government. In this matter no one will be able to raise any questions in the court of the law. So far so good. But according to Article 48(3) except appointing the Prime Minister, the President in all and every matter is to act with the advice of the Prime Minister including framing necessary rules. Thus what is really happening here is that the PM remains out of the reach of the courts of law while performing his executive duties. Additionally, the PM has the power to control the judiciary indirectly, because the Chief Justice and other Judges of the Supreme Court will be appointed by the President (Article 95) and, of course, on the advice of the PM. As a result, both executive and judiciary come under the grip of a single person -- the Prime Minister.

This is in addition to his immense control over the members of the Parliament elected as his party's nominees, and the fate of the Parliament in general. The extent of his control over Parliament members can be understood from Article 70(1-4). It has been provided in this Article that if a Parliament member resigns or is expelled from the party or votes against the party, he/she will lose the Parliament membership. The control also goes beyond the party, because, if the PM ceases to retain the support of the majority of the members of the Parliament, he would either resign or advise the President to dissolve the Parliament (Article 57). Hence the party leader who is also very likely the parliamentary leader and the Prime Minister has control over all of the three organs of the government -- the executive, judiciary and legislature.

All of these provisions were incorporated in the original constitution enacted on December 16, 1972 and provided ample power to the government. Yet, the ruling party faced with greater political opposition in the post-election situation felt the need to amend the Constitution to include some further provisions that will give the government power to legislate and enact laws contrary to the provisions pertaining to the fundamental rights of the people. On September 22, 1973, the ruling party introduced the Constitution (Second Amendment) Bill '73 which incorporated provisions relating to preventive detention and proclamation of emergency. Article 33 was substituted with a new Article in order to make provisions for preventive detention, and Part IXA was incorporated to include emergency provisions in the constitution. The salient feature of this amendment was that the government can now detain any one for an initial period of six months in order to prevent that person from engaging in any action which is in the opinion of the government a threat to the public safety and sovereignty of the state. An Advisory Board will be constituted to review each case separately and can extend the detention for an unlimited period if the Board is convinced that sufficient cause exists for such detention. This provision is self-explanatory and needs no further elaboration.

With the incorporation of the Part IXA in the constitution a provision was made that "if the President is satisfied that a grave emergency exists in which the security or economic life of Bangladesh or any part thereof, is threatened by war or external aggression or internal disturbances, he may issue a proclamation of emergency" [Article 141A(1)]. By Article 141B, certain articles relating to the fundamental rights could be put under suspension and laws inconsistent to Article 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 42 could be made during the period of emergency. Furthermore, by Article 141C provisions were made to have the enforcement of fundamental rights through the courts of law suspended during such a period of emergency. Inclusion of these provisions in the constitution on the one hand restricted the fundamental rights of the people and hence were antithetical to the spirit of democracy, while on the other hand they dramatically enhanced the power of the executive branch of the government. The near monopoly of the Awami League in the Parliament ruled out any scope of discussion on the proposed amendment. As a result, despite feeble resistance by the opposition and independent members the amendment was passed by the parliament.

With the power derived from the amended Article 33, the government moved further in early 1974. On February 5, 1974 Parliament enacted the Special Powers Act 1974. The Act made provisions for preventive detention. According to the Special Powers Act, a person was to be detained if the government was satisfied that it was necessary to do so with a view to preventing him from doing any 'prejudicial act' (Section 3). The Act also dealt with sabotage (Section 15), prohibition of prejudicial acts including publication of any prejudicial report (Section 16). The Act curtailed the freedom of association and authorized the government to impose control over such associations which would "act in a manner or to be used for the purpose prejudicial to the maintenance of public order"; it also gave the government necessary power to "direct the association to suspend its activities for such period not exceeding six months" (Section 19 and 20). The Act laid down that the persons engaged in hoarding, black marketing, sabotage, printing,

possessing or distributing any 'prejudicial report' shall be tried by Special Tribunals created under the Act (Section 26-29). Anyone accused or convicted for an offence punishable under the Act could not be released on bail (Section 32). Furthermore, in the original Act an appeal from the judgement of the Special Tribunal lay with the High Court Division but by an amendment on July 23, 1974 the jurisdiction was taken away. The amendment also made provision for 'firing squads' for the execution of persons found guilty by the Special Tribunals.

The Act clearly reflects the attitude of the ruling party. In combination with the provisions incorporated in the original constitution and the alterations made through the Second Amendment, this Act indicates an ominous trend. It is obvious that in the face of the growing economic and political crises, especially the growth of the opposition, the ruling party drifted towards coercive measures rather than making efforts to co-opt the opposition and combat the underlying reasons for the crises. What is of further significance is that the ruling party utilized their overwhelming majority in parliament in manipulating the constitution in general. The parliament became the tool for legitimizing the coercive actions of the government, instead of being a forum of discussion and debate about the future direction of the country. The views of the opposition members were never taken into consideration. Taking advantage of the absolute majority in parliament, the ruling party imposed its will upon the entire population. Unfortunately this was done in the name of the democracy.

These constitutional and legal measures were enough to quell the opposition -- be it an individual or an organization. The mass media was not spared from the onslaught of the ruling party. The constitutional and legal measures discussed above had special provisions to deal with dissenting voices. But these were not the only measures taken by the ruling party to silence critics. Legislation specifically designed to curtail the freedom of the press was enacted and implemented vigorously.

### Curtailement of the Freedom of Press:

The distinctive features of the Bangladesh press at independence were the prevalence of a number of gag laws, especially the Printing and Publication Ordinance (PPO) of 1960, and a total government control over the electronic media (i.e. radio and television). Besides, there were two dailies (i.e. Morning News and Dainik Bangla) under the control of the government through the National Press Trust (NPT) constituted in 1960s during the Ayub regime. The PPO, which journalists and politicians alike called a 'black law', included several restrictive provisions including one of licensing. Under the PPO, publication of newspaper without a proper license issued by the authorities would be considered illegal and thus liable for punishment. The Ordinance also empowered the government to arrest journalists for their reports. The Awami League promised to repeal the PPO and pledged to ensure the freedom of the press. With independence they inherited the legacy. Additionally, a number of newspapers (e.g., Bangladesh Observer, Daily Purbadesh, Weekly Chitrali, Daily Azad, Daily Paygam) owned by pro-Pakistani businessmen and politicians were abandoned and consequently brought under the government control as abandoned property. Two wire services operating in the pre-independence period (i.e., Pakistan Press International -- PPI, and Associated Press of Pakistan -- APP) also came under government control. Thus there was very little scope within mainstream journalism to oppose the government. The role of the journalistic community as a whole was also not very appreciable in putting pressure on the government to ensure an environment conducive to the freedom of press. Even though the leadership of journalist unions were reminding the ruling party of their pre-independence promises, some of the influential members of the union either joined the government or cooperated with it. The ruling party took advantage of this deep division within the community.

Nevertheless, an array of weeklies that began to come out in early-1972 (e.g., Hoq Katha, Spokesman, Wave, Nayajug, Chorompatra, Mukhopatra, Lal Pataka, Ittehad, Abhimat, etc.)

joined the band of pre-independence opposition weeklies (e.g. Holiday, Gonoshakti) and appeared as the principal critics of the ruling party. The JSD also brought out their daily Gonokantha. These opposition newspapers -- with a few exceptions -- were not always behaving responsibly. Some of them, one must acknowledge, were full of venom and invective directed at the AL leaders combined with an unrealistic propaganda spiced with revolutionary rhetoric. Their occasional irresponsibility provided the government the opportunity to crack down on them.

While the leaders of the ruling party were declaring that securing a free press was one of their prime goals and the PM announced that 'the government of Bangladesh is aimed at establishing a free and responsible press' (Bangladesh Observer, March 3, 1972), the government began to use the PPO for closing down newspapers, issuing warrants and arresting newspaper editors and others connected with their publication. They used the ordinance even to close down the printing presses which were used to print those newspapers.

The first indication of the ruling party's intolerance towards criticism was the dismissal of the editor of the government-controlled daily Bangladesh Observer in March, 1972. Abdus Salam, a prominent and well-respected journalist, was removed from his office, because of the opinion expressed in his editorial titled 'the Supreme Test' (Bangladesh Observer, March 15, 1972). That, however, was only the beginning. Within the first six months of the independence two weeklies were banned (the Hoq Katha and Gonoshakti), one of the editors was arrested and warrant was issued against another (Report of the General Secretary 1972-73, Dhaka Union of Journalist, Dhaka). On September 6, 1972 editor of Spokesman and Mukhopatra, Fayzur Rahman was detained. On January 2, 1973 the editor and executive editor of the government-controlled daily Dainik Bangla were removed from their duties and made OSDs (Officers on Special Duty) in the Information Ministry. Hasan Hafizur Rahman and Toab Khan were dismissed because they decided to bring out a special edition of the newspaper covering the news of police firing in front of the United States Information Service (USIS) killing two students on

January 1, 1973. In March, 1973 government cracked down on the only opposition daily -- Gonokantha<sup>27</sup>. By July, the government took actions against five newspapers, arrested two editors, and issued warrants against one publisher. In August, 1973 the office of the Deshbangla (a newspaper published from Chittagong) was forcibly closed and 9 journalists including the news editor were arrested. Later the editor was also taken into custody.

The PPO provided the necessary legal shield in cracking down on the opposition newspapers. Essentially, the ruling party was making use of the PPO in its extreme form to silence dissident voices. In terms of legality one could hardly question the use of the PPO, but there remained a moral question: should the ruling party make use of a law so frequently which they themselves called a 'black law'? Should they use a discredited 'Pakistani law' when they were alleging that those who opposed the regime were Pakistani collaborators and still have the 'Pakistani mentality'? Having faced this moral dilemma, the ruling party moved to make changes in the gag laws -- but ironically, only in terms of its name. The PPO was repealed at the end of August 1973. But the annulment came only after the government promulgated a new ordinance on August 28, 1973: 'Printing Presses and Publication (Registration and Declaration) Ordinance, 1973'. The content as well as the form of the new ordinance was identical, a mere duplication of the previous one. No changes were made in so far as the restrictive provisions and punishments for violation of the law was concerned. The Ordinance found a safe passage in parliament when presented for approval on September 19, 1973. It was accompanied by harsh criticism of the press by the members of the ruling party, including the Home Minister.

The vilification and questioning the parentage of the journalists by the Home Minister and others in the Parliamentary debate was a prelude to a further crack down on the freedom

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<sup>27</sup>Gonokantha practically became the prime target of the government. Until its final closure in January, 1975, the newspaper faced several assault from the government through 'legal' means. Its editor was also incarcerated. Besides, the supporters of the AL attacked and burned the office building several times.

of the press. Armed with the new ordinance and freed from the moral dilemma, the ruling party went wild to crush the opposition voices. Events like suspension of newspaper publication, cancellation of newspaper declaration, seizing published materials, arrest of journalists and editors, raid on newspaper offices became a part of life<sup>28</sup>. Within six months of the passage of the Ordinance came the Special Powers Act of 1974 which had, among others, specific provisions to deal with the newspapers. The Act, as I have said earlier, was a pointer to the ruling party's growing reliance on coercion in order to rule the country.

Simultaneous to the process of legislating the repressive laws was the process of the emergence and preeminence of coercive apparatuses. That is to say, as the ruling party was becoming increasingly dependent upon these coercive laws to obtain conformity and crush resistance, so was increasing their reliance on those institutions that could enforce those laws forcibly. This is exactly how an authoritarian state begins to rise.

#### **Rise of the Authoritarian State**

One can deduce from the preceding paragraphs that the principal characteristic of an authoritarian state is the presence of a highly developed system of repression and terror. But the presence of a system of repression and terror is not sufficient enough to say that a given state has become authoritarian. Any despotic and/or degenerated system of governance could also have a highly developed system of repression. What makes the authoritarian state different from others is the combination of the 'legitimate' preeminence of the coercive apparatuses and the supremacy of the executive branch of the state. Furthermore, all these are geared towards fulfillment of a definite political project. In accordance with the legislation of repressive laws the coercive

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<sup>28</sup>The final blow to the freedom of the press came in June 1975 after the introduction of the one-party presidential system (see discussion presented later). The government promulgated the Newspapers (Annulment of Declaration) Ordinance 1975 by which it allowed only 4 daily newspapers to continue publication and banned the rest. All four of these newspapers were taken under the control and management of the government.



apparatuses of Bangladesh state began to emerge and assume a prominent position. Concurrently the executive organ of the state was gaining supremacy.

Emergence and Preeminence of Coercive Apparatuses,  
and Introduction of the Emergency Rule:

In early 1972, the government announced the formation of a para-military force named Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini (National Defense Force)<sup>29</sup>. The formation of the JRB grew out of two interrelated needs of the ruling party: firstly, administrative; and secondly, political.

The administrative need arose from the lack of a strong law-enforcement agency. Immediately after the independence the government began to reorganize the law enforcement agencies such as the police, Bangladesh Rifles and the army. The question involving the future structure of the Army created a dilemma for the ruling party. On the one hand, they preferred the restoration and rebuilding of the Army in accordance with the traditional concepts and colonial pattern as opposed to the concept of "people's militia" advanced by the radicals, while on the other hand, the experience of Pakistan began to haunt them. Finally, the ruling party found a precarious balance between these two: having a small conventional Army with very little equipment and a low profile. The question that immediately followed the reorganization issue was whether to involve the defense forces in reconstruction and law-enforcement. From the organizational point it had very little significance, because the forces were still disorganized. But the more fundamental point was political. Involvement of Army in law-enforcement so soon after independence was perceived as a prestige issue -- an indication of the lack of the regime's political authority. There was also skepticism from the part of the ruling party whether or not the existing law-enforcement forces would be able to meet the needs of the independent country. Nevertheless, the need for a strong law-enforcement agency in a post-war situation where firearms were all around was seriously felt by the regime.

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<sup>29</sup>The Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini Order, 1972 (President's Order no. 21 of 1972) was promulgated on March 7, 1972 with a retroactive effect from February 1, 1972.

The political imperative of the JRB involves internal feuds within the party as well as the ruling party's perception of opposition political parties. Contending factions of the party began to vie for power and engaged themselves in creating private forces such as 'Lal-Bahini' and 'Awami League Sechhasebak Bahini' (AL Volunteer Force). The former members of the Mujib Bahini led by Fazlul Hoq Moni -- nephew of Sheikh Mujib -- insisted on a greater role in the government. The ruling party came to believe that the entire nation, except for a few Pakistani collaborators, was with the party. Hence opposition to the party and the regime was deemed as opposition to the sovereignty of the country. Those involved in such acts should be dealt with severely without any consideration. Furthermore, the prevailing skepticism of the ruling party about the existing law enforcing agencies to meet the needs of an independent country convinced them that an organized legitimate force under the control of the party and its leaders would be a better solution.

Although these two needs were complementary, one question placed them in diametrically opposite positions: who would control the para-military force? The administrative need called for leaving the control with the state-bureaucracy, while the political need called for control by the party hierarchy. If it came under control of the latter, how does one legitimize it?

When the JRB Order was promulgated in March 1972 it became obvious that political needs of the ruling party superseded administrative needs. The question pertaining to the aim and purpose of the force as well as the control over the JRB were kept vague leaving ample space for maneuvering. The Order was devoid of any specifics about the organization, its methods of operation, its powers and authorities and its accountability as law-enforcement agency. In terms of the objects and purposes of the Bahini, Article 8 of the Order stated that it would be employed for the purpose of assisting civil authority in the maintenance of internal security when required and it would perform such functions as the government would direct. In terms of rules of its functioning, the Order only stated that the Government would make rules

and regulations for its functioning, conduct of its members and their powers and functions (Article 17). An organized force of 20,000 members equipped with sophisticated weapons was created through such an ambiguous order that left them without any accountability to any specific institution of the government. No one can doubt the fact that this ambiguity was the result of a deliberate strategy of the ruling party to accord enormous power to the Rakkhi Bahini and its members.

The magnitude of the power of the newly formed force was felt shortly after its creation. Reports began to pour in from different parts of the country about the atrocities of the members of the Rakkhi Bahini. Apparently they were up against the 'anti-social elements' such as smugglers, black-marketeers, hoarders, and dacoits, but essentially the political dissidents became their prime targets<sup>30</sup>. Ahmed (1983) succinctly described their method of operation:

"It acted like a storm-trooper, a crack-force for a lightning strike. It would surround a whole village combing for arms, miscreants and political opponents and at times to recover 'fake ration cards'. In the process they would kill, loot and even rape -- there was no regulation to control their conduct or make them accountable. Soon it assumed the name of a private Bahini working outside legal norms. They could enter any house, arrest anyone, detain any number of people including women and children in their camps all over the rural areas" (Ahmed, 1983:56).

The brutal actions of the Bahini evoked serious criticism in the opposition press. When the legality of such actions were being questioned by some newspapers, the government introduced an amendment to the original order in October 1973 with retroactive effect from February 1, 1972 [The Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini (Amendment) Ordinance, 1973, October 30, 1973]. The amendment legalized all acts committed by the Bahini in the past or in future by including the provision that no suit, prosecution, or other legal proceedings would lie against any member of the Bahini which was done in good faith or intended to have done so (Article 16A). The amendment also provided the Bahini the power and authority to search any place and arrest

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<sup>30</sup>There are thousands of incidents involving Rakkhi Bahini's torture on political dissidents as well as innocent people. Some of them are documented by Ahmed Musa (1988).

anyone without warrant (Article 8A). These provisions not only made the members of the Bahini completely immune from legal proceedings but also authorized them to operate beyond the reach of the law. Practically they were acting at the free will of their leaders (officers) and followed no codes of conduct. The officers of Rakkhi Bahini also admitted that the Bahini had no rules or procedures or codes of conduct (Mohsin Sharif vs. the State, 27 DLR, 1975 HC, p.186, popularly known as Shahjahan Case argued by Moudud Ahmed on behalf of the plaintiff in May 1974). The JRB officers acknowledged that "they do not have to maintain any paper or document or record of their activities or conduct in the operations they used to undertake. There was no record of any arrest or search, or seizure they made." In response to a question how they worked, a Senior Deputy Leader told the court, 'we work the way we decide' (ibid).

The numerical strength of the Bahini continued to grow steadily and reached 29,000 in subsequent years. A plan to raise the number to about 130,000 by the year 1980 was drawn up by the government. It was also planned that one regiment of the JRB would be placed under the command of the each district governor -- a political appointee of the regime. Besides, the Bahini increasingly became the primary tool of the regime to counter law and order situations. The deployment of JRB in various places for various reasons became a norm.

Besides the JRB, the government began to call in the army frequently to aid civil authorities. Sometimes this caused embarrassment to the ruling party, because the army occasionally went 'beyond their jurisdiction' and caught party loyalists engaged in various unlawful acts. Nevertheless, the government's primary goal was to bring the situation under control by employing whatever methods necessary.

The army was first called into action in the middle of 1973 in 'operation ration-card and abandoned houses' (i.e. to recover false ration cards and to evict the unauthorized occupants of abandoned houses left by Pakistanis). The operation, however, caused some tensions between the army and the ruling party, because the army began to evict the illegal occupants indiscriminately

including the members of the ruling party. On the very first day, it was reported, the army action to evict 12 illegal occupants of houses in the Mohammadpur area of Dhaka met with resistance from AL workers. Consequently, the central leaders of the party intervened and the subject of abandoned houses were taken out of the terms of reference of the army. But the operation continued for quite sometime, and not surprisingly, it was the poor and lower middle class who became targets of the army. Harassment in the name of fake ration card recovery became a part of their life.

The second time the armed forces were called into action was during the latter part of 1973. They were ordered to carry out localized operations against 'miscreants and anti-social elements' in Barisal, Jessore, Khulna, Rangpur and Rajshahi. According to a report published in JSD newspaper Gonokantha (December 19, 1973), some 100 'communists' were killed in this operation. The regime claimed to have wiped out half of the miscreants from the 19 districts (ibid).

The army was deployed for the third time in April 1974 on a national scale to deal with subversion, smuggling, the recovery of illegal arms and backmarketeering. Unlike the previous two occasions the army was given the power to supersede the civil administration. The deployment of Army with such vast power was seen by some analysts such as Enayetullah Khan as the virtual abdication of civil authority to military rule ('Why The Armed Forces Have Been Called Out,' Weekly Holiday, April 28, 1974). Khan also commented that, "the irony is that the armed forces did not have to ask for it. It came to them in spite of their own selves and it is possible that they may be struck with it for years from now" (ibid).

The deployment of the Army on a national scale with such vast power through an executive order was nothing but the imposition of emergency rule without having it pronounced. Because of the very nature of the operations of the armed forces, even if it was to remain within the given terms of reference, it precluded basic human rights guaranteed by the constitution that

can be suspended only under an emergency. Actions of such a nature obviously revealed that the ruling party was desperately trying to make a compromise between the rule of emergency and parliamentary pretenses. But striking a complementarity between these two is practically impossible. Their inherent contradictions ultimately led to a clash between respective institutions, even though an inimical forbearance might be achieved for sometime. In the latter case, the only result that can be expected is a limbo. Whatever may be the immediate repercussions, the ultimate result, as it happened in all such cases, was to bring about the demise of even the semblance of parliamentary rule.

And that is what happened within eight months of the deployment of the army. On December 28, 1974 the President by an Ordinance proclaimed a state of emergency in the country suspending the enforcement of fundamental rights during the period of emergency. The Ordinance stated that emergency rule was proclaimed because the 'security and economic life of Bangladesh was threatened by internal disturbances'.

The proclamation of the emergency, of course, essentially brought an end to parliamentary rule and the constitutional state. But the facade remained. The supremacy of the parliament accorded by the constitution became discordant with the prevailing situation and a source of contradiction. What was necessary to eliminate the incompatibility was to constitutionally legitimize the concentration of power in the hands of executive and destroy all autonomous bases of power outside the jurisdiction of the executive. Those were the inevitable logical steps toward the completion of the process of establishing an authoritarian state. The ruling classes of Bangladesh advanced in this direction without any delay.

#### Supremacy of the Executive and Emergence of the One-Party State:

Within less than a month of the promulgation of emergency rule, the Parliament hurriedly passed a constitutional amendment without any discussion or debate that brought an

end to the last vestige of parliamentary rule in Bangladesh<sup>31</sup>. The Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Act (The Act No. II of 1975) passed on January 25, 1975 made sweeping changes. The country entered into a new constitutional arrangement where none but only one political party could exist and the executive branch with the President at its apex assumed supremacy over the legislative and judicial organs of the state. Additionally, by the amendment itself, Mujib was made the President for the next five years and with an opportunity to hold the office for an unlimited number of terms.

Contrary to the earlier constitutional provision that the President will be elected by the Parliament, the new system made provisions that the President would be elected by the people in a direct election (Article 48) and the executive authority of the republic would be vested in him (Article 56). The amendment made it more difficult to impeach the President from office by increasing the number of members required to sign a notice of motion to initiate impeachment proceeding (minimum of two-thirds as opposed to the previous one-third) and the number of votes required to pass the resolution (three-fourths as opposed to two-thirds). The 'Council of Ministers' was made responsible to the President, not to the Parliament as it was under the original constitution. The ministers, including the Prime Minister were to be appointed by the President and would hold office during his pleasure.

One of the principal features of the original constitution was the sovereignty of Parliament. The Parliament had the supreme power and authority in law-making. Any bill passed by Parliament would become law and the President had no power of veto. But under the new system the President could withhold assent to any bill passed by the Parliament.

In Part II of the original constitution, where the fundamental principles of the state policies were laid down, Article 11 contemplated that people would effectively participate through

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<sup>31</sup>The amendment bill, even though of great significance, was passed by the Parliament within less than an hour -- at a speed, according to Ahmed (1983:235), unprecedented in the history of law-making.

their elected representatives in the administration at all levels in order to ensure a democratic system. Accordingly, Chapter III of Part IV of the original constitution provided for local government at every administrative unit of the Republic composed of elected persons. The Fourth Amendment omitted the provisions and thus made it possible for the President to appoint local governments.

The separation of judiciary and executive is considered to be the one of the basic conditions as well as the strength of the democratic process. The primary function of the judiciary in a democratic society is to oversee the executive branch, strike a balance between the law and its application and administer justice. That is why any democratic constitution strictly prohibits interference of the executive in the functioning of the judiciary. But the Fourth Amendment severed the very root of the independence of the judiciary and made it subservient to the executive branch. As opposed to the original constitutional provision that the "the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court shall be appointed by the President, and other judges shall be appointed by the President after consultation with the Chief Justice" [Article 95(1)], the new amendment empowered the President to appoint all judges without any consultation with the Chief Justice. In terms of the tenure of office of the judges, the President assumed total power as opposed to the previous stipulation that "a resolution of Parliament supported by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the total number of members of the Parliament" would be required [Article 96(2)]. Under the new condition, the President could remove a judge including the Chief Justice simply by an order on grounds of misbehavior or incapacity. The President also assumed authority to appoint additional judges for the Supreme Court without any consultation with the Chief Justice.

The power and authority of the Supreme Court was severely curtailed. The authority of the Supreme Court in matters of appointments to, and control and discipline of, subordinate courts were withdrawn and vested in the President (Article 115 and Article 116). The power of



High Court Division in respect of enforcement of fundamental rights and to issue certain orders and direction was circumscribed.

While the Fourth Amendment established supremacy of the executive over the legislative and judicial organs of the state and thus left no room for opposition to the concentration of power in a single hand, it also barred the dissidents from entering into the political arena through the introduction of a one-party system [Article 117A (1)].

With these constitutional changes and consequent actions<sup>32</sup> there emerged a certain form of state wherein the executive branch retained the supreme authority and the chief executive held the power to control all institutions including the only legitimate political party. Besides, so much power was vested in the coercive apparatuses that those who declined to conform could be "legitimately" forced to do so or silenced forever<sup>33</sup>. All of these were done, we must remember, to fulfill a specific political project.

#### **Political Project of the Authoritarian State**

These measures, as we can see from the preceding discussion, grew out of the need to cope with the failing economy and establish the authority of the ruling classes. Both of these were, in the ultimate analysis, needed for the perpetuation of the capitalist mode of production. The instability and the crisis of authority of the ruling classes were clearly endangering the smooth functioning of the economic process essential for capitalist development in Bangladesh. There were, indeed, some other impediments such as the economic policies of the regime in general and the industrial and investment policies in particular. The ruling classes were on the

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<sup>32</sup>In pursuance of the new constitutional stipulation, Sheikh Mujib declared the formation of the 'national party' -- 'Bangladesh Krishak Srmaik Awami League' (BAKSAL) on February 24, 1975. The organizational structure of the party was announced on June 6, 1975.

<sup>33</sup>The first action taken by the government after the promulgation of the Fourth Amendment is illustrative in this regard. Three days after the Amendment Bill was passed, the office of the opposition daily 'Gonokantha' was seized by the police resulted in the cessation of the publication of the daily during the Mujib regime.

move to dismantle those barriers as well. The radical policy changes in mid-1974 illustrate the ruling classes' desperate attempts in this direction. The changes in economic policies beginning in mid-1974 also opened the avenue for gradual integration with the world capitalist economy - a prerequisite for the development of peripheral capitalism. In addition to these structural imperatives was the specific need to accommodate the new rich class that evolved over the last two years as the direct beneficiary of independence. It is not only that the wealth accumulated by this class needed to be protected but most importantly avenues had to be provided to them for the reproduction of their capital and ensure their further growth. What they really needed and aspired for was a strong state which would come forward to help them by ensuring the much needed stability for their growth and extend financial support as the Pakistani state did in its early days. This class also found it necessary for them to establish a link, not mediated by the state, with the world capitalist economy for their growth. The situation pertaining to the rise and actions of the burgeoning class, which had already come into being 'yet not become fixed'; their hopes and aspirations can be described by borrowing words from Marx's description of French small peasant proprietors between 1848 and 1851:

"They are ... incapable of asserting their class interests in their own name, whether through a parliament or through a convention. They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented. Their representatives must appear simultaneously as their master, as an authority over them, an unrestricted governmental power that protects them other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above" (Marx, 1973:239).

The socialist posture and the democratic pretense of the ruling party were not conducive to the realization of these goals of the new rich.

By the beginning of the year 1974, the bureaucracy overcame the initial setbacks and successfully consolidated its position because of the perpetuation of the colonial state structure and enhanced role of the state in the post-colonial period. The external dependency of the regime helped them gain immense power and phenomenal control over resources. The

internecine quarrel among the different factions of the ruling party, however, was pulling them in different directions. In order to free them from the continuous tension and fulfill the necessary conditions for realization of their potential autonomy, the bureaucracy needed a constitutionally guaranteed supremacy.

Thus by the beginning of 1974, the need to fulfill the conditions of capitalist development, accommodate the new rich class and ensure a highly visible autonomous role for the bureaucracy as well as the ruling party's craving for perpetuation of their power converged at a point. And that is when a new political project of the power-bloc was defined. The democratic pretense became a hindrance in accomplishing the newly defined political project. The legislation of the Special Powers Act in January 1974 is, in one sense, the turning point in this regard. Hence, the constitutional state began to unravel leading to the one-party monolithic state in January 1975. But the question remained whether the 'national party' state would be able to deliver what it was intended for. The political and economic agenda of the party remained unclear until Mujib hinted some features of, what he called the 'second revolution' -- a revolution to bring about 'the democracy of the exploited masses'.

#### Mujib's 'Second Revolution':

Although Mujib delivered a long and emotionally charged impromptu speech on the day the Fourth Amendment Bill was introduced in the Parliament, it was full of rhetoric rather than substance. Barring the constitutional amendments, no reference was made about the concrete agenda for changes in social, political and economic system. As a matter of fact, the complete agenda for reform was never documented and made public. But three speeches delivered by Mujib between March and July, 1975 especially the one on March 26, delineated some principal features of his so-called 'second revolution'<sup>34</sup>. These speeches, like the one of January 25, were

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<sup>34</sup>These speeches were delivered on March 26 in a public gathering in Dhaka, on June 19 in the first meeting of the BAKSAL central committee, and on July 21 to the newly appointed District Governors.

unwritten and often lacked consistency. Yet, a broad outline of the changes Mujib envisaged can be gleaned from these important speeches.

The salient features of the agenda for reforms were: formation of compulsory multi-purpose co-operatives in every village, revamping the local-level administration, abolishing the highly powerful Secretary position, and establishment of tribunals or court at a Thana (i.e. lowest tier of administrative unit) level.

According to Mujib, the compulsory multi-purpose co-operatives would be formed in all 65,000 villages within the next 5 years in phases. Each co-operative would be comprised of 500-1000 families and would bring together all the able-bodied persons of the villages whether they are landowner or landless. The ownership of the land would remain with the current owners, but the produce would be divided into three parts: one to the owner, one to the local co-operative members, and the other to the government.

In terms of revamping the local-level administration, both the prevalent structure of thana and district administration would be dismantled. The responsibility of thana and district administration would be assigned to thana and district administrative council respectively. In contrast to the prevailing structure where the civil servants enjoyed the supreme authority, these administrative units will be headed by the Chairman and the Governor respectively. They will be appointed by the Central Government and the only required qualification would be party membership. Thus anyone including a government official could be appointed to that position, because the government officials were also given the opportunity to be members of the 'national party'. The District Administrative Council was vested with immense authority with regard to planning and implementation of development projects. The District Commissioner, presently the highest ranking civil administrator, would be the Secretary of the Council and work under the

direction of the Governor. The Governor would control all the government departments at the district level including the para-military forces<sup>35</sup>.

Mujib's speeches referred to earlier repeatedly mentioned the other two features without any indication what he was really intending to do. It was reported that Mujib instructed the Ministers to get work done by the Joint Secretaries (Address to the members of the BAKSAL Central Committee, June 19, 1975). He also said, 'secretariat would go', 'red-tapism would be abolished' and 'bureaucratic system would be replaced with people-oriented system'. He, however, never mentioned how and when these would be done. The Fourth Amendment conferred powers to the President to establish court or tribunals at the thana-level and Mujib frequently mentioned that he would exercise his power.

Besides these programs, no reference was made as to how the economy would be disciplined, the ills of corruption and inefficiency in the nationalized sector would be fought and the proper functioning of the economic system would be ensured. One further point involving the composition of the new national party should be mentioned here. In spite of his call for 'national unity' Mujib failed to attract much support from outside his own party men. The old allies of the Awami League -- CPB and NAP (M) enthusiastically joined the bandwagon. But they were not included in the policy-making bodies of the BAKSAL. The 15-member Executive Committee -- highest policy-making body of the organization had no members from outside the former AL. The 115-member Central Committee was dominated by the former AL stalwarts. Of the 28 members who came from outside the AL, 21 were senior bureaucrats.

Despite some elements of egalitarianism, the program of the so-called 'second revolution' was far short of 'a program for socialist transformation of the society' as its protagonists would

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<sup>35</sup>The composition and function of the District Administrative Council was delineated in the District Administration Act, Act No. VI of 1975 and was approved by the Parliament on July 9, 1975 (The Bangladesh Gazette Extraordinary, July 10, 1975). Subsequently 61 District Governors appointed by the President.

want us to believe. Ironically, it was not a radical program of capitalist development either. In other words, the political project envisaged by Mujib -- the political representative of the new rich class, bureaucracy and military -- appears to be different from the political project envisioned by these three social forces. The conjunctural events that created the background and the social forces that pushed for the changes were betrayed. We can also go further and describe the situation as the failure of the political representatives of the social forces they were representing - - a situation described by Gramsci as "a rift" and consequently a "conflict between the representative and represented" (Gramsci, 1971:210).

#### **Organic Crisis and The Beginning of Military Rule**

The need for constituting a new party and charting a new political program became necessary for the prominent social forces of Bangladesh (i.e., the new rich class, bureaucracy and the military) in order to influence a historical moment in their favor. The growing crises reached at a point where the dominant mode of production came under a serious threat. Thus further growth of the emerging social class was in jeopardy. Additionally, the consolidation of the 'legitimate' power of the bureaucracy and the military and establish themselves as the central institution as opposed to the political party required the constitution of the BAKSAL. But at the birth of the party, it became obvious that it was incapable of bearing the responsibility history had put on its shoulders.

With that the crises of the ruling alliance reached its zenith, to the level of an organic crisis wherein "the social classes become detached from their traditional parties. ... The traditional parties in that particular organizational form, with the particular men who constitute, represent, and lead them, are no longer recognized by their class (or fraction of a class) as its expression" (Gramsci, 1971:210).

When such crisis occurs, Gramsci correctly points out, "the immediate situation becomes delicate and dangerous, because the field is open for violent solutions" (Gramsci, *ibid*, emphasis

added). Now the question is: what might that solution be? Following Poulantzas (1979:72) we can say situations like these necessitate a specific reorganization of the power-bloc. This involves a modification of the relation of forces within the power-bloc and establishment of the hegemony of a new class within the power-bloc. It is easily understandable that the establishment of the hegemony of a new class within the power-bloc cannot be achieved overnight, it definitely requires some time. Besides, without direct patronization of state-power, a new class cannot acquire the material basis necessary for establishing its hegemony. As a result, the process of reorganization of the power bloc has to begin with remodification of the relation of forces within the power-bloc. Given the fact that by the time the organic crisis occurs the executive and coercive apparatuses ascend to a preeminent position and wield enormous power, only they can substitute the civilian political party in power. Thus a military-bureaucratic oligarchy seizes state-power with a definite political and economic agenda whose ultimate goal is to establish the hegemony of a new class -- the bourgeoisie.

That is precisely what happened in Bangladesh in 1975 after it gradually became evident that the BAKSAL was failing to adapt itself to the new tasks demanded by the classes it was representing. The military-bureaucratic oligarchy took over state power through a violent coup d'etat on August 15, 1975. In the early morning of that day Sheikh Mujib and about 46 members of his family including a 10-year old son of Mujib, his nephew Fazlul Hoq Moni and his pregnant wife were brutally murdered. Bangladesh had entered into an era of coups and counter coups, and prolonged military rule.

**CHAPTER VII  
MILITARY RULE AND  
EMERGENCE OF THE 'NEW' STATE  
1975-1982**

It has already been pointed out in chapter VI that the need for a new state grew out of the structural imperatives of Bangladesh society and the conjunctural events leading to the multiple crises of the ruling alliance; and that this conjuncture clearly defined a political and economic agenda for the 'new state' -- a state distinctly different from the one that emerged after liberation. The political agenda of the new state, as argued in the previous chapter, was to consolidate the power and authority of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy as the central institution within the state (in a society whose central institution is the state); and the economic objective was to ensure capitalist development in general and specifically to revert to the pre-liberation policy of 'sponsored capitalism', where state would come forward to help private investors with financial support. Following these arguments, in this chapter I will analyze the composition of the state after the coup d'etat of 1975 and the economic agenda of the state under the military-bureaucratic oligarchy in order to corroborate the above contentions.

We must, however, begin with a description of the events that followed the brutal murder of Sheikh Mujib on August 15, 1975. The crises of the ruling alliance not only provided the necessary conjuncture for the elements in favor of capitalist development to launch their assault, but also to the radical elements to bid for state power. Although the 'coup de main' (surprise attack)<sup>1</sup> of August 15 came from the conservative elements of the army, the radical elements were on the wings, waiting for a time when the balance of class and other contradictions seemed appropriate to take action towards a revolutionary seizure of power. And added to these forces

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<sup>1</sup>The term is borrowed from Marx's description of the February revolution of 1848 in France (Marx, 1974:149).



were the loyalists of the Mujib regime, and status quoists -- who were primarily concerned about chain of command and hierarchy of the army. With the downfall of the Mujib regime the contradictions between different social forces shifted to the arena of military actions -- coups and counter coups -- until a Bangladeshi version of Louis Bonaparte, Major General Ziaur Rahman was found.

**Advent of Ziaur Rahman:  
A Bonapartist Solution?**

The pre-dawn 'coup de main' of August 15, 1975 was engineered by about 47 army officers of the ranks of major, captain and lieutenants. Of them, six Majors were on the command. There were: Syed Farook Rahman, Khandaker Abdur Rashid, Abdul Aziz Pasha, Sharful Islam Dalim, Bazlul Huda, and Shamsul Islam Nur. Captains, Khairuzzaman, and Abdul Majed; and Lieutenants, Muslehuddin, Kismet Hashem, and Nazmul Ansar also played prominent roles. Not all of the coup leaders were in service at the time of the coup, some of them were retired, some lost jobs on charges of corruption, some were discharged on disciplinary grounds<sup>2</sup>.

The planning for the coup began as early as March, 1975. Farook Rahman, one of the key planners, met then Deputy Chief of Army Staff, General Ziaur Rahman on March 20, 1975 and hinted their intention to make 'some changes necessary for the betterment of the country' ( Rashid and Farook, 1983). Zia declined to be involved with anything like this, but said 'if you want to do something, the junior officers should do it themselves.' Zia neither reported it to the

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<sup>2</sup>Major Sarful Islam Dalim, for example, was discharged from the army on disciplinary ground. It is alleged that his dismissal was undue and was a result of an untoward incident involving an Awami League leader. The story goes that Major Dalim's wife was insulted and intimidated by two sons of a close associate of Mujib, Gazi Golam Mostafa, in a social gathering. Following the incident, Chief of Army Staff Major General Safiullah went to Mujib and placed the matter before him requesting some actions against those involved. Mujib, however, expressed his annoyance and later in August 1974 dismissed Dalim from the service.

President, nor attempted to stop them from getting involved in such activities<sup>3</sup>. The coup-planners then contacted a section of discontented AL leaders. Most prominent of them was Khandaker Mushtaq Ahmed, then-foreign trade minister of the cabinet. Khandaker Abdur Rashid, who happened to be a nephew of Mushtaq, played the key role in making the arrangements for a meeting between the coup-planners and Mushtaq in first week of August. Subsequently, three meetings took place -- on 11th, 13th and 14th of August. Contacts were also made with another prominent AL leader, Taheruddin Thakur, then-Information minister; and a prominent former foreign service official -- Mahbubul Alam Chasi<sup>4</sup>.

With the blessings of a section of AL leaders, the junior army officers went ahead and successfully executed their plan. Following the coup Khandaker Mushtaq Ahmed was installed

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<sup>3</sup>The coup-makers' repeated claim that Zia was aware, if not well-informed, about the coup has been contradicted by Zia supporters. Zia, however, maintained a dubious silence regarding such allegations during his entire lifetime. Maj. Gen. Safiullah, then Chief of Army Staff also came to this conclusion based on Ziaur Rahman's reaction on the morning of the August 15 that Zia was ready for a situation like this (for Safiullah's comment see his interview with Weekly Jonomot, published from London, August 28 and September 3, 1987. Safiullah was serving as the Bangladesh High Commissioner in UK during the time of this interview). However, Safiullah's comment should be taken with great caution, because Zia and Safiullah had serious personal rivalry. Although Zia was senior to Safiullah, the latter was appointed as the Chief of Army Staff due to his close relations with the Mujib regime.

<sup>4</sup>Involvement of this 'dubious trio', as they were called by their colleagues during the war of liberation, deserves special mention. During the liberation war while Mushtaq was serving as the Foreign Minister of the exile government, Taheruddin Thakur was his special assistant and Chasi was the Foreign Secretary. All of them were seriously discontented with the leadership and were allegedly involved with the US move in mid-1971 to bring an end to the war keeping the integrity of Pakistan. After the independence Chasi was appointed the Vice Chairman of the Bangladesh Academy of Rural Development (BARD), Mustaque and Thakur found positions in cabinet. Whether this 'trio' maintained their close connection with the US intelligence and acted in 1975 as per their instruction remains a mystery to date. If we take into account the presence of another character of this drama, in both places and in both times (i.e. in India in 1971 and in Bangladesh in 1975), plausibility of a US role in the coup cannot be discounted altogether. The person is Philip Cherry, a senior CIA staff. Cherry was in charge of the CIA station in New Delhi from June 1971 and took charge of Dhaka station of the CIA in August 1974. Although these circumstantial evidences indicate a possible US involvement, there is no hard evidence to support it. Nevertheless, if that is the case, the initiative might have come from the political leaders and the army officers' narration of the events are simply cover up for the political leaders and their big allies.

as the President and a cabinet was hastily organized. The cabinet consisted entirely of AL leaders. In fact, 11 of the 19 ministers and 8 of the 9 ministers of state of the Mujib cabinet joined the government. No military officer was included in the cabinet. But the real power remained with the coup-makers, especially six majors who were commanding the armored and infantry regiments.

The putsch came as a surprise not only to the public but also to the senior military officers because most of them were unaware of such a move. Some of them were outraged at being the ignorant spectators of events. Nevertheless, chiefs of three services (i.e. the Army, Navy and Air Force), police, BDR and Rakkhi Bahini endorsed the coup in their speeches over radio. Most of the senior army officers were more concerned about the 'chain of command' than the killing of Mujib and unconstitutional acts of the junior officers.

Clearly, three centers of power emerged out of the coup: constitutionally the President and the civilian cabinet remained the supreme authority -- even though they had very little control over the situation; the army as a whole remained under the command of its regular senior officers, who were caught off guard by the coup; and the third source of authority was the putsch-makers themselves -- hiding in the safety of the Presidential palace (Bongobhavan) with loyal soldiers they were instructing the President on all matters. Soon after the coup junior officers were asked by the army command to return to their normal duties. They declined to do so because they feared a court martial for breaking the chain of command.

Besides the chain of command question, the political affiliation of these majors became another source of conflict among the army officers. After the take over the majors declared Bangladesh an Islamic state. Khandaker Mustaque, however, did not mention any thing of that sort. Yet, it was known to the army command that the putsch-makers belong to the conservative section of the army. A large number of army officers, especially those who actively participated

in the liberation war, found this extremely uncomfortable. They viewed it as a return of the 'Pakistani' army.

While confusion, chaos and tension were running high in the cantonment and in the Presidential palace, the Mushtaq government took some important decisions: it repealed a part of the Constitution which was related to the formation and the functioning of the BAKSAL<sup>5</sup>; it rescinded the scheme to make changes in local government (i.e. to divide Bangladesh into 61 districts and run by district Governors); it annulled the Presidential Order no. 9 of 1972 (which enabled the government to dismiss any government officer without assigning any reason); it merged the Rakkhi Bahini with the Army; and it withdrew ban on some of the newspapers imposed under the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution.

Ten days after the coup a major shake up in the military and civil bureaucracy took place. The Chief of Army Staff, Major General Safiullah was replaced by Major General Ziaur Rahman. The Chief of Air Force A.K. Khandaker was replaced by Air Vice Marshal M.G. Tawab. A.B.S. Safdar was appointed as Director General of Defense Forces Intelligence (DFI). Mahbub Alam Chasi was appointed as the Principal Secretary to the President. Shafiul Azam became the Cabinet Secretary, Keramat Ali became the Establishment Secretary and Kazi Anwarul Hoq became an advisor to the President<sup>6</sup>. General (Rtd.) Osmani was appointed as the Defense advisor to the President, the post created to handle the internal feuds of the army. Excepting Zia and Osmani, none of the new appointees had been involved in the liberation war. In fact, most of them were involved with Pakistan administration in different capacities. The only freedom fighter who benefitted from these elevations was Brigadier Khaled Musharraf. He was

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<sup>5</sup>The Presidential form of government, however, was kept intact.

<sup>6</sup>Some more reshuffling in the administration took place in and around this time. All of these changes brought back the once-ostracized pro-Pakistani bureaucrats. For example, Salehuddin, who had been Home Secretary of East Pakistan provincial government in 1971 was brought back from a foreign job and appointed Home Secretary. Tabarak Hossain, a close associate of Yahya Khan who was dumped as an OSD, became the Foreign Secretary of the new regime.

elevated to the position of Chief of General Staff. Hossain Mohammed Ershad (who was in India for military training at that time) and Kazi Golam Dostagir were also elevated in the ranks, and Ershad became the Deputy Chief of Staff. Both of them, we must recall, were repatriated to Bangladesh from Pakistan after the liberation war. These actions were welcomed by the section of the army which was repatriated from Pakistan, but caused fury among the freedom fighters and Mujib loyalists. They, quite appropriately, saw it as the total return of the Pakistani command structure. Thus on the one hand a conflict between the junior officers who staged the coup and the senior officers who were in command surfaced, while on the other hand a tension between the former freedom fighters and the repatriates mounted. The Mujib loyalists and the radical elements had one thing in common: opposition to the new regime, who were 'pro-Pakistani'.

Khandaker Mushtaq, in the meantime, sent envoys to different countries including the USSR and India to apprise them that no major changes in foreign policy would be brought in. India allegedly assembled a large number of soldiers along Bangladesh's borders. The air was thick with rumors that India might intervene. In order to diminish the possibility of any pro-Mujib political move, the government began to arrest the AL leaders who either declined to join the government or was not liked by the putsch-makers. By the end of the month, some 35 prominent AL leaders including Acting-President of the government in exile Nazrul Islam, PM of the exile government Tajuddin Ahmed, PM of the ousted Mujib regime Mansoor Ali, a minister of ousted government Kamruzzaman, and the political secretary of Sheikh Mujib, Tofail Ahmed, were all taken into custody.

In subsequent days, it became evident that nobody was in control of the country. Mushtaq in collusion with the bureaucrats was trying to establish his authority; the majors especially two of them (Rashid and Farook) were trying to exert their power; and senior army officers were annoyed by Mushtaq's 'mistreatment' and attempted division among them. Mushtaq, convinced

by the fact that a change was imminent made some desperate attempts to rally public support behind him and indemnify himself and his associates against possible punishments in future for their crimes including the killing of Mujib and his family members.

In order to legitimize the August coup on grounds of economic hardship of the people, he appointed an Economic Task Force on September 12. The Task Force completed its report within a record time of twelve days. The report was then incorporated in a White Paper that was intended to show how miserable the situation became under the former regime. But, ironically it failed to stir any support for the regime as it failed to recommend something different from the former regime. As a matter of fact, the report even used the verbiage of the former regime. Mushtaq then addressed the nation on October 3. He promised that the restrictions on political activity would be lifted from August 15, 1976 and the parliamentary elections would be held on February 28, 1977. This move was acclaimed by some quarters, but a statement contained in his speech infuriated senior army officers. That involved praise for the junior officers. Mushtaq's reference to the Majors as 'the valiant sons of the sun' was seen by the seniors as an approval to the continued arrogance of the Majors. After these steps he issued an ordinance on September 26, 1975 to indemnify everyone involved in August coup<sup>7</sup>. A meeting of the members of the parliament was then summoned on October 16 at Bangabhaban. But the meeting could not proceed because a parliament member declined to address Mushtaq as 'President' and questioned the legality of Mushtaq's assumption of presidency.

By the end of October, it was apparent that the regime has no support-base at all. It is at that time the status-quoists begin to plan a counter-offensive. Led by Brigadier Khaled Mosharraf and Colonel Safaet Jamil the group hastily drew a plan for takeover. The plan went

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<sup>7</sup>"The Indemnity Ordinance 1975' (Ordinance No. XLX of 1975) was promulgated "to restrict the taking of any legal or other proceedings in respect of certain acts or things done in connection with, or in preparation or execution of any plan for, or steps necessitating, the historical change and the Proclamation of Martial Law on the morning of the 15th August, 1975" (The Bangladesh Gazette Extraordinary, September 26, 1975).

into effect after the midnight of November 2: Ziaur Rahman was put under house arrest and armored regiments were moved to take over control of 'Bangabhavan' from the majors<sup>8</sup>. The majors initially vowed to fight till the last in response to a request by Khaled Musharraf over telephone, but by the early morning of November 3 they changed their minds and negotiated a compromise that would allow them to leave the country. The coup was ill-planned, hastily organized and was strictly limited in its objective -- bringing down the arrogant Majors. It was after the Majors expulsion that the coup-makers begin to think about the changes necessary to establish their total control over the army. The next day (November 4) they forced Ziaur Rahman to resign as Chief of Army Staff and compelled Mushtaq to appoint Khaled to that position. On Mushtaq's insistence, the cabinet met on the evening and approved these actions. But even before the meeting was over came the horrifying news: four prominent AL leaders, Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, Monsoor Ali and Kamruzzman -- had been brutally murdered by some army men in the early hours of November 3 inside Dhaka jail. This news dramatically changed the entire situation. A section of coup leaders angrily demanded the resignation of Mushtaq, and the Cabinet. They brought the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem to appoint as the President. Accordingly, A.S.M. Sayem was appointed President at 1:00 am on November 5.

During these three days, a number of events took place outside the Bangabhavan where the coup leaders were involved in protracted negotiations with the Majors and then unnecessary and ridiculous mockery of constitutionality (for example drafting and issuing a Presidential

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<sup>8</sup>Some analysts, for example Zillur Rahman Khan (1984), characterized this coup as a pro-Mujib coup. This interpretation is very easy to find in Bangladesh. Some concurrent events and massive propaganda between November 4 and 7 against Khaled had helped to characterize the coup as such. The presence of Khaled's mother and a brother in a pro-Mujib demonstration on November 4 is one of the reasons why common people believed it to be a pro-Mujib move. But I have found very little evidence to support this notion despite the fact that some Mujib loyalists were involved in the coup. Khaled himself was concerned with restoration of the chain of command in army.

Proclamation that would enable the Chief Justice to become the President instead of the Speaker of the Parliament as stipulated by the Constitution). Most significant of these was, of course, the killings inside Dhaka jail. The other one was the massive pro-Mujib demonstration in Dhaka on November 4 led by Khaled Mosharraf's mother and a brother, which gave the impression that AL rule was on its way back. The killings were, as it became clear later, designed by the Majors as a contingency plan to resist any AL comeback and was done with the approval of Mushtaq. The Majors came to terms with Khaled's forces only after they became sure that the plan had been executed.

Until the morning of November 6 when A.S.M. Sayem was sworn in and addressed the nation, people were in dark as to who was in charge. In situations like these, rumors abound. The air was again thick with rumors: a section of pro-AL army men in collusion with India had taken over, an Indian intervention is imminent. Whether or not the rumor was deliberately created is difficult to determine. But the consequence was evident: a complete rejection of the coup. Nationalistic feelings ran high and everyone began to talk about a possible retaliation by freedom fighters in the Army. "The question of national sovereignty and independence acquired a new dimension and the fear of Indian hegemony loomed large" (Ahmed, 1988:79).

The radical forces who were sitting on the wings for about three months for an opportune moment to strike and bring down the entire 'exploitative social system' decided to act now. On November 5, the Biplobi Sainik Sangstha (Revolutionary Soldiers Union), an organization of non-commissioned soldiers supported by JSD and led by Lt. Col. Abu Taher, called upon the soldiers to revolt against the army officers who were exploiting the soldiers for their "own selfish and ambitious scrambles for power through staging one putsch after another" (A leaflet distributed by the Sangstha on November 5 and 6)<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup>The leaflet also contained 12-point demands of the sepoy which included a call for changing the structure as well as functions of the army; abolition of colonial practices such as Batman system; recognition to the Revolutionary Sainik Sangstha as the central policy-making body of



The soldiers were moved by the call. "On the night of November 6, the soldiers began to rise, with a force that was to shake the State in Bangladesh, in the first soldiers' mutiny on such a scale since the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857" (Lindquist, 1977:16). At least 34 officers including Khaled Musharraf, some of their wives and children and nearly 100 enlisted men were killed<sup>10</sup>. Ziaur Rahman was freed by the sepoys. On the morning of November 7, troops from Dhaka Cantonment poured into Dhaka city, paraded through the city streets shouting slogans and firing their weapons into the air. An unprecedented situation emerged as common people and the soldiers participated in processions. There were, however, two different political strands involved: one that was in favor of the 'unity among the soldiers and the people', while the other in support of Mushtaq and against India.

In view of the organizers of the soldiers' uprising it was a revolution, a revolution they dreamt of for three years. On many counts, such as a definite objective to bring about a social change, dedication of the organizers and spontaneity it resembled a revolution<sup>11</sup>; but it seriously lacked two principal elements of a revolutionary uprising: a powerful leadership and an organized mass movement outside the army to link up with. In order to fill the vacuum of leadership the

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the army and entrusting the supreme authority on this organization; immediate release of all political prisoners; confiscation of properties of all corrupt officials and individuals; ending discriminations between the officer and the sepoys in the armed forces; and increasing the salaries of sepoys.

<sup>10</sup>The conflict between the soldiers and their officers spread to some other cantonments in subsequent days resulting indiscriminate killings. In Rangpur cantonment more than 15 officers were killed on November 8. Later it spread to naval bases as well. It is reported that in an uprising in the Navy between 13 and 15 November, 7 officials and 40 others were killed in Chittagong.

<sup>11</sup>The opening sentence of the leaflet distributed by the Biplobi Sainik Sangstha on November 5 and 6 termed the uprising a revolution and succinctly described the goal: "Our revolution is not for changing the leadership only; this revolution is for the interests of the poor class." The leaflet further said, "For many years we have served as the soldiers of the rich classes. The rich class have used us for their interests.... 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."

organizers fell back on Ziaur Rahman, "an ambitious and seemingly non-political man who lacked a progressive personality" but had popularity among the soldiers as a patriot and war-hero<sup>12</sup>.

At 5:30 am of the morning of November 7, Col. Abu Taher met Zia and took him to the radio station. Zia then broadcast a brief speech proclaiming Martial Law and declaring himself as the Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA). Then he went back to the Cantonment to meet other officers. In spite of repeated requests from Taher, Zia declined to attend a public gathering organized by the JSD and Biplobi Sainik Sangstha at the Shahid Minar (Martyr's Memorial) at 10 am. He was brought back to the Radio station again around 10 am where he confronted Taher and excited Sepoys who insisted that Zia sign a copy of the 12-point demands as a gesture of his commitment to the demands. He complied with their request but refrained from making any reference to it when he spoke again to the nation. He, instead, appealed to the troops to return at once to their duties. The differences between Taher and Zia began to become obvious. About half an hour later, Zia met General Osmani, General Khalil, Air Vice Marshal M.G. Tawab, M.H. Khan, and Mahbub Alam Chasi at his headquarters. Col. Taher was also present in the meeting. It was decided in this meeting that Sayem would continue to be the President. It was also decided that for reasons of precedence Sayem should also be the CMLA. Zia was asked to be one of the three DCMLAs. Although the meeting decided to release all political prisoners, which met one of the 12 demands, it categorically declined to talk about the 12 point demands as such. The decision to release political prisoners was extremely beneficial to JSD, for all its key leaders were in jail at the time of coup. But what became clear after this meeting was that Zia had taken the advantage of the situation and now began to shake off the coup-makers. The day which began with extreme hope for the revolutionaries ended with utter defeat. The only achievement was the release of its party leaders (i.e. A.S.M. Abdur Rab , Major Jalil) from jail.

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<sup>12</sup>This is how the JSD later described Zia and justified their decision to bring Zia in the forefront (see Sammyabad, the underground party journal of the JSD, No.4, February 23, 1976).

Upon their release JSD leaders denounced Zia and asked the sepoy's not to surrender their arms until their demands were met, while Zia ordered the soldiers to return to barracks, surrender the weapons looted from the armories, and refrain from attacking officers. On November 15, 1975 a martial law regulation was promulgated, evidently aimed at JSD activists, providing for a death sentence for any one preaching and encouraging any mutinous actions. Eight days later, JSD leaders were again arrested on charges of sedition. Col. Taher was arrested on November 24 on charges of mutiny and treason. And thus ended the revolution<sup>13</sup>.

Eighty-four days of chaos and confusion, coups and counter-coups, killings and counter-killings, conspiracy and uprising finally paved the way for the rise of Ziaur Rahman as the strong-man<sup>14</sup>. A man who neither engineered a coup nor participated in one became the ultimate beneficiary of all the changes. Contending groups within the army fought each other only to hire a 'frontman' -- Zia -- who cleverly took advantage of the situation. In the process they exposed and exhausted themselves. The rise of Zia quite appropriately reminds us of the situation in France between 1848-1851 leading to the emergence of Louis Bonaparte; 'all fell on their knees, equally mute and equally impotent, before the rifle butt' (Marx, 1974:236), and all that seemed to be achievements 'vanished like a series of optical illusions before the spell of a man whom even his enemies do not claim to be a magician' (Marx, 1974:151).

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<sup>13</sup>The arrests came right after an attempt to stage a coup on November 24. Seven months after the arrests, 33 persons including Col. Taher and the JSD leaders were charged with treason. 22 of them were members of the defense services, remaining 11 were prominent JSD leaders. In a trial held in camera Col. Taher was sentenced to death, Jalil and Rab got life imprisonment and 14 others were sentenced to imprisonment for various terms. On July 21, 1976 Taher was hanged at dawn in Dhaka Central Jail. Few sporadic actions of Taher's followers, nevertheless, continued even after Taher's arrest. In December, 1975 'disturbances' were reported from Chittagong naval base and in March, 1976 Chittagong Brigade experienced a significant movement.

<sup>14</sup>On November 19, 1976 the post of CMLA was handed over to Zia by Sayem in the 'national interests' through a Presidential Proclamation. Later on April 21, 1977 Sayem relinquished the office of President because of 'failing health' and Zia became President as well.

These eighty-four days, however, not only brought Zia to the helm but also brought back the bureaucrats who perfected in leading a state capable of navigating through rough waters towards the goal of the capitalist shore. The bureaucracy as an institution already secured a prominent position in the last days of the Mujib regime, and now it found leaders asserting that authority in collusion with the army. In other words, the final act of the transformation of Bangladesh state began. The state, we can say borrowing Marx's (1974: 149) words, began to "return to its ancient form, the unashamedly simple rule of military sabre and the clerical cowl."

**'Rule of Military Sabre  
and the Clerical Cowl'**

In his first speech after the November 7 uprising, President Sayem dissolved the Parliament, suspended the constitution and appointed three DCMLAs. The country was divided into 9 martial law zones and nine Zonal Martial Law Administrators were also appointed. Excepting the President, who himself was nominally in charge, the core of the central authority was composed of military officials.

Later, a seven-member Council of Advisors was appointed on November 26, 1975. Four bureaucrats and technocrats were added to the three DCMLAs. Subsequently the council was expanded to double its size, but it maintained, "its essential character -- it was full of 'non-political' bureaucrats and technocrats, who served in the regimes of Ayub and Yahya Khan during the Pakistani colonial rule, and who knew the art of running a civil-military bureaucratic regime" (Jahan, 1980:210). The number of advisers then increased to 24, and of these 10 were from civil bureaucracy (and not surprisingly, former CSP officers), 3 military officers and the rest were technocrats. It was not only the numbers of bureaucrats that demonstrated their dominance but also their positions within the cabinet that reflected their control. Ahmed (1980) noted that the important ministries such as Planning, Finance, Industries, Agriculture were headed by bureaucrats. Thus, their orientations had a significant impact on the future course of Bangladesh.

The case of Shafiul Azam would help us understand the point. Shafiul Azam, who continued to serve as Chief Secretary of East Pakistan during the liberation war, left the civil service sometime in 1972 because of his strong opposition to the government's nationalization policy. He was brought back during the Mushtaq regime as Cabinet Secretary. During Ziaur Rahman's rule he initially headed the Planning Commission and was then elevated to the position of President's special adviser. And became "the design architect of Bangladesh's move toward privatization and private sector development" (Humphrey, 1990:59, fn 5).

In 1981 -- the year Zia was assassinated in an abortive coup -- there were 24 cabinet ministers and of them, 6 were military bureaucrats, 5 civil servants, 6 technocrats, 4 businessmen, 1 landlord, and 2 lawyers.

It was not only that the bureaucrats were occupying cabinet memberships, they successfully usurped positions in public enterprises and the planning apparatus, and established their firm control over the institutions responsible for implementing government policies. Public corporations, Ahmed (1980) informs us, became the exclusive preserve of bureaucrats, both civil and military. By the end of 1975, of 38 public corporations 11 were headed by former CSP officers, 2 police officers, 5 military officers, 6 were former EPCS officials and the rest were other civil service cadres. In fact, an account of 1976 shows that there was not even a single head of a public enterprise who came from outside the civil-military bureaucracy. A World Bank report noted that "of 76 chief executives appointed in public sector corporations in 1972, not one was in place 3 years later. Quite a few emigrated" (IBRD, 1984:140).

In the face of opposition and virtual non-cooperation from the bureaucracy, and because of disillusionment with the political regime, the original members of the Planning Commission had left before the coup d'etat of August 15, 1975. With the changes in the apex of state power the Planning Commission experienced changes in terms of its composition and functioning. The National Economic Council (NEC), a colonial vestige abolished during the Mujib-regime, was

revived and accorded enormous power. A five-member Executive Committee of the NEC was constituted with civil-military bureaucrats as its members. The Planning Commission, an eight-member body was completely dominated by civil bureaucrats.

The importance of the Commission itself was reduced drastically by reducing the status of deputy chairman, members and consequently the others down the structure. The external resources division had been reorganized several times. The monitoring function was taken away from the sectoral divisions of the Commission; the administrative division assumed usual bureaucratic control over the functioning and organizing of sector divisions. Essentially the Commission had lost its planning capability in respect to plan formulation, monitoring implementation and even evaluation due to an increase in intervention by aid donors in these areas as well as by authoritarian decision making emerged at the top. The function of Planning Commission had been infructuous, often it had been used for post-facto approval. The bureaucratic control over planning mechanism also ensured control over scarce resources which, quite naturally, had far-reaching consequences. As we all know, planning process is ultimately about allocating the resources at the disposal of the state. I will come back to this point in a while; before that a few other points need to be mentioned.

During the period between 1975 and 1981 the control of the bureaucracy also extended to the implementation level. Islam's (1988) calculations, based on government publications, show that "the Investment Board of the government, which was the highest authority for implementing development strategy, consisted of 15 members, and except for one member all of them were bureaucratic elites during the Zia period" (Islam, 1988:148).

Added to these were strengthening the supremacy of the executive and militarization of administration. Despite the military-regime's so-called 'civilianization' -- meaning general elections, appointment of civilian politicians in larger numbers in the cabinet, and installation of a parliament -- the supreme authority remained with the chief executive, the President. The

power and authority was enhanced in subsequent years. The Second Proclamation (Fifteenth Amendment) Order, 1978 among other things made the parliament completely subservient to the President. The Order made it possible for the President to appoint some one as PM who appeared to be commanding the support of a majority of MPs. Which means, he was not obliged to appoint as PM the leader of the party that wins a majority of the seats in Parliament. Furthermore, he could appoint one-fifth of his cabinet from among people who are not members of Parliament; he may enter into treaties with foreign countries without informing Parliament if he considers such action 'in the national interest'; and that he could withhold his assent from any bill passed by Parliament (Second Proclamation Order No. IV of 1978, December 18, 1978).

The military bureaucrats, during this period, increasingly began to occupy high-ranking positions in civil administration and foreign services. On March 1, 1979, 25 of 625 officers of senior policy pool (SPP)<sup>15</sup> were military officers. At that time, 6 of 20 Secretaries came from military. In June 1980, of 101 senior officers (i.e. Chairman, Managing Director, Director, General Manager) of public sector enterprises 42 were military officers or retired military personnel. 10 of 20 top public corporations were headed by military officers. At the beginning of 1980 the number of military officers appointed in civilian positions (such as Secretary, Ambassador) was 41, but by the end of the year the number went up to 79. Of them, 32 were in diplomatic missions abroad, 7 were ambassadors.

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<sup>15</sup>Senior Policy Pool was constituted by Zia-regime in March 1979 in order to streamline the bureaucracy and open the policy-making positions to new civil servants as opposed to former CSP system practiced in Pakistan-era. The pool consists of all the posts of Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Joint Secretary and Additional Secretary. Qualifications for the membership of the pool were: 10 years of service in class I posts, less than 45 years of age, and successful completion of promotion tests conducted by Bangladesh Public Service Commission (Memos of Cabinet Secretariat, Establishment Division No. ED(IC) SII-6/78/5 dated March 1, 1979 and ED(IC) SII-6/78/20 dated April 9, 1979).

Occupying the key-positions and control over the planning and implementation mechanism accorded the civil-military bureaucracy immense control over the scarce resources, which they used for their own benefit. Huque and Ahkter (1989) quite appropriately noted that

"the military rulers of Bangladesh have consistently tried to keep the army and the bureaucracy satisfied by granting additional facilities to them. Armed forces personnel have received rations (foodstuffs) at very low prices, free furnished accommodation and attractive fringe benefits. On retirement or resignation from active service, officers have been rewarded with lucrative commercial facilities and contracts or appointments to important and well-paid administrative positions" (Huque and Ahkter, 1989:174).

In order to enhance their benefits and coercive abilities, the military rulers had increased the defense allocation substantially. "The defense budget of left over from the Mujib-regime for 1975-76 was immediately revised upwards, with the original allocation raised from Tk. 750 million (7% of the national budget) to Tk. 1109.34 million (20% of the national budget)" (Islam, 1988:121). The increase, however, was not limited to the defense expenditure alone. But rather was accompanied by increase in general administration and police. In the first two years of military rule, "there was an increase in defense and civil administration expenditure by over Taka 2 billion against the increase of less than 1 billion in the total expenditure on all other heads taken together" (Hossain, 1979:34). The following table (Table 7.1) shows the revenue expenditure of Bangladesh Government on defense, police and justice, and general administration heads between the years 1973/74-1980/81. These figures, however, do not reflect the total expenditure on these heads because some expenditure for these purposes were concealed under other heads. It is alleged that money spent to build cantonments (which grew quite remarkably) were covered either under development budget or included under civil works head. Yet, these figures provide us with a clear impression of how resources were used for the benefit of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy. The expenditure on education is also included in this table to show the priorities of the regime in a country whose literacy rate was below 20 percent.



Table 7.1

Revenue Expenditure of Bangladesh Government  
on Selected Heads: 1973/74 - 1980/81

(In Crore Taka)

Year	General Admn.	Police & Judiciary	Defense	Education & Sports
1973/74	32.21	24.51	41.96	64.82
1974/75	35.15	22.45	70.85	82.21
1975/76	24.66	66.38	110.93	85.45
1976/77	35.33	87.10	151.39	98.21
1977/78	38.69	96.59	144.41	126.50
1978/79	47.57	125.86	207.21	154.19
1979/80	343.10	131.20	178.20	177.20
1980/81	292.00	77.30	211.80	209.80
1981/82	381.80	213.40	274.20	234.90

Source: Statistical Pocket Book of Bangladesh  
1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982  
Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics  
Statistical Division, Planning Ministry, GPRB

Besides these macro-statistics some micro-level data would help us understand the astounding amount of money spent on military personnel. According to Vivekananda (1986:324), in 1977 the regime was spending \$1606 per soldier. In 1979, it went up to \$1697. We should recall here that per capita income of Bangladesh population at that time was less than \$100. Available statistics further show that during the period of 1976-80, annually Bangladesh spent about \$593 per person on military (SIPRI, 1981).

One can easily discern a discrimination in favor of defense service personnel in terms of resource allocation. One glaring example is the food distributed under Public Foodgrain Distribution System (PFDS). As I have mentioned previously, Army, Police and other para-military forces included in Essential Priority (EP) group receive a larger share than any other section of the society, and the share of the EP group in PFDS offtake increased from 13 percent in 1972/73 to 39 percent in 1980/81 (World Bank, 1985:35). Additionally, they receive it at

significantly lower prices. The price of rationed rice for EP group was Tk 58 per maund (that is about 80 lbs.) since July 1975 to date, while it was Tk 229 per maund for SR (Statutory Rationing), MR (Modified Rationing), and other groups. There was a gradual increase of price of rationed commodities between 1973 and 1985. In fact, the cumulative increase in ration price of rice was 564 percent. This affected all categories except the EP<sup>16</sup>.

Following the coups and counter coups of 1975 the numerical strength of the defense forces and members of law-enforcing agencies increased at a spectacular rate. The number of total defense forces personnel (including Air Force and Navy) was about 26,500 in 1974, which grew to 63,000 in 1976; by 1982, the number reached 80,000. Army expanded from 5 divisions in 1975 to 8 divisions in 1981. Within first three years of military takeover, a new army division was created. Paramilitary forces grew from 29,000 to about 46,000. The strength of Police force increased from about 40,000 to about 70,000, with a combat-ready Special Police Force of 12,500 men (Maniruzzman, 1980:203).

With the attainment of prominent positions in different levels of administration the civil and military bureaucracy successfully consolidated itself as the central institution within the state. Along with the consolidation of power the oligarchy moved forward to implement its economic project: to ensure the capitalist development in general and specifically to revert to the pre-liberation policy of 'sponsored capitalism', where state would come forward to help private investors with financial supports.

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<sup>16</sup>In December 1975, government increased the price of rationed commodities drastically (Memo Nos. 2372-MFCS-II and 2373-MFCS-II dated December 17, 1975, Ministry of Food and Civil Supplies, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh). But the Secretary of the department issued a separate memo (No. 2374/87(91)MFCS-II dated December 17, 1975) saying that 'the revised issue price of the commodities under reference shall not be applied to Army, Navy, BDR, jail Staff, Ansar staff and embodied Ansar and Police.' He reiterated that they will continue to get their rations at the existing rates (i.e. rates prevailing before 20.12.75).

### Economic Project of the New State

In order to ensure a capitalist development the military regime took a number of significant steps during the period of 1975-1981. These steps can be broadly summarized as follows:

- a) legalization of 'black money';
- b) disinvestment/denationalization<sup>17</sup> of state-owned enterprises;
- c) raising and subsequently abolishing the ceiling on private investment;
- d) withdrawal of restrictions on private foreign investment; and
- e) providing credit to private entrepreneurs.

One of the first acts of the military regime was to legalize the wealth earned by the new rich class through a variety of ways. The military regime which claimed that the misery under Mujib regime was due to unprecedented corruption and rampant pilferage of public property, and that they have taken over to bring an end to this corruption, soon after assuming power decided to provide an opportunity to legalize wealth earned through 'unknown' means. Avenues were provided to legalize what is called black money in Bangladesh. By the end of the year 1975, the regime declared that it would not ask any questions of any intending investor about the source of his wealth. The government decided that "even for the purpose of income tax and wealth tax, the amount so declared will not be taken into account at all and assessment would be made under the normal law as usual, as if no declaration of such funds were made, if the funds were utilized for the purchase of the disinvested units or for new investments before 30 June 1978" (Weekly Holiday, January 18, 1976). The significance of the decision can be

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<sup>17</sup>The terms 'disinvestment' and 'denationalization' are used here to refer policy measures taken by the government towards what is commonly known as privatization. In the context of Bangladesh, in the industrial sector "disinvestment refers to the process of selling off abandoned units through public tenders, while denationalization refers to the return of the units to their Bangladeshi former owners on administratively determined ground" (Sobhan and Ahmed, 1984:7).

appreciated if one takes into consideration the estimated amount of black money accumulated by the new rich class after liberation. According to a weekly newspaper, during the three and a half years of Mujib regime at least Tk 800 crore had been accumulated by this new rich class (Weekly Holiday, January 18, 1976). The newspaper maintained that people involved in textile trade alone made an illegal profit of Tk 138.50 crore (ibid). This estimate, I believe, was a very conservative one. The decision, of course, was to placate the new rich class and their allies.

It is at this time the government delineated the basic principles of its economic policies.

Shafiul Azam, then-Commerce Minister stated that

"the government is ready to extend all possible support to the private sector for utilizing the full potential of the private entrepreneurs in stepping up of the productive economic activities in the country" (The Bangladesh Observer, December 7, 1975).

The government declared a 'Revised Investment Policy' on December 7, 1975. Though the policy was periodically amended, it remained the basic policy statement and guideline until a completely new and more liberalized policy was declared in June 1982 by Ershad-regime. Under the revised policy of 1975 the ceiling on private investment was raised to Tk 100 million. The new policy opened opportunity for joint ventures between public corporations and private investors indigenous or foreign in all but eight categories.<sup>18</sup> The moratorium on nationalization, which had earlier been raised to 15 years, was altogether deleted.<sup>19</sup> Tax holidays and other incentives introduced earlier were reinforced. The policy also announced the government's intention to set

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<sup>18</sup>The eight categories reserved exclusively for the public sector were: arms, ammunition and allied defense equipment; atomic energy; jute (sacking, hessian, and carpet backing); textiles (excluding handlooms and specialized textiles); sugar; air transport; telephone, telephone cables, telegraph, and wireless apparatus; generation and distribution of electricity.

<sup>19</sup>The policy stated that "In view of the misgivings that has been created in the minds of the investors by the reference in the New Investment Policy (of 1974) to the moratorium on nationalization for a period of fifteen years, this provision has been deleted" (Revised Investment Policy, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Industries division, Government of Bangladesh, p.2)

up the Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB) to provide bridge finance.<sup>20</sup> The Dhaka Stock Exchange, which had been shut down in 1972, was reactivated. The policy made it permissible to repatriate foreign capital and profits. Additionally, the policy outlined government's plan to disinvest and denationalize some industrial enterprises. As mentioned earlier, there were some amendments to the policy in subsequent years. One of them was related to the ceiling. In September 1978, the ceiling was altogether removed.

It is not difficult to discern that the thrust of the policies of the military regime was bringing a fundamental change in the approach of the government towards the role of the private sector in industrial development. Hence in accordance with the new policy, the regime went ahead with denationalization and disinvestment. By the end of 1977, 21 industrial units were disinvested and handed over to the new owners; 15 units were disinvested but not handed over; and 33 units were under process of disinvestment (Rahim, 1978:1185). The process intensified after 1977. By March 1982, a total of 236 industrial units were disinvested/ denationalized. The following table (Table 7.2) presents a comprehensive picture<sup>21</sup>:

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<sup>20</sup>Bridge finance is the amount of equity support provided by special institutional arrangement to meet the gap in finance needed by the private entrepreneur in establishing new industries. ICB was established in 1976.

<sup>21</sup>The numbers of disinvested units may, however, create some confusions and provide a wrong impression that a large-scale privatization begin during the Mujib-regime. During the period the units those were disinvested were significantly small sized (i.e. industrial enterprises having fixed assets upto Tk 2.5 million). The units those were disinvested during 1975-82 were either medium (i.e. fixed assets of Tk 2.5 - 10 million) or large (i.e. fixed assets above Tk 10 million). But the units disinvested between 1982-89 were mostly large. In one fiscal year alone (1982/83) the average sale price of an industrial unit was about Tk 32.65 million (Sobhan and Ahsan, 1984).

**Table 7.2**  
Disinvested/Denationalized Industrial Units

Period	Units Under Corporations	Units Under D.G. Industries	Units Under Vested Properties*	Total
1972-75	--	138	21	159
1975-82**	112	92	32	236
1982-89	113	39	4	156
<b>Total</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>551</b>

Source: Ministry of Industries, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Notes: \* After the Indo-Pakistan war in 1965 firms owned and managed by Hindus who left then-East Pakistan were taken over as 'enemy property'; after the liberation they were renamed 'vested property'.

\*\* Till March 1982.

This table does not include the commercial and trading entities. Clare Humphrey, a US-AID researcher and protagonist of privatization acknowledges that "there is no aspect of the study of privatization in Bangladesh more shrouded in mystery, obfuscation, and general lack of information" than the question of privatization of commercial and trading entities. According to Humphrey (1990:50), "estimates of privatized commercial enterprises have varied from 2000 to 8000. Comprehensive official figures are nonexistent, or at least not available." Nevertheless, statistics pertaining to share of commercial/trading enterprises in private sector in 1974 and 1977 provide us with some indications. The share of private enterprises went up to 65 percent from 30 percent. The non-existence of data related to the commercial enterprises are primarily due to frightening speed of disinvestment/ denationalization. In most cases, units were sold without any public tender and primarily to those who could establish close contact with the regime.

Primarily two reasons were cited for the policy of privatization: firstly, the industrial units were grossly mismanaged; secondly, they were not profiting at all. Although the allegation of

mismanagement is partially true, the claim that the performance of all public sector industrial units were dismal is factually incorrect. Sobhan and Ahsan (1984), in their study of the performance of disinvestment and denationalized units show that 90 small and medium sized units disinvested during the period of 1976 and June 1982 profited about Taka 6 crore even in the year prior to disinvestment. The performance of 32 units were 'excellent'.

In accordance with government's policy of privatization in industrial sector, similar initiatives were taken in agrarian sector. Given that the government does not own land the privatization policy took a different form. Withdrawal of subsidy from inputs such as fertilizers, increase of tube-well rent, privatization of irrigation equipment were some of them. Soon after the military take-over government begin to withdraw subsidy from fertilizers and irrigation equipment. Due to withdrawal of subsidy from fertilizers, price had gone up remarkably over the period of 1975-1984. For example, price of Urea fertilizer has gone up 326 percent, TSP fertilizer 348 percent and MP 340 percent (Osmani and Quasem, 1985). This stunning increase, according to the study of Osmani and Quasem (1985), has affected the poor and middle class peasants so much that they are almost being driven out of agricultural production. The situation further deteriorated because of the agricultural credit policy of the government. The study reveals that in 1981/82 peasants who owned more than 5 acres of land received about 31.2 percent of credit, while marginal farmers (owning land 1 acre or less) received 3.2 percent of total credit disbursed by banks and other government agencies.

Additionally, since 1975 rent of irrigation pumps had been increased. In 1975/76, rent of a 2 cusec power pump was Tk 600 and of a deep tube-well was Tk 1200. In 1983/84, the amount was raised to Tk 3600 and Tk 5000 respectively. Along with the increase in rent, government began to privatize the pumps and tube-wells. The process of privatization began in 1979/80. By the end of 1983, 43 percent of deep tube-wells and 56 percent of power pumps had been

transferred to private ownership. Privatization of irrigation equipment had virtually limited the access of relatively poor farmers in irrigation.

Encouragement to private sector did not stop at disinvestment and denationalization measures. The state came forward with further help in the form of bank loans to the entrepreneurs. Table 7.3 presents the total value of funding provided by Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (BSB), Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS) and Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB), three Development Finance Institutions (DFI) between the period 1972 and 1982.

This table clearly show that prior to the changes of August 15, 1975 the private sector received 21.6 percent of loans provided by the DFIs. Whereas after the military takeover, 93.4 percent of loans went to the private sector. Data available from these DFIs further informs us that during the period 1971/72-1974/75, average disbursement per year to public sector was Tk 23.83 million and to private sector was Tk 6.54. During the period 1975/76-1981/82, corresponding figures were Tk 40.71 million and Tk 508.89 million respectively.

In order to encourage private enterprise the military regime brought some changes in the First Five Year Plan (1973-78) that was already in operation. Since two years of the plan were already over, the regime revised the plan targets for the remaining three years instead of changing the plan altogether. "Three-Year Hard Core Plan", as it was called by the regime, allocated a larger share to the private sector, especially industrial sector. Private investment in industry increased from Tk 87.4 million in 1973/74 to Tk 2091.4 million in 1977-78 (Bangladesh Planning Commission, 1980: Section IX, 6-7). In the Two-Year Plan that followed the Hard-Core Plan the private sector was allocated 16 percent of the plan outlay as opposed to 11 percent in the First Five Year Plan (BPC, 1978). Although the Second Five Year Plan recognized the limitation of the private sector, the allocation went up to 22 percent in Second Five Year Plan (1980-85) formulated by the military regime (BPC, 1980).



Table 7.3

Total Value of Funding Provided by  
BSB, BSRS and ICB; 1972-1982

(In million Taka)

Year	Sanction		Total	Disbursement		Total
	Public	Private		Public	Private	
1971/72- 1974/75	363.8	104.3	468.1	83.4	22.9	106.3
1975/76- 1981/82	373.5	9638.6	10014.1	285.0	4003.3	4288.3
1971/72- 1981/82	739.3	9743.9	10483.2	368.4	4026.3	4394.7
% (percentage)						
1971/72- 1974/75	77.7	22.3	100.0	78.4	21.6	100.0
1975/76- 1981-82	3.7	96.3	100.0	6.6	93.4	100.0
1971/72- 1981/82	7.1	92.9	100.0	8.4	91.6	100.0

Note: For ICB commitments are considered as sanction and disbursements figures until March 31, 1982.

The economic project of the new state also included further integration with the world capitalist economy. With that end, the government inspired the establishment of export-oriented industry and promote foreign investment. During 1975-80, a total number of 119 export-oriented industrial units were sanctioned involving a subsidy of Tk 1929 million (19,291.85 lacs) including foreign exchange components of Tk 1351 million (13,511.90 lacs). In addition to a wide range of privileges already offered such as tax holidays, general rules for depreciation of fixed assets, and the 'Free Zone' concessions, an act was passed by the Parliament in 1980 to promote foreign investment and protect the interests of the foreign investors (Foreign Private Investment: Promotion and Protection Act No. XI, 1980). The act unequivocally stated that "foreign investment shall not be expropriated or nationalized' and if any foreign enterprise is nationalized for a public purpose "adequate compensation will be provided".

None of these measures brought any significant change in favor of Bangladesh. Due to the difficulties associated with capturing foreign markets by a late-industrializing country as well as the low quality of products, the export-oriented ventures did not reap any substantial profit during this period. The scheme to attract private foreign capital also failed to achieve success to any significant degree for two reasons:

"First, the existing weak industrial infrastructure, except cheap labour, was not enough to provide profitable grounds for investment. Second, the metropolitan investors were hesitant to invest, as they wanted to be sure that no radical regime would come to power and nationalize their investment" (Mannan, 1990:403).

The legislation of the Foreign Private Investment Act of 1980 was an attempted remedy to the second problem. But it appears that such measure had not been able to gain the trust of metropolitan investors.

As opposed to this situation there was an upward surge in import bills leading to a huge deficit in the balance of trade (Table 7.4). That was due to two reasons. Firstly, the structure of industry in Bangladesh. There was (and still is) an almost total dependence on imports for raw

materials. According to the Planning Commission under Mujib regime, "to ensure utilisation of industrial capacity at single shift capacity annual imports of roughly Tk 318 crore are required" (BPC, 1973). Secondly, the sumptuous life-styles of the new rich necessitated import of consumption goods.

**Table 7.4**

Import, Export and Balance of Trade, 1972-1982

(In crore Taka)

Year	Export	Import	Surplus/Deficit
1972/73	285.60	773.40	- 487.80
1973/74	289.33	732.00	- 442.67
1974/75	313.58	1084.23	- 770.65
1975/76	555.17	1470.32	- 915.15
1976/77	667.01	1399.29	- 732.28
1977/78	717.42	1821.65	-1103.81
1978/79	963.17	2172.66	-1209.49
1979/80	1018.72	2707.50	-1668.78
1980/81	1250.00	4014.00	-2764.00
1981/82	1454.48	4851.08	-3396.60

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

During the aforementioned period, the share of exports in GDP remained almost stagnant (6.33 percent in 1972/73 and 6.80 percent in 1981/82), while the share of import increased from 17.14 percent in 1972/73 to 22.70 percent in 1981/82. During the fiscal year 1975/76 when the military regime took over, export's share in GDP was 5.17 percent and imports' share was 13.68 percent. Over the period of five years share of export increased 1.63 percent, whereas share of import increased 9.02 percent (Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics).

The regime's ambitious plans to revitalize the private sector and extend all sorts of credit to the entrepreneurs necessitated further dependence on aid. Prodded by the donors, they easily embarked upon a policy of seeking more and more aid from the western countries. Depending on the "foreign help lined up for private and public sector", Zia time and again said that "money

is no problem" and that entrepreneurs should "think more and come up with new projects". Table 7.5 and Table 7.6 show the dimension of aid dependence and "contribution" of aid to the Bangladesh Economy during this period.

**Table 7.5**  
The Dimensions of Aid Dependence  
1975/76 - 1981/82

	1975/76	1978/79	1980/81
GDP	58,686	66,766	73,850
Aid Disbursed	6631.0	7723.0	10128
Aid as % of GDP	11.3	11.6	13.7
Aid as % of imports	65.70	71.17	61.06
Domestic Savings as % of GDP	1.8	3.0	0.9
Aid as % of investment	107.55	83.35	64.92
Disbursed Aid as % of Development Budget	141.18	97.83	78.26

Notes:

1. GDP at Market Prices of 1972/73 in millions of Taka.
2. Aid Figures in millions of Taka computed in 1972/73 prices using import index of the World Bank.
3. Imports in market prices of 1972/73. real value of imports taken from World Bank data.
4. World Bank estimate.

Massive privatization, adherence to a policy of sponsored capitalism and infusion of aid along with an autonomous role of the civil-military bureaucrats brought dramatic changes in terms of class composition of Bangladesh society. Central to these changes was the consolidation of the class which begin to grow under the previous regime. The class which we have so far described as new rich (*nouveau riche*), now with the help of the state functionaries elevated themselves to the position of 'lumpen capitalist', a class that is more interested in plundering as means of accumulating capital than resorting to economic means of accumulation, namely 'profit maximization through productive investments in various sectors of the economy' (Siddiqui et. al.,

Table 7.6

Contribution of Aid in Economy  
1975/76 - 1980/81

<b>A. The % share of disbursed project aid to development expenditure in the Annual Development Plan in various sector</b>	<b>1975/76</b>	<b>1980/81</b>
1. Agriculture	4.52	21.32
2. Rural Development	1.86	27.70
3. Water & Flood Control	11.14	23.47
4. Industries	32.76	33.97
5. Power, Scientific Research & Natural Resources	26.95	45.63
6. Transport	15.80	60.89
7. Communications	7.75	22.00
8. Physical Planning and Housing	12.60	30.29
9. Education	21.12	20.38
10. Health	37.80	39.79
11. Population Planning	27.32	52.82
12. Social Welfare	81.67	7.43
13. Manpower and Employment	4.95	43.57
14. Cyclone Reconstruction	32.30	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>19.62</b>	<b>38.64</b>
 <b>B. The % share of disbursed food aid to total food availability</b>	 10.6	 6.0
 <b>C. The % share of disbursed commodity aid to import of intermediate goods</b>	 83.6	 NA

Source: Sobhan (1982:26)

1990:197). We will return to the discussion on consequences of these policies on Bangladesh society. But before that, let me shed some light on the legitimation processes of military-bureaucratic rule and the crises of the state during 1975-81 period.

### **Legitimation of Military-Bureaucratic Rule**

Legitimation process of the new state involved constitutional measures as well as an ideological shift. In terms of constitutionality the regime was illegitimate. But one favorable point was that Zia neither engineered nor participated in the process of violation of the constitution. He could easily claim that the coups and counter coups, killings and counter killings paved the way for his emergence but was not done with an intention to bring him to power.

Ziaur Rahman essentially derived his legitimacy from the uprising of the November 7, 1975 though he did not identify himself with the spirit of the uprising. There was clearly an ambivalence, he had to separate the act from the spirit of the act. In order to do so he attached a new meaning to the uprising befitting to his seizure of power. Thus he interpreted the uprising in terms of its nationalist content. Nationalist, yet different from the nationalism of Mujib regime. He thus explicated that the uprising was a nationalist one, an uprising to safeguard the national sovereignty against foreign conspiracy (i.e. Indian hegemony), to assert the independent identity of the people of Bangladesh.

There were three elements in this interpretation of the uprising: that it marked a break with the radicals' claim of class uprising and hence attempted to reach all classes, which shifts the political discourse from class contradiction to consensus and national building; that the uprising to safeguard national sovereignty was primarily led by the military, hence the military appeared as the defender of national independence at a critical juncture and thus should play a paramount role in future in ensuring the security of Bangladesh state; and that the enemy against whom the nationalism should be pitted was different from earlier regime's interpretation; now it was India.

In accordance with this interpretation, Ziaur Rahman began to talk about a new nationalism, Bangladeshi nationalism<sup>22</sup>. In April 1977 soon after the assumption of the office of President, Zia made some constitutional amendments through a proclamation (Second Proclamation Order no. 1, April 23, 1977). The amendment brought changes in Article 6 of the original constitution which stipulated that the identity of the citizens of Bangladesh would be known as 'Bangalee'. Instead the amendment proclaimed, the citizens would be known as 'Bangaldeshi'. Thus the identity of the nation was linked with the territorial limit in order to isolate it from the so-called 'Bangalee sub-culture' of India. The amendment also brought changes in the Preamble of the Constitution. The words, 'historic struggle for national liberation' was replaced by 'historic war for national independence'. The change, though it appears to be only semantic, reflected the regime's attitude towards the historical background of Bangladesh and the role of civilian population. Ostensibly it highlighted the war of 1971 in which the military played a role, rather than the political movements of civilian population in 1950s and 1960s that contributed to the growth of the Bengali nationalism. Minimizing the role of the civilian population in 'achieving the independence' also minimizes their role in 'safeguarding the independence'.

The word 'secularism' appearing in the Preamble and Article 8 as one of the four fundamental principles was substituted with 'absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah'; and a new clause (1A) was inserted to emphasize that 'absolute trust and faith in almighty Allah' should be 'the basis of all actions'. Article 12 which defined 'secularism' was omitted and above the Preamble the words 'Bismillah-ar-Rahman-ar-Rahim' (In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful) were inserted to give the Constitution an Islamic color. The principle of socialism was given a new meaning -- 'economic and social justice' (Preamble and Article 8). Taken

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<sup>22</sup>For an illuminating study of nationalism in Bangladesh see Jahangir (1986).

together, a new ideological terrain was created by the regime to legitimize their rule. Religion, territoriality of the identity and national security constituted the core of this new ideology.

Simultaneous to the process of ideological legitimation the regime initiated a process to gain constitutional legitimacy. President Sayem in his first speech to the nation on November 6, 1975 committed that ban on political activities would be lifted by mid-1976 and the general elections would be held by February 1977. Accordingly, Political Parties Regulation (PPR) was promulgated on July 28, 1976. Under the regulation, the parties were allowed to function on limited scale (e.g. organize small-scale indoor meetings) provided they got their programs approved by the government. A strict rule for licensing the parties was followed. Nevertheless, major political parties, including AL, were approved for functioning. In the process, the pan-Islamic parties, banned under Mujib regime, also gained permission to revive their organizations. At the beginning of 'indoor politics' President Sayem reiterated his pledge for restoration of democracy. He declared that ban on politics would be totally lifted by August 1976 and the elections would be held as promised (The Bangladesh Observer, July 28, 1976). But later, on grounds of a deteriorating law and order situation, the restrictions on open politics were continued and on November 21, allegedly due to pressure from Zia, President Sayem postponed the general elections. He, however, maintained that local-level elections would be held in February. On November 30, 1976, Zia assumed the position of CMLA leaving President Sayem merely a ceremonial head. The non-partisan elections to the local-level bodies were held in early 1977, which generated considerable political activity. Having seen that the people had somewhat accepted the regime and its authority, Zia took over the Presidency on April 21, 1977 and made the constitutional amendments referred to earlier. Shortly afterwards, he declared a 19-point program for his administration, and announced that he would seek a popular mandate to remain in power and for his 19-point program. The program, among other things called for preservation



of 'the independence, integrity and sovereignty of the state at all costs' and 'give necessary incentives to the private sector for the economic development of the country'.

The referendum held on May 30, 1977 was a mockery of electoral process. No political party was allowed to speak out against him or his program. Strict censorship imposed on newspapers made it impossible to make any evaluation of the program, let alone of Ziaur Rahman. The entire administration was employed in favor of Zia, all mass media was forced to propagate the program. Two separate ballot boxes -- one with a picture of Zia and another without any symbol -- was supposed to be placed in all polling centers. Thus anyone voting against Zia would have had to identify himself publicly and thus exposing himself to future intimidation by the administration and Zia-supporters. It is alleged that in a number of polling stations, the box without the picture was removed altogether by Zia-supporters. Additionally, organized mass rigging and false voting became an open act. Under such circumstances, the results were bound to be in favor of Zia. So it was, with Zia securing 98.88 percent votes.

Through this election Zia found supporters intended to work for him. On the other hand, opposition parties succeeded in reorganizing themselves and began to demand national elections. The attempted coup of September 30 and October 2, 1977 (discussed later) sent out a clear signal to the regime that organized political support is needed to continue their rule. Accordingly, at the end of the year, Ziaur Rahman, who claimed to have no political ambitions, hinted at forming a political platform.<sup>23</sup> With his active support and encouragement, a political party named Jagodal (Jatiyatabadi Gonotantik Dal, Nationalist Democratic Party) was launched by the Vice-President Justice Sattar on February 23, 1978. Although it was public knowledge that Zia was behind the party, he did not join the party. For the first time in the history of

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<sup>23</sup>First indication that Zia is considering to launch a political organization came in a meeting with leaders of different political parties on December 8, 1977. Later, in his speech on the eve of victory day celebration of December 16, Zia maintained that there is a 'political vacuum' and party is needed to fill it.

Bangladesh, a party was being formed by those who were already in power. Leaders and workers of different parties were enticed to join the new party, primarily through dispensation of patronage, bribes and hand-outs.

On April 21, 1978 Zia announced that the Presidential elections would be held on June 3, 1978 and restrictions on political activities would be withdrawn in May. The Jagodal formed an electoral alliance (Nationalist Front) with five other political parties (Muslim League, United People's Party, NAP-B, Bangladesh Labor Party and Bangladesh Scheduled Caste Federation), appointed Zia the Chairperson of the alliance and nominated him their candidate. Zia's main rival was retired General M.A.G. Osmani, former C-in-C of liberation forces, nominee of an alliance (Gonotantik Oikkya Jote, Democratic United Alliance) of six opposition parties including AL. Given that the opposition was not allowed to function for the last three years and a large number of opposition leaders were in jail, 40 days notice of the election and 23 days to campaign was insufficient time for opposition to reach the voters. Additionally, Zia used all government resources and mass media as he did previously. The government's information and broadcasting ministry was put in charge of Zia's publicity, while martial law restrictions on press were still in place. Manipulation of election results were also reported. The results were a foregone conclusion. Ziaur Rahman was elected as President securing 76 percent of the vote. Osmani, who had not even been able to buy the voters' lists (cost \$60,000) due to insufficient funds, polled 21 percent of votes.

Following the election, Zia took the initiative to integrate the Front into a single party. Accordingly, a new party was formed in September 1, 1978: Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Shortly afterwards, the date of Parliamentary elections were announced. The opposition political parties initially refused to join the elections unless their four point demands were met: withdrawal of martial law and Special Powers Act of 1974; restoration of constitution of 1972 except Fourth amendment; guarantee to press freedom; and release of all political prisoners. After few

postponements due to opposition' threat of boycott, parliamentary elections were held on February 18, 1979. The opposition parties failed to gain any concessions because of internal squabbles. The election was participated in by 29 political parties. 1703 candidates from different political parties and 425 independent candidates contested for 300 seats of the parliament. Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) secured 207 seats. They were followed by Awami League with 39 seats. The results of the election are presented in Table 7.7.

The newly elected Parliament met in its first session at the beginning of April 1979. An amendment to the Constitution was passed (The Constitution Fifth Amendment Bill) which incorporated all the resolutions, decrees, proclamations, orders issued under the authority of martial law into laws and parts of constitution, where necessary. Thus the actions taken after August 15, 1975 were legitimized including the indemnification of the killers of Mujib and the deletion of secularism from the constitution.

One can arrive at a conclusion from the preceding paragraphs that the military-bureaucratic regime led by Zia was extremely successful in legitimizing their rule. It is indeed true to a great extent, for good or worse. In terms of constitutionality the regime finally took a shape no one could challenge their legal authority. They even indemnified themselves from all the killings. In terms of changing the course of Bangladesh politics or to say, borrowing Zia's own words, making politics difficult, their success was immense. The regime, indeed changed the entire discourse of Bangladesh politics. The secular politics of Bangladesh was dealt a serious blow. The core identity base of nationalism had been changed to religion from language. Since then the emphasis on religious identity has grown so strong that the fundamentalist Islamic force has emerged as one of the principal political actor in Bangladesh. Pursuance of growth oriented development strategy prodded by donors and beneficial to the regime not only pushed Bangladesh to a deeper debt-trap and increased incidence of poverty, but more significantly, marginalized the question of public intervention to redistribute productive assets. Redistribution

**Table 7.7**

## Results of Parliamentary Elections, 1979

Name of the Party	No. of Seats Contested	No. of Seats Won	Percentage of votes secured
BNP	298	207	44
AL (Malek)	295	39	25
Muslim League & IDL	265	20	8
AL (Mizan)	183	2	2
JSD	240	8	6
Other Parties	419	8	6
Independents	425	16	9

**Note:** The total number of parliament members of BNP later increased to 251 out of 330. 30 reserved seats for women was won by BNP and 11 out of 16 independents joined the party. 3 more came from winning bye-elections.

Source: Hossain (1988)

with growth is no longer on the agenda in the economic planning of Bangladesh. The 'success' must be attributed to the military-bureaucratic regimes, especially the one which ruled Bangladesh between 1975 and 1982. The economic rationale for political promotion of economic growth was advanced to ensure the absolute control of the bureaucracy over the planning process, not only for the time being but also in the future.

In spite of these successes of the regime and miserable failure of the political opposition to mount any significant resistance, it would be wrong to say that the regime was free from crises and faced no opposition at all. At the initial stage, the regime encountered resistance from different factions of Army, which were contained with remarkable brutality. At the later stage, intra-party squabble, and conflict between politicians and bureaucrats brought considerable difficulty for the regime.

### Crises of and Opposition to the Regime

The political developments since the November 7 uprising evidently benefitted the repatriated officers much to the annoyance of freedom fighters within the Army. The trial and execution of Col. Taher, who had lost one of his legs during the liberation war and was awarded the highest military award for his indomitable courage, appeared to the latter section as an act of vengeance by the repatriated officers. The economic programs of the regime and rehabilitation of once-ostracized top-ranking bureaucrats corroborated their feelings that the history of Pakistan is being repeated again. This gave the followers of Taher ample opportunity to bring a large number of freedom fighters together to make some further coup attempts. Additionally, there remained supporters of the exiled six-Majors, who felt they were being excluded from power. In order to gain salience and bring back their leaders from exile, they also conspired a number of coups in collusion with their leaders during the period of 1975-1981.

Following the arrest of Taher and the JSD leaders, 'troubles of serious nature began to erupt in several cantonments' (Ahmed, 1988:108). Hundreds of soldiers were arrested and, allegedly, summarily executed. In March 1976, an Army unit in Chittagong was reported to have mutinied. Although it was not clear whether or not Biplobi Sainik Sangstha was involved, three officers were killed. Zia personally intervened to bring an end to the trouble (A Washington Post despatch reported in Indian Express, March 26, 1976).

In April, Air Vice Marshal M.G. Towab, one of the DCMLAs, ostensibly attempted to take-over through a right-wing coup d'etat. The exiled Majors were brought in by Towab and one of them joined a tank regiment stationed in Bogra to begin the assault. This short-lived coup attempt staged on April 30, 1976 cost Towab's job. He was thrown out of the country. Farook Rahman, who managed to reach his loyalists in Bogra was coaxed by his parents and sister to give in. He was then sent out of country again. Two months after the coup attempt the tank regiment

which rallied with Farook was disbanded and about 250 of its members were charged under the service act.

Bogra, hometown of Ziaur Rahman, ironically became a citadel of anti-Zia military activists. On July 17 of the same year, a day-long rebellion caused considerable problem for the regime. Rapid actions contained the rebels for the time being only to be found later that another rebellion began to grow at the same time.

One year later, on September 29-30, 1977 an uprising of soldiers took place in Bogra. Supposedly the members of Biplobi Sainik Sangstha took over Bogra city and marched through the streets carrying their weapons and shouting slogans against the regime. Some members of the rebel group got involved in looting as well. Mutineers alleged that the government had sold out the country to the foreign powers. Next day they freed some political prisoners and exchanged fire with local police. But, according to the official account, the mutineers were brought to book without much trouble. Only one officer was killed; police, with the help of local people, apprehended five of the runaway 'miscreants' (The Bangladesh Observer, October 5, 1977). But reportedly hundreds of soldiers were either killed or later executed.

Even before Bogra was brought under the control of government forces, Dhaka was shaken by another attempt to unseat the regime. On the night of October 1, a full fledged soldiers' uprising took place, presumably organized by Biplobi Sainik Sangstha. According to one account, Bogra and Dhaka uprisings were not isolated events but rather part of a grand design. The proximity of these two events give credence to the claim but substantial evidence could not be found to back such an assertion. Nevertheless, the Dhaka uprising was well-organized and were powerful than the Bogra attempt. The rebel soldiers -- claiming to be members of 'Gonobahini' -- took control of the radio station for about three hours and announced that an armed revolution was taking place led by armed forces, students, peasants, and workers. At the early hours of the day, in addition to the radio station, rebels captured some vital points of the

cantonments and Dhaka city, advanced towards the President's residence, and attacked the airport where Air Force Chief A.G. Mahmood and some senior military officers were engaged in negotiations with international skyjackers of a JAL airliner (Japanese Red Army). Participated in by a large section of army and air force personnel, the coup almost brought down the government. This was the bloodiest coup attempt since the November 7, 1975 uprising. Eleven senior air force officers, 10 army officers and an estimated 200 other soldiers were killed in the battle between the rebels and pro-government forces in airport.

The failed attempt was followed by brutal executions. Martial Law Tribunals set up by the government hurriedly tried the soldiers and airmen. According to the government account, within 25 days of the incident 92 persons were sentenced to death, 34 persons received transportation for life and 18 others received various terms of rigorous imprisonment (The Bangladesh Observer, October 19 and 27, 1977). Ziaur Rahman himself informed a reporter of The New York Times that 460 officers and soldiers were tried for their involvement in the October 2 coup attempt. Only 63 of them were acquitted (The New York Times, October 20, 1977). The Times of London reported March 5, 1978 on the basis of conversations with senior army officers that more than 800 servicemen had been convicted by military tribunals. Mascarenhas (1986) reckoned that 1143 men were hanged in the two months from October 9, 1977.

Such a massive scale of repression, and subsequent changes in army structure eliminated and completely silenced all opposition within the army. In next two years, the situation remained remarkably calm and quiet. Meanwhile, presidential and parliamentary elections were held and the political party (BNP) was formed.

The BNP, as I have mentioned before, was composed of defectors from different political parties. An uneasy combination of extreme rightists and extreme leftists, collaborators and freedom fighters, Islamic fundamentalists and pro-Peking leftists was made primarily through

dispensation of privileges and thus the seeds of conflict were sown at birth. The conflict began to surface after the parliamentary elections of 1979. The selection of PM provide the opportunity for a showdown of strength. Much to the annoyance of the freedom fighters, Shah Azizur Rahman -- a politician who actively supported the Pakistani regime in 1971 -- secured the position.

Personal rivalry and ideological differences increasingly became obvious. Zia, sitting at the helm, sometimes played one against another, sometimes attempted to resolve the conflicts. Cabinet was expanded several times. Additionally, political elites were trying to gain some control over state apparatuses and engaged themselves in conflict with bureaucracy. At one point Deputy Prime Minister, Moudud Ahmed alleged that bureaucrats are defying the political ministers. Because, Moudud said, 'the bureaucrats think that politicians are transient and if this government fall they will have the total power to rule the country' (Sangbad, November 12, 1979). At the end of the year, Moudud Ahmed, who was calling for 'democratization' of the party, was dismissed from cabinet. Corruption became rampant within the party. Zia himself recognized in his speech to economists that 'corruption and misuse of power have led to the wasting of almost 40 percent of the total resources set apart for development' (Quoted in Puchkov, 1989:133).

By 1980, the economic situation deteriorated to a great extent. In spite of massive aid flow, incidence of poverty increased and the number of rural landless raised substantially. "In 1977, 58.5 percent of rural households claimed ownership to one acre of land or less. In 1978, the percentage increased to 59.4" (Januzzi and Peach, 1980). Personal income decreased<sup>24</sup> while consumer price index increased by 19.3 percent as compared to previous year. Due to economic hardship, labor militancy begin to rise again. In 1977 there were 22 strikes, in 1978 the number gone up to 89, in the course of which 662,000 man-days were lost (Bangladesh Labor Journal,

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<sup>24</sup>According to government account, the rate of personal growth was negative during the year 1976/77, 1979/80 and 1980/81. They were -0.7 percent, -1.2 percent and -1.5 percent respectively (Bangladesh Economic Survey 1985/86, p.582).



1979:26). In 1980, 104 strikes led to a loss of 1,160,000 man-days. In jute mills 1.6 million man-days were lost due to strike in 1979/80 (Bangladesh Observer, April 18, 1981).

In the conflict between political elites and the bureaucrats which intensified in 1980, Zia began to sway. Facing pressure from political elites for more power and authority Zia created a position of District Development Coordinator (Establishment Ministry's memo: ED/SAIV-57/80-112 dated 23 April 1980) to coordinate and assist in the execution of development projects in district. Twenty MPs were appointed to this position. This measure irked bureaucrats and was viewed by them as a move to curtail their power.

Ardent supporters of the Zia-regime, the international agencies, were little discontented due to his slow move towards deregulation. Although the World Bank was applauding that "a new, more pragmatic policy orientation had been taking place since 1975", it contended "despite moves towards pragmatism the Government still tries to exercise detailed control over many aspects of economic life.... These restrictions lead to delays in production and investment, inefficiency in resource allocation and, frequently, abuse and corruption" (World Bank, 1989:21). Tacitly, it was suggesting an all-out deregulation within a short period of time.

Meanwhile, a small section of military comprised of radicals and supporters of exiled Majors plotted a coup on June 17, 1980. But government intercepted their communication and foiled the attempt at a very early stage. Nevertheless, the top-ranking military and civil bureaucrats were increasingly becoming disenchanted with and critical of Zia due to his reliance on partymen. The DDC scheme appeared to them as a distinct move to shift the power-base away from the bureaucracy. In a meeting on May 20, 1981 high-ranking military Generals suggested to Zia that he impose martial law in order to quell the internal strife of the party, arrest the deteriorating law and order situation and bring down inflation. Nine days later, on May

30 1981, Zia was brutally murdered in an abortive coup attempt in Chittagong<sup>25</sup>. Within ten months of this killing, Lt. Gen. H.M. Ershad took over in a successful coup d'état on March 24, 1982.

Despite a number of coup attempts and instability associated with these, the Zia-regime, as I have mentioned before, was extremely successful in achieving its political and economic objectives: consolidating the power and authority of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy as the central institution within the state, and ensuring the capitalist development in general and specifically a 'sponsored capitalism', where the state comes forward to help private investors with financial supports. These policy measures, of course, brought changes in the class composition of Bangladesh society.

#### **Consequences of State Policies on Bangladesh Society**

The primary result of the economic policies pursued since 1975 is the consolidation and enhancement of the class that began to grow under the previous regime: rich in wealth, small in numbers and influential in terms of political and social connections. They are popularly known in Bangladesh as a class of 'industrialists without industry'; whom I will call borrowing Andre Gunder Frank's (1972) term, 'lumpen capitalists'. They have established their unbridled control over the national resources and are engaged in plundering the country at an unprecedented rate.

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<sup>25</sup>The events surrounding the killing of Zia remain a mystery to date. The regime claimed that it was conspired by Major General Abul Manzur, GOC of Chittagong, solely for personal vengeance as he was transferred from active command to an obscure position of Staff College Principal. Manzur was also killed mysteriously by soldiers after the mutiny was quelled. Thirty officers were tried by General Court Martial for mutiny (not for killing the President!), only four of them acquitted. Thirteen of them were convicted and hanged to death. Seven others initially received death penalty but later their sentence was reduced to life imprisonment. Six were sent to prison for various terms. The events took lives of 15 officers including Zia and Manzur, surprisingly all of them were freedom fighters. The 'White Paper' published by the government, failed to provide enough evidence to show that Manzur was the key planner. There are enough reasons to believe that the events of Chittagong was designed by some other persons and that two birds were killed with one stone. With the killing of them all the highest ranking officers involved in liberation struggle were eliminated.

This privileged few, not more than 1000 families, were the recipients of industrial loans in Bangladesh (Sobhan and Mahmood, 1981). Thirty-six of them, until 1981/82, controlled credits of about Taka 4,700 million (Sen, 1988:19), i.e. 52 percent of the total credits disbursed by state in the private sector. The personal income structure shows that, the upper 10 percent of the total population control 32 percent of the national income (Sen, 1988:25-26). The rural economy is under the total control of about 5,000 families (Sangbad, January 29, 1979).

The enormous amount of credit received by them from Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) was never repaid, and many cases written off. As of June 1990, the loans defaulted to the DFIs stood at Taka 10.5 billion as against a loan commitment of 10.4 billion (Sobhan, 1991:5). The overwhelming part of the default accrued in the private sector whose loans defaulted to the DFIs accounted for 96.5 percent of the total default. As a matter of fact, 20 business houses had an overdue of Taka 457.5 million to Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (BSB) and 24 business houses, mostly owned by the same owners, had debt of about Tk 670.4 million to Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS). As Siddiqui et.al. (1990) have noted "in recent years, perhaps the most important way of getting rich in Bangladesh has been to defraud and permanently default big loans taken from NCBS (Nationalized Commercial Banks) and DFIs" (Siddiqui et.al., 1990:193).

The wealth accumulated by this class was not invested in industrial development of the country but was invested or spent abroad. Essentially the policy of channelizing public resources to a privileged few had vitiated the entire structure of productive efforts. According to a report of a commission appointed by the government in 1985, total amount of capital allotted to private sector during the period of 1980-85 was Tk 1938.46 crore. A total of 7068 industrial units were suppose to be installed with this capital. But the report noted that only 3051 units have been initiated (meaning 43%). The total amount of capital invested was only Tk 897.59 crore (i.e. 46 percent of allotted capital). The remaining money has been amassed by the beneficiaries of such

a 'credit policy' (GPRB, 1985). Siddqui et. al., based on the data derived from interviews with 68 richest persons in Dhaka, concluded that "through various legal and illegal methods, a considerable part of the accumulated surplus is being continually siphoned off from an already capital scarce Bangladesh to countries where there is a relative abundance of capital" (Siddiqui, et.al., 1990:197).

It is easily understandable that this new class of 'lumpen capitalists' have gained affluence through access to state power. It is well documented in Rahman and Huq's (1987) study of 9 industrialists, who had outstanding loans amounting Taka 2 billion as of 1987, that a close connection with bureaucracy was a necessary condition for accumulating wealth. It is no surprise that Siddqui et. al. found that "there was none among the 68 richest persons of Dhaka who had not socially known one or more of the top officials of the country" (Siddqui, et.al., 1990:182). The relationship between this class and the bureaucracy (both civil and military) was, however, lopsided. The former depended upon the latter. This resulted in complete dependence of the capitalist class on the bureaucracy leaving no space of maneuvering for the former, which definitely enhanced the potential autonomy of the bureaucracy. Since transfer of resources were mediated through the bureaucrats, they themselves sought and evidently got, a share of the pie.

In the rural areas public policy had enhanced the social power of those who actually command assets. The process of privatization of agricultural inputs such as irrigation water, equipment and fertilizers reinforced the monopoly over the land. Now a situation had been created wherein the poor farmers are doubly oppressed by the landowners and input dealers. These have unleashed a spate of pauperization in rural areas.

In order to fulfill the perpetual appetite of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy and their junior partner, the lumpen capitalists, the country has been plunged into the debt-trap. Over the years foreign aid has increased and there is no possibility in sight to break the vicious cycle of

aid-dependence. Proliferation of an aid-regime has created further intermediaries and vitiated any future possibility of self-reliant development in Bangladesh.

To conclude our discussion on the nature of state and social structure of Bangladesh after 1975, we can say that the course followed by the military-bureaucratic regime after the coup d'etat, consolidated the power and authority of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy as the central institution within the state; and initiated a process of dependent capitalist development beneficial to a small segment of the society who began to emerge under the previous regime. Furthermore, the capitalist development model, though generated a new class of capitalist, failed to unleash the productivity usually associated with capitalism because the new capitalists of Bangladesh are least interested in profit maximization through productive investments in various sectors of economy. Instead, they rely upon extra-economic methods of accumulation, i.e. theft, plunder and embezzlement. They are tied in an uneven relationship with the dispensers of public resources, i.e. the bureaucracy, and are dependent upon their largesse making the latter more powerful and influential. Pursuance of a dependent capitalist model further integrated the country with the world capitalist economy, primarily as an aid-dependent nation.

## CHAPTER VIII CONCLUSION

I began this study with the intention of trying to understand why and how the military-bureaucratic oligarchy emerged as the power-bloc from a marginalized position in Bangladesh during her first decade of independence. Understanding the specific structural relationships and interactions between the state and social classes within the logic and system of peripheral capitalism was the guiding principle throughout the study.

Through an explanation of the complex state-class relationships, this study demonstrated that the underlying structures of the state in a post-colonial peripheral society reproduced the conditions whereby the military bureaucratic oligarchy emerged as the core of the power-bloc. The dynamics of the relatively autonomous state, the crises of hegemony of the ruling classes, and the political and economic crises embedded in the peripheral status of the country were the three primary structural factors those initially precipitated authoritarianism under a civilian regime in independent Bangladesh. The fundamental human rights were curtailed; repressive laws were enacted; constitutionality in general and electoral process in particular was manipulated; and organized physical repression assumed preeminent position in extracting 'consent' from the masses. But as these measures failed to resolve the 'crises of authority' of the ruling classes, the composition of the power-bloc was reorganized through the violent coup d'état of 1975. The civilian regime was overthrown and the nature of Bangladesh state was altered. The need to recast the state grew out of the necessity of capitalist development in Bangladesh.

The analysis of the state and social formation of Bangladesh under two consecutive colonial eras presented in this study showed that both British (1757 - 1947) and Pakistani (1947 - 1971) rule impeded the rise of the indigenous bourgeoisie. Instead, the colonial states deliberately

fostered an array of intermediate classes in order to serve the state apparatus and to be the political agent of the state in its drive for expropriation of economic surplus. The study further showed that owing to the general requirements of colonial domination, and the specific nature of the Pakistani state, the intermediate classes of Bangladesh were kept on the periphery of power. The dominant mode of articulation of power was dominance instead of co-optation. These left a space for the rise of a counter-hegemonic ideology. The Awami League, a political organization of the petty bourgeoisie and middle classes, capitalizing on the popular discontent of the masses, evolved a counter-hegemonic ideology and utilized nationalist ideology in the construction of its own power base. Hence an alliance of intermediate classes, evidently not economically dominant, became the prominent political actors and engaged themselves in conflict with the colonial state which finally resulted in the emergence of independent Bangladesh in 1971.

The examination of the policies of the post-colonial regime (i.e. post-1971) showed that a non-capitalist path of development was pursued, wherein the potential for development of an indigenous bourgeoisie was frustrated and cooperation between local and foreign capital was restricted. The policies favored the intermediate classes and helped the emergence of a new rich class as the direct beneficiary of state patronage. A section of intermediate classes gained control of state property and employing the authority of the state, they accumulated a vast amount of wealth primarily through illegal means (e.g. corruption, smuggling). They used the state as their prized possession and received extensive protection and patronage. But as they accumulated vast sums of money, the legal measures that benefitted them became serious impediments in their growth. Hence they began to put pressure on the regime to rescind restrictions on further growth of capital.

The study also showed that after independence, initially the civilian political regime apparently established its control over the two other components of the state (the bureaucracy

and military) despite internal factionalism and lack of consensus among the members of the ruling party. The internal feud within the bureaucracy and its close connections with the colonial power, and the inconsequential size of the military made it possible for the political regime to circumscribe both these forces. But the formal seizure of power did not destroy or completely immobilize old contenders of power, even though they lost their authority in the course of armed liberation struggle. The contenders of power were temporarily rendered impotent at the moment of triumph, but the dynamics of transition provided new opportunities for their remobilization.

Our examination of policies and actions of the intermediate regime revealed that the new regime retained the underlying structures of the state and augmented the role of state in an unprecedented manner. This led to the expansion of the power of bureaucracy and establishment of control over all social classes. Though the regime attempted to undercut some of the privileges enjoyed by both civil and military bureaucrats, it was attempted without any restructuring of the state apparatus, thus making the endeavor essentially ineffective and only ostensibly confrontative.

It is characteristic for peripheral capitalist states to integrate with the world capitalist economy in a fashion that they become increasingly dependent upon metropolitan countries for their survival. The present study showed that despite a socialist posture, Bangladesh was drawn into the world capitalist economy as an aid dependent country. Narcotics of aid were injected through intimidation and overt and covert sanctions by the metropolitan states; as well as to satisfy the appetite of the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the aid-regime: the intermediate classes. The increased degree of aid-dependency, as we have noticed, not only provided leverage to the donors, but also facilitated the rise of the bureaucracy to a prominent position. As the principal functionaries in aid negotiations bureaucrats assumed greater significance in policy formulation. By securing the unremitting flow of aid, bureaucrats became free from the slightest dependence on the indigenous social classes for surplus necessary to maintain the state.



Additionally, the internal dissension of the ruling party forced the regime to become more and more dependent upon the executive apparatus for implementation of their policies, which in turn, paved the way for the executive apparatus to play the role of a mediator between different factions.

Meanwhile, events stemming from the crisis of hegemony of the ruling classes facilitated the rise of the coercive apparatus of the state. The nationalist ideology that brought the alliance to power lost its relevance in the post-colonial situation and hence a rift between the ruling classes and the masses emerged. The ruling classes faced mounting pressure from the opposition political parties. The immediate consequence of this was another step towards enhancement of the power of the executive, for they became the mediators between the regime and the people whom they ruled. But such mediation was bound to fail, as the principal mode was not co-optation and consent of those who were ruled. The consensus that was attempted through the state apparatus appeared as an imposed ideology. Failure to extract consent from the subordinate classes moved the ruling class towards domination and coercion. Such an inclination towards coercion made possible the preeminence of the military. What is important to note here is that the entire process virtually destabilized the equilibrium that was necessary for maintaining property-relations and preserving the social-order. Or, in other words, the traditional role of the state was threatened. The present study thus showed that the crisis of hegemony of the intermediate classes undermined the regime and strengthened the two other components of the state. The description of conjunctural events presented in this study also exhibited that the failing economy and growing violence associated with radicalization of politics during 1972-75 were endangering the smooth functioning of economic process essential for capitalist development. Under such circumstances, in order to enhance the ability of the state to promote stable and expanded reproduction, even the vestiges of democratic practices were scrapped and an authoritarian state emerged.

The need to fulfill the conditions of capitalist development, accommodate the new rich class and ensure a highly visible autonomous role for the bureaucracy converged to a point wherein a specific reorganization of the power-bloc became the only way out. The process began with modification of the relation of forces. The promulgation of emergency rule and establishment of one party state bears out this fact. But the political representatives of the new alliance failed to adapt themselves to the new tasks demanded by their constituents. It made it necessary for the new alliance to remove the ruling party forcibly. The violent coup d'état of August 15, 1975 was that act of removal. Although this was followed by coups and counter coups, chaos and confusion, killings and counter-killings in subsequent months, the emergence of a new state was obvious and so was its political and economic agenda: consolidation of power and authority of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy as the central institution within the state; and to ensure capitalist development in general and specifically to revert to the pre-liberation policy of 'sponsored capitalism'. The policies pursued by the regime over the following six years (1975-1981) demonstrate that Bangladesh indeed became further integrated with the world capitalist economy as a dependent capitalist state and that state policy bred a new class of lumpen capitalists who are more interested in plunder as a means of accumulating capital than to economic means of accumulation, namely profit maximization through productive investments in various sectors of the economy.

The analysis of the nature of the Bangladesh state, the composition of the power-bloc, the socio-economic background of the members of ruling classes, and the events prior to and after the coups of 1975, clearly demonstrate that the coups were neither abrupt reactions of some disgruntled military officers motivated by personal vengeance nor merely military's attempt to safeguard their corporate interests; but rather part of a long process of capitalist development in Bangladesh. By 1975, the process of capitalist development reached to a juncture where active and effective support of the state became necessary for further growth. The simplest way out was

the reorganization of the power-bloc and alter the nature of the state itself. The coups were organized to attain those goals. The intervention of military in Bangladesh politics was also undertaken to transform the state apparatus in such a manner that the military-bureaucratic oligarchy occupies a preeminent position in all basic structures of authority and hence, it was the final act of their ascension from an undermined position to the center of the power-bloc.

These conclusions would seem more obvious to an observer of post-1982 Bangladesh politics. The process of capitalist development and concentration of power in the hands of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy initiated in post-1975 intensified further after the third successful coup d'état of March 24, 1982 which brought Lt. General Ershad to power. The Ershad-era (1982-1990) in all respect was a mere duplication of Zia period. The economic policies, political strategies and ideological positions of the regime were aimed at consolidation of the 'achievements' of the previous regime.

The cornerstone of the economic policies of the Ershad regime, for example, was denationalization/disinvestment and encouragement of private entrepreneurship. A total of 156 industrial units were privatized between March, 1982 and July, 1989. Additionally, 49 percent share of 11 state-owned industries were sold by June 1989 through public offering. Out of six nationalized banks, 95 percent shares each of two banks and 49 percent of another one was sold to public (Chowdhury, 1990). In the name of encouraging private entrepreneurship and providing incentives to private sector, state-owned development finance institutions (DFIs) continued furnishing huge amounts of loans and equity finance to individuals. In 1982/83, Tk. 31.9 billion was disbursed as credit to private sector. In 1985-86, the total amount increased to Tk. 83.6 billion. In 1987-88, the amount reached Tk. 108.9 billion (World Bank, 1989, Table 6.1). The government's credit policy, like the one pursued during Zia regime was highly skewed towards a small segment of the society. It is of no surprise, therefore, that a lion-share of this credit went to few business houses. More than fifty-five percent of loans disbursed by Bangladesh Shilpa

Bank (BSB), a leading DFI, between 1980/81 and 1984/85, went to seven business groups; while 82 percent of loans disbursed by Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (BSRS), another leading DFI, went to eight business houses (Mustafa, 1989).

The process of militarization of administration along with increased spending for military intensified after General Ershad took power in 1982. Between 1982 and 1990, at least 294 military officers had been appointed in different key positions of the government, semi-government and autonomous institutions, and public corporations<sup>1</sup>. The breadth of the militarization can be understood from the fact that the government appointed a military officer as the Secretary of the Bangla Academy, a semi-government organization in charge of research on Bengali literature and language. During the period in review, 28 military officers were appointed in the Foreign Ministry alone. In 1984, Bangladesh had 46 diplomatic mission abroad. Of them, 16 were headed by military officers as Ambassadors and/or High Commissioners. Like foreign missions key positions in local administration were also given to military officers. In 1984, 20 administrative districts were divided into 64; and in those 64 districts, 53 military officers were appointed as the district superintendents of police. In the same year there were 49 military officers occupying positions like Chairman, Secretary, Director General, Managing Director, Director etc., in different corporations, directorates and other public/autonomous bodies. By 1988 the number increased to 85. During the entire period of Ershad regime twenty-four military officers had been absorbed into the Police department. The Civil Aviation Authority and the Bangladesh Biman, the national airline, had 25 military officers. The Ershad-regime attempted to enhance the control of the military over the civil administration. In 1987, a bill was passed by the hand-picked parliament to include military officers in local level administration. The government, however, had to back out in the face of massive popular protests. In terms of

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<sup>1</sup>These figures are calculated on the basis of government documents made accessible to me during my visit to Bangladesh in early 1991 and early 1993, and Uzzman's (1991) study on militarization of administration.

increased spending on the military one piece of information says it all: throughout Ershad rule only 5 percent of revenue budget was spent on development as oppose to 18 percent on the army. While \$147 was spent on each citizen per year, \$4,700 was spent on each soldier (Bergman, 1991).

In conjunction with the military, the civil bureaucrats emerged as the key persons in decision-making machinery. The civilian cabinet of General Ershad which provided the political facade to the regime had very little power and authority and was overshadowed by the secretaries. It is well known in Bangladesh that 10 secretaries of the government constituted the so-called 'inner cabinet' of Ershad and hold immense power. In a number of occasions General Ershad informed the cabinet members of his decisions after consulting with these bureaucrats.

The bureaucrats in general and military bureaucrats in particular, have wielded so much of power over the last 15 years that it has become impossible to make any political decisions sidetracking them. An examination of the events leading to the resignation of General Ershad bears out the fact<sup>2</sup>. No denying that the seven-week long urban popular uprising beginning in October, 1990 forced General Ershad to consider resignation, but it was the withdrawal of the support of the civil and military bureaucrats that determined the final course. The resignation of the Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka -- the linchpin of the administration -- at the height of agitation was a clear signal to General Ershad that his good-weather allies are abandoning him. The military officials were initially divided whether to support Ershad or not. But the top-level officers opted to be in the sideline for the moment. The Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Nooruddin Khan, then 'advised' Ershad to resign and hence, Ershad resigned even without consulting his Cabinet colleagues. It is of no surprise that "on 5 December, even as people were celebrating the end of the army era, the Awami League -- the premier political party — and its

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<sup>2</sup>For detail description of the events leading to the resignation of Lt. General Ershad see Rizvi (1991), and Riaz and Rahman (1991).

allies, chose to send the names of their short-listed candidates to then-army chief Lt. Gen. Nooruddin Khan, instead of sending it direct to the presidential secretariat"<sup>3</sup>. Shahabuddin Ahmed, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court who was a consensus choice of all major political parties, conferred with three persons before accepting the position of the Acting President: Khaleda Zia -- leader of Bangladesh Nationalist Party and a seven-party alliance, Sheikh Hasina -- leader of the Awami League and an eight-party alliance, and Lt. Gen. Nooruddin Khan.

The ideological terrain of Ershad regime was nothing different from his predecessor -- religion, territoriality of the identity and national security were the central elements. Ershad went further ahead of Zia by proclaiming Islam as the state religion through a constitutional amendment on June 9, 1988 (The Eighth Amendment of the Constitution). This measure not only provide the final blow to the secular nature of the Bangladesh state, but also accorded religion a definite space in the political discourse of Bangladesh.

#### **Contribution of this Study**

Having presented this synopsis of the study one pertinent question must be asked: what is the most significant contribution of this study? Notwithstanding the fact that this study adds to the growing literature regarding the causes of, and conditions for, military intervention in general and Bangladesh in particular; and that the findings of this study are completely different from the earlier studies on the causes of military rule in Bangladesh, its principal contribution is in developing a newer framework for understanding military rule in peripheral societies in general and Bangladesh in particular. Although this approach comes close to the prevalent 'structuralist approach' as it attempts to analyze the problem of military interventionism from the perspective of state and class, it differs from and claims as improved over this approach because this study from the outset rejected many of the deterministic elements of structuralist approach -- such as uncritical acceptance of classical marxian approaches to state and social classes, and

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<sup>3</sup>V.G. Kulkarni, 'Armed Neutrality', Far Eastern Economic Review, December 27, 1990.

neglect of the historical specificity of a given society. Instead, the newer approach pursues a state/social classes based historical analysis to determine how their interactions lead to a specific method of rule. Before I proceed to identify the contributions of this study to the general literature, let me briefly present its contribution to the literature on military interventionism in Bangladesh.

Contribution to the Understanding  
of Bangladesh Situation:

I have argued in Chapter II that there are two strands of literature in Bangladesh regarding the causes of and conditions for military rule in Bangladesh. The predominant strand, which I called a 'corporatist approach', relies more on military explanation and relegate political and economic factors to secondary status. In view of the scholars who belong to this school, the principal causes of military intervention in 1975 was the perceived threat to the corporate interests of the military, nature of the military, and personal vengeance. Added to these were the failure of the civilian government, cleavages in political parties and lack of a political institutionalization. What is central to their interpretation is the assumption that military intervention is an abrupt reaction to the failure of civilian regime. A situation of failure on the part of the civilian government, reflected in the economic performances as well as inability to maintain law and order has been described by a number of scholars (Ahamed, Jahan and Bertocci, for example) as a precipitating factor for coups d'etat. These scholars contend that lack of political institutionalization constitutes a factor in military's rise to power.

The principal limitation of this line of interpretation is that it focusses more on the immediate causes rather than the broad conditions conducive to military intervention. They tend to forget the fact that a coup can be sparked off by a simple incident only if the underlying conditions for military intervention is present. A difficulty with any analysis which emphasizes the distinctive interests of the military is it begs questions of how the army came to enjoy such

autonomy, which in turn, raises questions about the nature of civil-military relations. Since this relationship is determined by the broad relationship between the civil society and the state, a study which ignores this aspect is bound to be deficient, if not erroneous. What is conspicuously absent in the literature is the recognition that the military is an apparatus of the state. As such, the question of state remained completely ignored. So is the question of class. Any attempt to find out an answer in the available literature to the question whom does the military represents would be futile. When the authors of these studies refer to the lack of political institutionalization they are actually more concerned about the political behavior of the ruling party and/or the leader. Yet, they do not explore the causes of such a behavior. The economic explanations advanced by the members of the corporatist school are strictly limited to the obvious ones like famine and inflation. Even the obvious ones have some 'hidden' reasons. But those hidden factors attracts little attention of these authors. For example, it is difficult to find out an answer to the question as to what really caused the famine that, according to them, undermined the legitimacy of Mujib-regime and thus paved the way for coup d'etat. A comprehensive explanation of the 1974 famine cannot be found by just looking inside Bangladesh and blaming the regime alone. It is unfortunate that these analysts of military intervention in Bangladesh never could see the linkages between the coups d'etat, regime changes and change in the nature of Bangladesh state.

These weaknesses grew out of the approaches they took to study military intervention. They tried to explain Bangladesh situation largely drawing on the general literature on military interventionism which grew together with the proliferation of military regimes in developing countries from the late 1950s through the mid 1970s. These approaches either put more emphasis on interests, outlooks, and ideologies of particular actors in military coup d'etat; or on the unique characteristics of the military establishment. Both actors and the institutions are considered as independent entities.



It is, however, true that another strand of literature, very weak to date, which I called 'structuralist approach', is partially free from these weaknesses. This approach is a remarkable improvement over the corporatist approach. The protagonists of this line of interpretation (Umar, for example) quite accurately contend that without proper appreciation of the nature of state and character of the ruling classes one cannot analyze the causes of military rule in Bangladesh. Yet, they have some problems of their own. The primary one being the uncritical acceptance of the classical and relatively crude Marxian approach to class and state. The unique characteristics of the peripheral social formation in general and Bangladesh in particular receives scant attention making the approach weak and incomplete. Yet, this approach has a great strength: it tries to lay bare the underlying forces of operation those creates conditions for military intervention. In other words, this approach attempts "to disclose 'deep structure' which underlines and produces directly observable phenomena of social life" (Bottomore, 1983:471).

This particular element of the structuralist approach serves as the point of departure of this study. The problem of military intervention is viewed in this study as a specific method of rule which emerged as a result of the interaction between the state and social classes of Bangladesh. As opposed to the prevalent structuralist approach which neglect the internal dynamics of a given country this study conceives the relationship between the external and internal forces as forming a complex whole. It insists that the problem has to be understood within the framework of peripheral capitalism in general and colonial/post-colonial peripheral capitalism in particular. Because these factors give rise to a unique state structure and class formation processes, without a proper appreciation of these aspects of peripheral formation one cannot understand the 'deep structures'. Accordingly, this study looks not only into regime change but also changes in state structure, and the socio-economic consequences of coups. Additionally, a central element of this new approach is historical analysis. It emphasizes not just the structural conditioning of social life but also the historical transformation of structures by

conflict, movements, class struggles and individuals. As such, the conjunctural events are no less significant than structural factors. Our analysis suggests that only a combination of conjuncture and conjunction makes it possible for the seizure of state power.

This approach is new not only in terms of explaining Bangladesh situation, it is an original contribution to the literature on military interventionism in general despite the fact that this study was exclusively limited to the case of Bangladesh and was not intended either to develop a 'covering law' or formulate an over-arching generalization.

#### Contribution to the General Literature

Much has been written over the years about the causes of coups d'état. Yet, it will be a mistake to claim that there is a general theoretical explanation of military intervention. The available literature can be categorized into two broad approaches: the dominant one and an alternative approach. The dominant approach suggests at least four overlapping factors as causes of and conditions for military intervention. These are: military, political, social, and economic.

The military explanation of military intervention can be found in the works of authors like Guy Pauker (1959), Lucian Pye (1962), S.E. Finer (1962), William Gutteridge (1962), Morris Janowitz (1964), Edward Feit (1968), Robert Dowse (1969), and Eric Nordlinger (1970, 1977). Their principal arguments are: 1) that "the organizational format designed to carry out military functions, as well as experience in the 'management of violence'" gives the military an unique ability to intervene politically" (Janowitz, 1964:32); 2) that the centralized command, hierarchy, discipline, high level of intercommunication, esprit de corps and a corresponding isolation from the civilian sector gives them a clear advantage over their civilian counterparts (Finer, 1962:6); 3) that the military has distinctive interests (such as adequate budgetary support, autonomy in managing their internal affairs, safeguarding their interests in the face of encroachment from rival organizations) which they wish to defend or advance; and 4) that foreign aid, training or collaboration imparts 'imported' values which gives soldiers new perceptions on the inadequacy

of civilian governments and thus liable to be removed<sup>4</sup>. The military explanations of military intervention has two serious drawbacks. Firstly, had the organization been the prime cause of military intervention, why did not all the countries with organized military succumb to military intervention? Instead countries with smaller and minimally organized militaries have also experienced coups d'état. Examples of such interventions are coups of Togo and the Central African Republic. The military assumed power in Togo in 1963 with only 250 men, and in the Central African Republic only 600 military personnel staged a successful coup in 1966. Clearly the nature and the internal organization of the military has to be seen in the context of the society in question and as against other social organizations, their relative strengths and weaknesses. This means that the organizational capacity of the military alone cannot be attributed for any intervention. The second drawback relates to the distinctive interests of the military. As I have mentioned before, a difficulty with any analysis which emphasizes the distinctive interests of the military is that it begs questions of how the army came to enjoy such autonomy. It would be impossible to find an answer to this question without a proper understanding of the genealogical origins of the military as well as its relationship with the civil society.

Political explanations have to do with both the inadequacy of political structures and the behavior of political actors. Huntington (1968) can be considered the best representative those who emphasize political factors as paramount in understanding military interventionism. According to him, "the most important causes of military intervention in politics are not military but political and reflect not the social and organizational characteristics of the military establishment, but the political and institutional structure of society" (Huntington, 1968:194). His central argument is that political systems with low level of institutionalization and high levels of

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<sup>4</sup>This is especially applicable to the highly professionalized armies in the developing countries which has been molded after 1945 through the use of military academies to preach the ideology of national security against the communist threat. It is argued that the army's *raison d'être* shifted from external defense to internal security and hence increased the likelihood of intervention in politics in the face of perceived threats to internal security.

participation, which Huntington called praetorian society, are particularly vulnerable to military interventions. That is to say, in the societies where political institutions are not developed enough to reflect and contain the needs and aspirations of the masses, social conflict escalates to the extent that a threat to the social order looms large. In a situation like this the legitimacy of the existing government declines making it a weak, inefficient and ineffective entity in the eyes of the masses. When the military takes a position to oppose the government, the downfall of the government becomes unavoidable. This explanation may claim success in describing situations leading to a military coup d'etat, but it definitely lacks the merit of analyzing the social origins of military rule. The question as to why political and institutional structures are weak in some countries while strong in others remain unanswered. If the colonialism and newly earned independence have to be blamed, how come countries with same historical legacy do not share the same destiny? Completely divergent role of military in Pakistan and India is a case in point.

Among the social explanations of military intervention, Finer's (1962) is the most sophisticated. Finer states that the various degrees of military intervention are directly and negatively related to the nature of the society's 'political culture'. In his schema, military interventions are characteristics of low level of political cultures<sup>5</sup>. It seem plausible to argue that a largely poor, illiterate population is less likely to want to resist military intervention than one which has evolved complex means of dealing with political conflict, based on a belief on democratic consent. But in reality it is not difficult to find otherwise. If a high level of political culture reduced the likelihood of military intervention, how could one subsequently explain coups

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<sup>5</sup>Finer sets two criteria for political culture: the first is the extent to which wide public approval exists for the procedures for transferring power and a corresponding belief that no exercise of power in breach of these procedures is legitimate; and this is coupled with the existence or otherwise of a wide public recognition of what or who is the sovereign authority and a corresponding belief that no other persons or bodies are legitimate. The second criteria is the width of the political public and how well organized it is in associations like trade unions, churches, political parties etc, (Finer, 1962:242).

in Greece ('the cradle of democracy'), Uruguay ('the Switzerland of Latin America') or Chile, with its equally long tradition of pluralism and military aloofness from politics?

At the heart of the economic explanation of military intervention is the argument that the poorer the country, the higher the possibility of military rule (Hopkins, 1973; Kennedy, 1974; Fossum, 1967). Additionally, it is argued that coups often concentrate in periods where there is a deteriorating economy (Needler, 1966; Fossum, 1967; Luttwak, 1968). McDonald explains intervention in Uruguay partly in terms of the desire 'to revive the stagnant economy' (McDonald, 1985) and Mitchell explains the 1964 coup in Bolivia partly in terms of the civilian government's inability to deliver the promised prosperity (Mitchell, 1981). But one must point to the ambiguous status of the economic factors revealed by deviant cases. For example, Argentina and Brazil are notorious for conflicts between civilian and military elites despite their relatively high economic development. It is not only the deviant cases that makes this approach weak but more importantly the conspicuous absence of an analysis of the causes of the economic underdevelopment of these countries, the historical background of the maldevelopment, and the systematic process of reproduction of the maldevelopment by various institutions.

It is clear from the foregone discussion that the four strand of explanations pursued in the dominant approach have serious shortcomings of their own. Together these factors may help us to discover certain patterns of events, but rarely serve us in our attempt to identify the underlying forces of operation. The 'bureaucratic authoritarian model' (B-A model), however, presents an alternative to this approach.

Radical Latin American scholars have developed 'the bureaucratic authoritarian model' to explain both military intervention and what follows it. The concept is introduced by Guillermo A. O'Donnell (1973) based on his interpretation of Latin American political economy. Bureaucratic Authoritarianism is a type of state that emerges in certain late industrialized countries as a response to the political and economic crises. The political system is seen to pass

from a populist phase in which a multi-class coalition of urban and industrial interests, including the working class, use the state to promote industrialization around consumer goods, to a bureaucratic authoritarian phase in which the coalition consists of high-level military and technocrats working with foreign capital. Electoral competition and popular participation are then suppressed, and public policy concerns with promoting advanced industrialization. Such a process is said to come about because the market for simple manufactured goods has been satisfied and the market dictates a 'deepening' of industrialization through the domestic manufacture of intermediate and capital goods through highly capitalized enterprises, often affiliated to multinational corporations. Brazil after 1964, Argentina after 1976, Chile after 1973 and Uruguay after 1975 are presented as examples (Collier, 1979; O'Donnell, 1979; Cammack, 1985; and Im, 1987). The political implication of such a process is that since a mass electorate is unlikely to vote for a package of policies which will reduce living standards in the immediate future, only an authoritarian government will be able to impose it and, in the absence of traditional elites enjoying any legitimacy, or coercive power, only a military takeover can ensure that capitalist development takes precedence over popular demands.

The bureaucratic authoritarian model has been criticized on the grounds that it is difficult to fit the facts of individual countries to the processes described, and that anyway the policies of the governments concerned have varied from the extremes of free market economics and political suppression in Chile to the more interventionist and pluralist policies in Brazil. In yet other cases, such as Colombia and Venezuela, democratic regimes have achieved considerable economic restructuring without bureaucratic authoritarianism, presumably because elites were able to obtain popular consent (O'Donnell, 1986).

The principal weaknesses of this model is its primacy on economic variables, exclusive emphasis on the import-substitution stage of industrialization (ISI), and consideration of state as a mere agent of the dominant economic class. Absence of any of these factors precludes us

from using this framework for understanding the causes of military rule. Nevertheless, this approach introduces us to some important elements those are significant in understanding peripheral societies: the state, the social classes and the economic system.

It is upon this premise that a state and social classes based historical approach was developed to understand military rule in peripheral societies. This approach has an intellectual debt to the B-A approach, but claims originality as it frees itself from the apparent shortcomings of B-A approach and broadens its scope to a larger number of countries. The Marxist and neo-Marxist literature on state and class, especially the explanatory frameworks of Alavi (1972), Kalecki (1976), Thomas (1984) and Ahmad (1985) are incorporated to understand the specifics of the social structure and the material basis of the state in peripheral societies. By doing so, this study develops a new and improved approach in understanding military intervention in peripheral formation and hence, makes an original contribution to the general literature on military intervention.

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