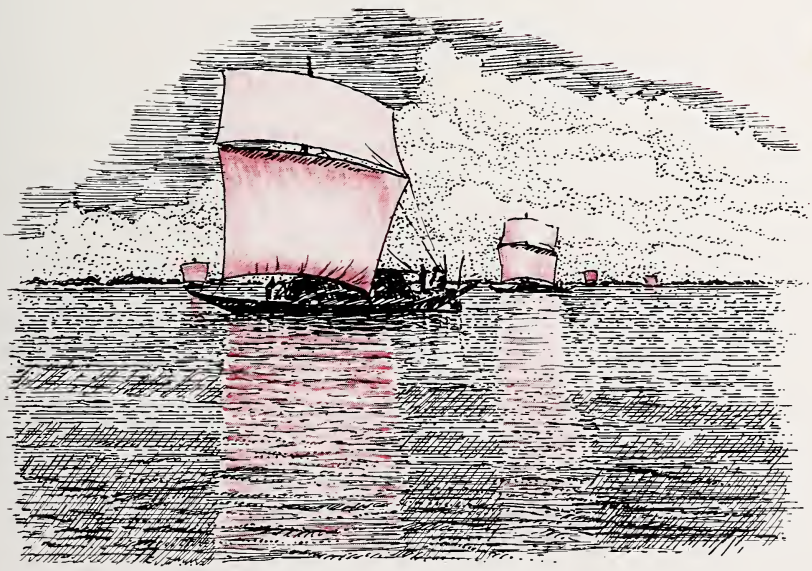
area handbook series

Bangladesh
a country study







Bangladesh
a country study

Federal Research Division
Library of Congress
Edited by
James Heitzman
and Robert L. Worden
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Foreword

This volume is one in a continuing series of books now being prepared by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress under the Country Studies—Area Handbook Program. The last page of this book lists the other published studies.

Most books in the series deal with a particular foreign country, describing and analyzing its political, economic, social, and national security systems and institutions, and examining the interrelationships of those systems and the ways they are shaped by cultural factors. Each study is written by a multidisciplinary team of social scientists. The authors seek to provide a basic understanding of the observed society, striving for a dynamic rather than a static portrayal. Particular attention is devoted to the people who make up the society, their origins, dominant beliefs and values, their common interests and the issues on which they are divided, the nature and extent of their involvement with national institutions, and their attitudes toward each other and toward their social system and political order.

The books represent the analysis of the authors and should not be construed as an expression of an official United States government position, policy, or decision. The authors have sought to adhere to accepted standards of scholarly objectivity. Corrections, additions, and suggestions for changes from readers will be welcomed for use in future editions.

Louis R. Mortimer
Acting Chief
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Washington, D.C. 20540

Acknowledgments

This edition supersedes the *Area Handbook for Bangladesh,* coauthored by Richard F. Nyrop, et alia, in 1975. Some parts of that edition have been used in the preparation of the current book, and the authors of *Bangladesh: A Country Study* are grateful for the seminal work done by the earlier edition's authors.

Several individuals provided timely insight and assistance to the authors. They included Lieutenant Colonel Russell Olson, United States Army; Major James A. Dunn, Jr., United States Army; former diplomat Archer Kent Blood; and Professor Harry W. Blair. The authors also wish to thank various members of the staff of the Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in Washington, D.C., especially Brigadier Sharifuddin Ahmed, M. Tajul Islam, Mohammed Nazimuddin, and Obaedul Huq, for useful comments and primary-source research materials. Bazlur Rahim and Joyce L. Rahim provided and tabulated key statistical information, respectively. Additionally, the staffs of the United States Embassy in Dhaka, the Department of State, and the World Bank provided timely economic data. Labanya Borra of the Library of Congress Descriptive Cataloging Division assisted with some of the Bangla-language materials.

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Preface

Bangladesh: A Country Study supersedes the 1975 *Area Handbook for Bangladesh*. Although much of what characterizes Bangladesh—its status as one of the world's largest but poorest countries and its corresponding need for international aid, its susceptibility to severe natural disasters, and the optimism of its people—has not changed in the years between publication of these two books, a considerable number of major developments have occurred. Just before the *Area Handbook for Bangladesh* went to press in 1975, the founding father of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib), and several members of his family were assassinated. The ensuing years brought two periods of transitional political instability, each followed by relative stability under long-term military regimes. More than a year passed after Mujib's death before Bangladesh Army chief of staff Ziaur Rahman (Zia) emerged as chief martial law administrator in November 1976. Zia assumed the presidency in April 1977, but he, too, became the victim of an assassination plot in May 1981. Army chief of staff Hussain Muhammad Ershad, after considerable hesitation, assumed the position of chief martial law administrator following a bloodless coup in March 1982 and became president in December 1983. By 1986 martial law had been relaxed, and civilian control gradually replaced military rule throughout all sectors of society. In 1988 Ershad continued to consolidate his role as civilian ruler of Bangladesh by calling for parliamentary elections and establishment of Islam as the state religion of Bangladesh. Continual pressure from opposition political forces shook the Ershad regime as the 1980s continued.

The authors of the 1975 work were examining a nation only slightly more than three years old. In contrast, the authors of the new edition have aimed to show the maturity Bangladesh has attained over nearly twenty years of development. Despite the continual adversity faced by Bangladeshis as they confront their historical development, difficult climate, burgeoning population, and fractious political forces, a national identity has emerged (see table A). Although the nation has much to accomplish in order to meet the basic needs of its people, much has been achieved in the 1970s and 1980s. Economic achievements have been made. Persistent demands by the people for basic freedoms and political expression have moved the country toward democratic rule. In international forums, Bangladesh's representatives had taken strong stands against injustice and in defense of their nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The transliteration of Bangla—the national language—varies widely among Bangladeshi and foreign scholars. Common family names may be transliterated in several ways, for example, Choudhury, Chaudri, Chowdhury, and several other variants. Where it is known, the authors have followed the spelling used by the individual. In other instances, the authors have followed the form used by the Bangladesh government; for example, the word *national* is transliterated as *jatiyo,* although many American sources use the less phonetically accurate *jatiya.* To the extent possible, the authors have used the place-names established by the United States Board on Geographic Names, e.g., Dhaka instead of Dacca.

Measurements are given in the metric system; a conversion table is provided to assist readers who want to convert measurements from metric (see table 1, Appendix). A bibliography of works used in researching the book is included. Whereas major sources of information are published in English, the readers of this book, after referring to the English- and other Western-language sources cited in the bibliography, may want to consult Bangla-language sources, such as the daily newspapers *Azad* (Free), *Ittefaq* (Unity), *Sangbad* (News), or *Dainik Bangla* (Daily Bangla); periodicals, such as the weekly *Bichitra* (Variety), *Rahbar* (Guide), or *Sachitra Sandhani* (Seeing Through Pictures); or the armed forces journal *Senani* (Army).

Table A. Chronology of Important Events

Period	Description
Ancient Empires	
ca. 1000 B.C.	Settlement of Bengal (see Glossary) by Dravidian-speaking peoples
ca. 550–486 B.C.	Life of Siddartha Gautama—the Buddha; founding of Buddhism
ca. 320–180 B.C.	Mauryan Empire; reign of Asoka (273–232 B.C.); spread of Buddhism
A.D. ca. 319–ca. 540	Gupta Empire; Classical Age in northern India
606–47	North Indian empire of Harsha
750–1150	Pala Dynasty
1150–1202	Sena Dynasty
Coming of Islam	
1001–1030	Turkish armies led by Mahmud of Ghazni raid into Indian subcontinent
1202	Turkish conquerors defeat Sena Dynasty and overrun Bengal
1206	Establishment of Delhi Sultanate
1341	Bengal achieves independence from Delhi; Dhaka established as capital
The Mughal Period	
1526–30	Babur lays foundation of Mughal Empire
1556–1605	Akbar the Great expands and reforms the empire
1576	Bengal conquered by Mughals
1605–27	Reign of Jahangir; British East India Company opens first trading post in 1612
1658–1707	Reign of Aurangzeb, last great Mughal ruler
1704	Capital of Bengal moved from Dhaka to Murshidabad
1707–1858	Lesser emperors; decline of the Mughal Empire
British Period	
Company Rule	
1757	Battle of Plassey—British victory over Mughal forces in Bengal; British rule in India begins
1793	Britain imposes Permanent Settlement (Land-lease) Act on Bengal, establishing a new land-lord system, which turns out to be disastrous for farmers
1835	Institution of British education and other reform measures
1857–58	Revolt of Indian sepoys (soldiers) against British East India Company
1858	British East India Company dissolved; rule of India under the British crown—the British Raj—begins; marks formal end of Mughal Empire
Empire to Independence	
1885	Indian National Congress (Congress) formed
1905	Partition of Bengal into separate provinces of East Bengal (including Assam) and West Bengal

Table A.—Cont.

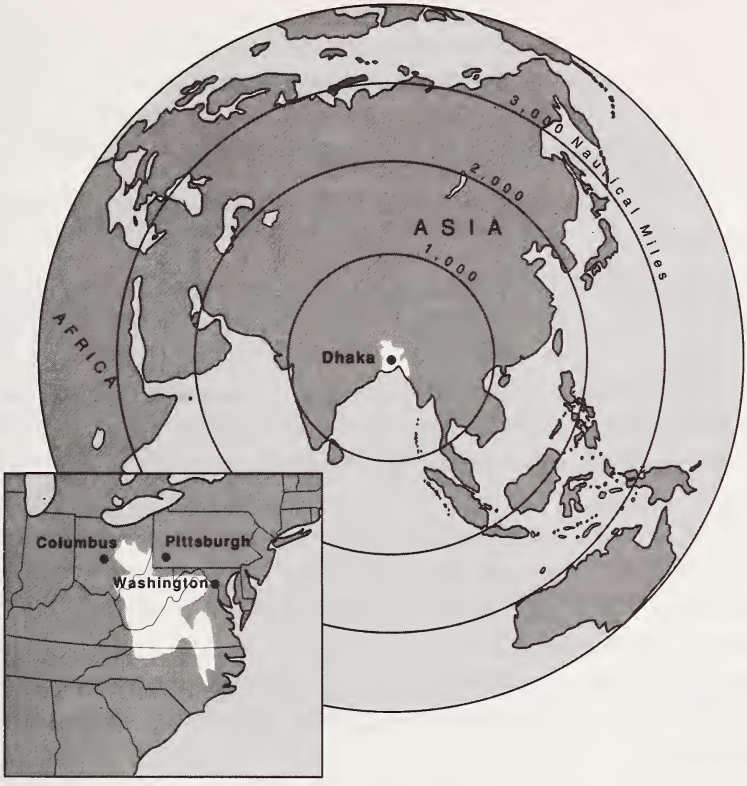
Period	Description
1906	All-India Muslim League (Muslim League) founded
1909	Morley-Minto reforms: separate electorates for Muslims
1912	Partition of Bengal annulled
1916	Congress-Muslim League Pact (often referred to as Lucknow Pact) signed
1919	India Act
1935	Government of India Act
1940	Muslim League adopts Lahore Resolution; "Two Nations" theory articulated by Muslim League leader Mohammad Ali Jinnah and others
1946	"Direct action" day of Muslim League, August 16
Independent Pakistan	
August 15, 1947	Partition of British India; India achieves independence and incorporates West Bengal and Assam; Pakistan is created and incorporates East Bengal (the East Wing, or East Pakistan) and territory in the northwest (the West Wing, or West Pakistan); Jinnah becomes governor general of Pakistan; Liaquat Ali Khan becomes prime minister
October 27, 1947	Undeclared war with India begins
September 11, 1948	Jinnah dies; Khwaja Nazimuddin becomes governor general
January 1, 1949	United Nations-arranged ceasefire between Pakistan and India takes effect
October 16, 1951	Liaquat assassinated; Nazimuddin becomes prime minister; Ghulam Mohammad becomes governor general
October 6, 1955	Iskander Mirza sworn in as governor general, succeeding Ghulam Mohammad, who had retired in ill health the previous month
March 23, 1956	Constitution adopted; Mirza becomes president
August 8, 1956	Muslim League leader Choudhry Mohammad Ali tenders resignation as prime minister and is succeeded the following month by Awami League (People's League) leader Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy
October 7, 1958	President Mirza abrogates constitution and declares martial law
October 27, 1958	Mirza sent into exile; General Mohammad Ayub Khan begins rule
August–September 1965	War with India
March 25, 1969	Ayub resigns as result of public pressure; General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan assumes power; East Pakistani Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib) arrested and jailed in West Pakistan

Table A.—Cont.

Period	Description
December 7, 1970	First general elections; Awami League under Mujib secures absolute majority in new Constituent Assembly; West Pakistan-dominated government declines to convene assembly
March 26–28, 1971	East Pakistan attempts to secede, beginning civil war; Mujib, imprisoned in West Pakistan, declared provisional president
April 17, 1971	Formal declaration of independence of Bangladesh issued; Mujib named president
December 3, 1971	Pakistan launches preemptive air strikes against India
December 4, 1971	India invades East Pakistan
December 6, 1971	India recognizes Bangladesh
December 16, 1971	Pakistani military forces in East Pakistan surrender to Indian armed forces, marking Bangladeshi independence
Independent Bangladesh	
January 10–12, 1972	Mujib returns from prison in West Pakistan; promulgates interim constitution and is sworn in first as president, then as prime minister
November 4, 1972	Parliamentary Constitution adopted
March 7, 1973	Mujib's Awami League wins overwhelming victory in parliamentary elections
February 22, 1974	Pakistan recognizes Bangladesh
September 17, 1974	Bangladesh admitted to United Nations
December 28, 1974	State of emergency declared as political situation deteriorates; fundamental rights under Constitution suspended
January 25, 1975	Constitution amended, abolishing parliamentary system and establishing presidential system with de facto one-man rule under Mujib
February 25, 1975	Mujib abolishes all parties but one—the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (Bangladesh Peasants, Workers, and People's League), the new name of the Awami League—which is under his direct control
August 15, 1975	Mujib assassinated in "majors' plot"; Khondakar Mushtaque Ahmed installed as president
November 3–7, 1975	Major General Khaled Musharraf killed in coup; Mushtaque resigns; Supreme Court chief justice Abu Sadat Muhammad Sayem becomes president and chief martial law administrator on November 7
November 30, 1976	Army chief of staff Ziaur Rahman (Zia) becomes chief martial law administrator
April 21, 1977	Sayem forced to resign because of "ill health"; Zia becomes president
May 30, 1977	Zia wins 98.9 percent of votes in referendum on his continuance as president
June 3, 1977	Supreme Court justice Abdus Sattar named vice president

Table A.—Cont.

Period	Description
April 1978	Zia announces new elections and independent judiciary; lifts ban on political parties
June 3, 1978	Zia elected president
February 18, 1979	Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party wins 207 out of 300 seats in parliamentary election
April 6, 1979	Martial law revoked; Constitution restored in full; Fifth Amendment ratifies all actions of Zia's martial law administration
May 30, 1981	Zia assassinated; Sattar becomes acting president
November 15, 1981	Sattar elected president
March 24, 1982	Sattar ousted in coup engineered by Lieutenant General Hussain Muhammad Ershad; Constitution suspended, Parliament dissolved, and political parties abolished; Ershad assumes full powers as chief martial law administrator
February 14–15, 1983	Student riots mark first major expression of public opposition to Ershad's martial law administration
March 1982–December 1983	Interim presidency of Abdul Fazal Muhammad Ahsanuddin Chowdhury
December 1983	Ershad assumes presidency
March 21, 1985	General referendum supports Ershad's administration
May 7, 1986	Parliamentary elections give pro-Ershad Jatiyo Party (National Party) majority in Parliament
October 15, 1986	Ershad elected president
November 10, 1986	Parliament passes Seventh Amendment to Constitution, ratifying all actions of Ershad's martial law administration; martial law withdrawn; Constitution restored in full
November 10–12, 1987	"Siege of Dhaka," mass demonstrations by united opposition parties against Ershad's government
December 6, 1987	Ershad dissolves Parliament
March 3, 1988	Parliamentary elections reaffirm Jatiyo Party control of Parliament
June 7, 1988	Eighth Amendment establishes Islam as state religion



Country

Formal Name: People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Short Form: Bangladesh.

Term for Citizens: Bangladeshi(s).

Capital: Dhaka.

Date of Independence: April 17, 1971; eastern part of Pakistan (East Pakistan), 1947–71.

Geography

Size: Total 144,000 square kilometers, land area 133,910 square kilometers.

Topography: Broad deltaic plain. Chittagong Hills in southeast, Low Hills in northeast and modest-elevation highlands in north and northwest.

Climate: Subtropical monsoon climate, wide seasonal variations in rainfall, moderately warm temperatures, high humidity. Climate generally uniform throughout entire country. Subject to severe natural disasters, such as floods, tropical cyclones, tornadoes, and tidal bores.

Society

Population: Officially given at 109,963,551 in July 1988. Eighth largest population in world. Annual growth rate 2.6 percent. Projected to reach more than 140 million by year 2000. About 82 percent live in rural areas, 18 percent in urban areas. In 1988 population density 821 per square kilometer, highest in world. Population control top priority for government.

Ethnic Groups: Over 98 percent Bengalis. Approximately 600,000 Biharis (Urdu-speaking, non-Bengali Muslims) and 900,000 members of tribal minority groups. Main tribal groups Chakmas, Marmas, Tipperas, and Mros, living primarily in Chittagong Hill Tracts (see Glossary).

Languages: Bangla (official language); English widely used by educated elite. Arabic used in many Muslim homes. Various tribal languages.

Religion: In 1988 nearly 83 percent Muslim, 16 percent Hindu, less than 1 percent Buddhist, Christian, and tribal religions.

Education: Schools based on British system: five years primary, five years lower secondary, and two years higher secondary. Higher education includes 758 general colleges, 7 universities, and 50 professional colleges. Traditional emphasis on arts and humanities; increased emphasis in late 1980s on technical subjects. Numerous religious-affiliated primary schools. In 1988 national literacy rate officially 29 percent, possibly lower; men 39 percent, women 18 percent; urban 35 percent, rural 17 percent.

Health: Life expectancy almost equal for males and females, averaging 55.1 years in 1986. Major health hazards infectious and parasitic diseases, poor nutrition, and inadequate sanitation. High infant mortality rate at 111.9 per 1,000; young children represented 40 percent of deaths annually.

Economy

Gross National Product (GNP): US$15.6 billion in fiscal year (FY) 1986 at current prices; per capita GNP US$150; 4.5 percent real growth in FY 1987.

Agriculture: Large-scale subsistence farming, labor intensive, heavily dependent on monsoon rains. Main crops rice, jute, wheat, tea, and forestry products. Fisheries of increasing importance.

Industry: Jute manufactures, ready-made garments, cotton textiles, seafood processing, and pharmaceuticals.

Services: Substantial exported labor, primarily to Persian Gulf nations. As many as 450,000 Bangladeshis abroad in 1987; important source of foreign currency remittances.

Resources: Sufficient natural gas for country's nitrogenous fertilizer needs. Abundant proven coal reserves. Offshore and onshore reserves of petroleum. Hydroelectric power and thermal power sources. Biofuels widely used in rural areas.

Exports: Approximately US$819 million in FY 1986. Raw jute and jute manufactures, frozen seafood, ready-made garments, tea, and leather goods. United States, Japan, and Britain largest buyers.

Imports: Approximately US$2.4 billion in FY 1986. Food grains, fuels, raw cotton, fertilizer, and manufactured products. Singapore, Japan, and United States largest suppliers.

Balance of Payments: Has had negative trade balance since independence in 1971. Exports represented 30 percent, imports 70 percent of total annual trade in FY 1986.

Exchange Rate: 34.20 takas = US$1 (September 1988).

Fiscal Year: July 1 to June 30.

Transportation and Communications

Rivers: Extensive and complex network of some 700 rivers. Major systems Jamuna-Brahmaputra, Padma-Ganges, Surma-Meghna, and Padma-Meghna, all of which flow south to Mouths of the Ganges and into Bay of Bengal. Fifth major system Karnaphuli in Chittagong region. Primary transportation system employing nearly 300,000 small and medium-sized sail- and human-powered country boats. About 8,430 kilometers of navigable waterways.

Roads: About 10,890 kilometers of motorable roads in 1986. Despite severe flooding, increasingly important means of moving

people and goods. Extensive network of bridges and ferries cross numerous inland waterways.

Railroads: About 2,818 kilometers of track in 1986. Operated by Bangladesh Railways, declining numbers of rolling stock as 1980s progressed.

Ports: Chittagong and Chalna major freight-handling ports.

Airports: Largest near Dhaka (Zia International Airport) and at Chittagong and Sylhet. National carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines serving twenty-four cities in twenty countries; domestic service to eighteen regional airports.

Government and Politics

Government: Presidential form of government with popularly elected president and appointed prime minister. 1972 Constitution amended numerous times to reflect new political realities. Unicameral Parliament (known as Jatiyo Sangsad, or House of the People) with 300 members. Elections held in March 1988.

Politics: Authoritarian or military regimes have run Bangladesh almost since its inception. Regime in power traditionally controls government and Parliament through single national political party: under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1972–75), the Awami League (People's League); under Ziaur Rahman (1977–81), the Bangladesh Nationalist Party; and under Hussain Muhammad Ershad (since 1982), the Jatiyo Party (National Party). Numerous opposition parties joined periodically in fractious alliances against party in power. In 1988 most important were Awami League, centrist Bangladesh Nationalist Party, leftist Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (National Socialist Party), and conservative, pro-Islamic Jamaat e Islami (Congregation of Islam). Student and workers' wings of these and other parties important players in national politics.

Justice: Supreme Court headed by chief justice. Two Supreme Court divisions: High Court Division with seven regional benches, and Appellate Division in Dhaka. Grass-roots judicial system at village level. British-style criminal codes, amended in Pakistan and Bangladesh eras.

Administrative Divisions: Divided into four administration divisions headed by commissioners. Divisions divided into twenty-one regions, further subdivided into sixty-four districts (*zilas*). Urban subdivisions in 1988 included four municipal corporations (Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, and Khulna—which corresponded to the

four divisions in name), eighty-seven municipalities (*pourashavas*), and thirty townships (*thanas*). Rural subdivisions included 460 subdistricts (*upazilas*) and 4,401 unions. Popularly elected representative councils (*parishads*) at various administrative levels except divisions and regions.

Foreign Affairs: Heavily dependent on massive infusions of foreign development aid, Bangladesh maintains neutral policy. Maintains friendly relations with United States, Soviet Union, and China; close relations with Muslim nations; and proper but watchful relations with neighboring India. Member of Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, Asian Development Bank, Colombo Plan, Commonwealth of Nations, Customs Cooperation Council, Group of 77, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Olympic Committee, International Rice Council, International Telecommunications Satellite Organization, INTERPOL, Islamic Development Bank, Nonaligned Movement, Organization of the Islamic Conference, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, United Nations and all its affiliated agencies, World Federation of Trade Unions, and World Tourism Organization.

National Security

Armed Forces: About 102,500 in 1988: army 90,000; navy 7,500; and air force 5,000.

Military Units: Most powerful and prestigious Ninth Infantry Division near Dhaka and Twenty-fourth Infantry Division at Chittagong. Other important infantry divisions at Rangpur, Jessore, Bogra, and Comilla—the latter two containing country's armor regiments.

Equipment: Army: Type 54/55 tanks, Chinese-made Type 59 main battle tanks, and Type 62 light tanks; 105mm and 122mm howitzers; 60mm and 120mm mortars; and 57mm, 76mm, and 106mm antitank weapons. Navy: Leopard-class Type 41 and Salisbury-class Type 61 frigates and more modern Chinese-made Hegu-class, P4-class, Hainan-class, and Shanghai II-class fast attack craft primarily for use in territorial waters. Air Force: three squadrons, comprising MiG-21s, Chinese-made F-6s and A-5s, Soviet An-26 transports, and American-made Bell 212 and Soviet Mi-8 helicopters.

Auxiliary Forces: Important supplement to armed forces. In 1988 consisted of 30,000-member Bangladesh Rifles, 20,000-member Ansars (security guards), and 5,000-member Armed Police, all subordinate to Ministry of Home Affairs. Used to extend governmental authority and ensure law and order in border and internal areas and backup to army in wartime. Village Defence Party of 10 million (males and females) largely involved in village security.



Figure 1. Administrative Divisions of Bangladesh, 1988

Introduction

THE WORLD FREQUENTLY RECEIVES bad news from Bangladesh. So adverse is the economic situation in Bangladesh that some have referred to it not as a Third World developing nation but as member of the "fourth world," the poorest of the poor. Its population of 110 million—the eighth largest in the world—lives on constricted land affected by an unkind climate. There is relatively little industry, and most people live at the subsistence level in rural areas. The political system is unstable, characterized by military coups, authoritarian regimes, civil violence, and a poor human rights record. Adding to the nation's woes are natural disasters. Tropical storms whipping in from the Bay of Bengal have repeatedly devastated the country, causing huge losses of life. In 1988 record floods caused by monsoon rains inundated two-thirds of the country, setting back economic growth. International lending and aid institutions bolster the country, but the problems are so massive that no one predicts near-term major improvements.

Despite its problems, Bangladesh is a land of miracles and heroic accomplishments. Using traditional methods, farmers manage to produce enough food to maintain one of the densest concentrations of rural people in the world. The Bangladeshi people have liberated themselves twice, from the British and from the Pakistanis. Perhaps the greatest deeds are cultural. The Bangla language has a distinguished history in literature and remains one of the most dynamic forces in South Asian arts and humanities. In Bangladesh, local language and artistic forms are combined with the Islamic religion in a special blend of orthodoxy and cultural nationalism. United by strong village traditions, the struggle for existence, the legacy of the freedom movement, the Bangla language, and Islam, most Bangladeshis retain considerable optimism and pride in their nation.

The economic and political situation in Bangladesh has its roots in the complex relationship between its unusual geography and its history during the last 200 years. Most of the country is a low-lying delta where four major river systems come together. The land is subject to heavy annual monsoon flooding followed by a long dry season. The extreme conditions support a fertile environment for agriculture but often demand a high cost from cultivators, who are confronted with the conflicting demands of irrigation systems and flood prevention measures. For these reasons, the area that is Bangladesh remained a frontier until the last few centuries, and the wild characteristics of the frontier still dominate society on newly

formed islands that continually emerge along the courses of silty rivers and along the coast.

High mountain walls to the north and the east block easy access to East Asia and Southeast Asia, orienting the country toward Indian civilization, but from the Indian standpoint Bangladesh stands on the periphery of culture and politics. While the hallmarks of civilization first appeared in northwest India and Pakistan at least 4,000 years ago, and a vibrant urban society existed in north India by 500 B.C., large-scale social organization in the area that became Bangladesh developed only by the seventh century A.D. The peripheral position of Bangladesh allowed the long-term survival there of cultural motifs that had been absorbed into history in most other parts of the subcontinent. Buddhism, for example, survived in Bangladesh as a royal cult and a popular religion long after it had died out in most of India. Even during the Mughal Empire (1526–1858), the neglected eastern wing of the province of Bengal (see Glossary) became part of a pan-Indian political system but remained a scene of political disunity and piracy. Under these conditions the population remained relatively small until the nineteenth century, and there was little indication of the intense pressure on resources that would develop by the twentieth century.

European traders arrived in the region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by following traditional Indian Ocean trade routes. They found a prosperous Bengal dotted with small commercial centers where a dynamic handloom weaving industry produced world-class textiles. As the power of the Mughal Empire waned in the early eighteenth century, the British East India Company became the dominant force in Bengal, but with fateful consequences. The British chose Calcutta in West Bengal as the center of their operations, resulting in a decisive westward shift of commercial interests and capital. The conquest of Bengal coincided with Europe's Industrial Revolution, driven in its early stages by the mechanization of the British textile industry. British policy deliberately discouraged the export of finished textiles to Britain and instead encouraged the spread of British-made goods in the colonies. The handloom industry was ruined, resulting in the collapse of the old commercial networks in Bengal. Meanwhile, British and Indian entrepreneurs looking for investment opportunities in the East Bengal countryside found that rice would support the growing population in Calcutta and that jute would satisfy the world market for sacking material.

As a result of these forces, during the nineteenth century East Bengal became a purely agricultural society, dominated by rice and jute, with few opportunities in commerce or manufacturing. The

British administration provided some basic public works for irrigation and transportation, encouraged land reclamation, prevented large-scale warfare, and implemented rudimentary public health measure. The policies of the British encouraged population growth but at the same time discouraged the urban and industrial development that had absorbed population increases in Europe. By the twentieth century, rapid population increases were outstripping advances in agriculture, and millions of Bengalis were trapped in subsistence agriculture with no alternative form of livelihood.

As nationalism began to grow in South Asia during the late nineteenth century, it accompanied a worldwide Islamic revival that found a rich field for expression in East Bengal. British education and economic opportunities under the colonial government tended to benefit Hindus, who dominated the jute and rice trade and formed a landlord class, while the mass of poor cultivators were mostly Muslims. The British encouraged communal religious consciousness by implementing limited election systems with separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims, a strategy that preserved the rights of minority communities but also allowed the colonial administration to play one side against the other throughout the early twentieth century. The profound doctrinal differences between Hinduism and Islam, the disproportionate opportunities for Hindus and Muslims in the colonial economy, and the growing political competition created a widening rift between the two religious communities. Muslim leaders in Bengal, aware of the deepening economic crisis there, argued at an early date for the separation of the eastern and western parts of Bengal, allowing the Muslim majority in the east greater expression in determining their destiny. The British government responded by dividing Bengal in 1905 but after only seven years rescinded the order, due to pressure throughout India from nationalist forces dominated, in the eyes of Bengali Muslims, by Hindu interests. By the 1940s, when British and Japanese armies were fighting nearby and famine had killed hundreds of thousands of people, the masses of Muslim Bengalis backed the All-India Muslim League (Muslim League), established in 1906, with its call for a separate Islamic state. Amid widespread communal violence, during which many East Bengal Hindus migrated to Hindu areas of India, East Bengal became part of the new nation of Pakistan in 1947 as the East Wing, or East Pakistan.

The issue of language, which quickly divided East Pakistan and West Pakistan, was a symbol for the unique role of Islam in the culture of East Pakistan. Conversion to Islam in Bengal had been a movement of the masses since the twelfth century, a rebellion against caste ideology that had kept peasants subservient to

landlords. Embracing Islam did not mean the adoption of a new, elite language and culture, however. Instead, the ancient Bangla language, which was based on Sanskrit, remained a vital force and had relatively few imports of Arabic or Persian terminology. The Bangla renaissance, a literary movement in reaction to British education in the late nineteenth century, found its roots in the long and rich history of Bengali folk literature and produced Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore. The love of Bangla that permeated all levels of society had links with a large and well-known religious literature created by mystic poets who spread the love of God regardless of communal differences. The doctrinal positions of Bengali Islam were orthodox, but a wide variety of popular religious practices linked originally to polytheism remained important in the countryside.

This web of Bangla language and culture was alien to the leaders of West Pakistan. Outside of Bengal, the preferred language of South Asian Muslims was Urdu, a combination of Sanskritic languages and Persian with a large admixture of Arabic terms. The reforming ideology of many Muslim nationalists in north and northwest India aimed at a return to the original message of Muhammad and a revival of Islam's Arabic roots. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, expressed the viewpoint of the majority in the Muslim League when he argued for one language—Urdu—that would unify the two wings of the nation. In 1952 the attempts to impose Urdu as the second language in East Pakistan provoked severe riots, leading to the death of two students—an event still remembered in Bangladesh as Martyrs' Day, an annual holiday celebrating the survival of Bangla. Until 1971 the language issue continued to boil, as Bengali nationalists refused to compromise their long-standing cultural traditions.

Neither East Pakistan nor West Pakistan had experienced democratic government until their separation from India in 1947, but the British-educated leaders of the Muslim League were determined to implement parliamentary rule. The task proved nearly impossible. The country was under constant pressure from India, the government and economy had to be constructed anew, ethnic divisions rocked West Pakistan, and neglect of East Pakistan by the central government pushed the nation toward civil war. Amid a political crisis, the minister of defense, General Mohammad Ayub Khan, accumulated increasing powers under the constitution and finally implemented military rule over Pakistan in 1958. He later engineered elections that made him president and allowed a return to parliamentary government dominated by his own party and military interests. The pattern of crisis, military takeover, and return to democracy directed by the generals was to recur in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

After the bloody war of independence in 1971, the leaders of Bangladesh implemented a republican form of government, directed by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib). As the new administration tried to cope with huge economic problems, it did not take long for the traditional factionalism of Bengali politics to resurface in the new nation. Mujib's party was committed to socialist reconstruction, but communist and socialist groups advocated further revolutionary change while conservative religious and military interests opposed socialism. Mujib began to implement an authoritarian, single-party dictatorship in 1974, but military factions revolted the following year, killed him along with most of his family, and plunged the nation into a period of chaos. Army chief of staff General Ziaur Rahman (Zia) accumulated more and more power and finally implemented martial law in 1976. He organized his own political party, manipulated elections that packed Parliament with his supporters, and became president in national elections in 1978. The rise to power of military interests followed closely the pattern set earlier by Ayub and the army in Pakistan.

The parallels with Pakistan continued during the 1980s. After the loss of Bangladesh, Pakistani politics had drifted under civilian regimes until 1977, when General Zia ul Haq took control and directed the nation until his sudden death in an air crash in August 1988. His regime slowly returned to a parliamentary government directed by his own party. In Bangladesh, President Zia's assassination in 1981 deprived the country of its most effective leader since independence. After a brief interlude under a weak civilian government, army chief of staff Lieutenant General Hussain Muhammad Ershad took power in a bloodless coup. Ershad's policies during the 1980s centered on creating his own political party, packing Parliament with his supporters, and winning election as president in 1986. By 1988 Bangladesh was officially a republic with a popularly elected government, but Ershad's Jatiyo Party (National Party) dominated all levels of administration and representative government. The parliamentary system allowed political opposition, however, and a wide range of political parties remained active, headed by the political successors of Mujib and Zia. The political opposition refused to give legitimacy to Ershad and his military supporters and generally declined to participate in parliamentary elections. Instead, the opposition organized periodic demonstrations and strikes that disrupted the country. The opposition was plagued with political factionalism that permeated Bangladeshi politics down to the village level, and frequent states of emergency kept coalitions from forming an effective unified front. Meanwhile, administrative reforms under Ershad's regime allowed the voters

to elect popular representatives to local governing bodies with a wide range of authority, giving local elites and the electorate a real stake in Ershad's political system. In the late 1980s, it appeared that military democracy was entrenched for the long term in Bangladesh.

The grim economic situation remained the most important problem for the young nation. Decades of skewed development under the British, followed by neglect under Pakistan and the destruction caused by the 1971 war, left the country prostrate during the early 1970s. The Mujib and Zia years witnessed major accomplishments in repairing damage and setting up the basic administrative machinery needed to run the country. At no time after independence, however, did Bangladesh experience sustained rates of economic growth sufficient to allow the country to outrun population growth and enter a period of rapid development. With few mineral resources, almost no industrial infrastructure, and a mostly unskilled labor force, Bangladesh depended on imports for most of the basic requirements of a modern nation. Its exports, on the other hand, were agricultural commodities, especially jute, that declined in real value and were subject to uncontrolled fluctuations in world demand. Under these circumstances, the economy depended on large annual inputs of foreign aid. In fact, since independence more than 85 percent of the annual development budget of Bangladesh relied on foreign aid receipts. Without this aid, the country would certainly have experienced disaster; with the aid, the economy achieved stability and even registered moderate advances that allowed it to survive.

In its unenviable status as "largest poorest" country in the world, Bangladesh was a test case for development strategies. The Mujib government nationalized the jute industry and other major industries, and the officially expressed purpose of the country was to build a socialist economy. In the first years after independence, there were serious thoughts of nationalizing all economic endeavors and collectivizing agriculture, a major departure from the traditional system of private ownership. Under the more conservative governments of Zia and Ershad, however, Bangladesh increasingly withdrew from the socialist path, and the administration slowly denationalized commercial and industrial enterprises. As the centrally planned economy declined, decentralized development strategies and private initiative became more important and were supported by large international donors, such as the World Bank (see Glossary) and the International Monetary Fund (see Glossary).

In rural areas, the government administered aid to major irrigation and flood control projects, while allotting an increasing

percentage of resources to local government bodies at the subdistrict (*upazila*) level staffed by civil servants but directed by elected local representatives. This process funneled capital and decision-making power into the hands of relatively wealthy or influential local elites, who then created employment opportunities for land-poor or landless laborers. In urban areas, development concentrated on major infrastructure projects such as power plants, as well as the encouragement of private enterprise for the export sector. By encouraging private industry, the government and international donors aimed to create jobs that would eventually provide an alternate source of income to unskilled or semiskilled laborers. The 1980s witnessed some major industrial advances, including a remarkable expansion of the ready-made garment industry and an export-oriented processed seafood industry. But was it enough? The underlying assumption of these development strategies was that urban capitalists and rural elites could create enough new jobs to outrun population increases in the future. The unanswered questions were whether the masses of poor workers would benefit quickly enough or whether they would rebel as they witnessed the growth of an influential Bangladeshi middle class. Massive popular unrest, encouraged by the political opposition, was an ever-present alternative to the government's development strategies.

The necessity for development aid underlay the foreign policy of Bangladesh, which remained decidedly nonaligned in world politics. During the first few years of independence, a close relationship with India reflected the early political isolation of Bangladesh and its dependence on its big neighbor for military protection as well as economic support. After achieving recognition by most countries, including Pakistan, by 1975 Bangladesh was ready to diversify its international connections when Mujib's death severed the special relationship with India and a concomitant one with the Soviet Union. The subsequent Zia and Ershad governments moved closer to the sources of aid: Japan, the United States, Canada, Western Europe, China, the wealthy Arab nations, and the big international lending agencies. At no time, however, did Bangladesh subordinate its foreign policy to its dependence on foreign donors. As a member of major international forums, such as the United Nations, the Nonaligned Movement, and the Commonwealth of Nations, Bangladesh advocated a new international economic order and an end to superpower interference in the affairs of sovereign states. Bangladesh's status as a populous but poor country without foreign alliances allowed it to take outspoken stands and to play a leading role among the nations of the Third World.

High international visibility and clear neutrality were important security strategies for Bangladesh because the nation's military capacity was insufficient to effectively defend the country against foreign adversaries. The most likely foe was India, which surrounds Bangladesh on three sides and could quickly overrun the country. Disputes with India began during the trauma of separation in 1947, were glossed over during the honeymoon period of the early 1970s, and began again in earnest during the late 1970s. Despite the intense nationalist feelings on both sides of the border, it seemed unlikely that India (or any other nation) would launch an attack, risking world censure and bringing in its wake the inherited problems of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh maintained, with help from China and other nations, an army of 90,000 personnel, a small air force and navy, and several paramilitary border and security forces. The roles of these forces in national defense were in reality subordinate to their roles in internal security. Military leaders repeatedly used the military to launch coups or to maintain order during massive campaigns of civil disobedience by the opposition parties. The army was also involved in ongoing counterinsurgency operations against tribal groups in the Chittagong Hills, where guerrillas of tribal minorities were fighting for independence. The ever-present threat of army intervention guaranteed the continuation of either military regimes or democratic governments that clearly represented the interests of the armed forces.

In the late 1980s, there was still hope for Bangladesh. The gigantic economic disasters predicted in the early 1970s remained possibilities, and many smaller calamities did occur, but Bangladeshis showed a striking ability to survive and make progress. The population continued to increase, but the rate of increase declined. Living conditions remained poor, but starvation was prevented. The government was authoritarian, but the rule of law and parliament continued. The economy advanced very slowly, but it did advance and showed signs of agrarian expansion and industrial diversification. Bangladesh maintained a high profile in international affairs and avoided military conflict with any foreign power, guaranteeing the high levels of foreign aid necessary for economic survival. Through it all, the rich cultural heritage of the Bangladeshis supported a remarkably tolerant Islamic society that held the allegiance of its people.

September 30, 1988

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After the manuscript for this book was completed in the summer of 1988, two calamitous events—both related to weather—occurred in Bangladesh. Floods devastated Bangladesh in the summer of 1988, and in the fall a killer cyclone hit the still-beleaguered nation. As in the past, the resilient people of Bangladesh confronted the disastrous effects on the nation's economy with government assistance and international aid.

The floods—caused by heavy monsoon runoff in the Himalayas—started in August 1988 and were described as the worst in the country's history. Nearly 47 million people and an area of more than 120,000 of the nation's 144,000 square kilometers were affected. In some districts the entire population was left homeless. Flood waters were deeper than ever recorded before, and for the first time Zia International Airport near Dhaka had to be closed when its runways were inundated, an occurrence that further hindered relief operations. Statistics provided by the government were grim: 53 of the country's 64 districts affected; some 4 million hectares of crops completely destroyed and an additional 3 million partially destroyed; and some 100,000 head of cattle lost. Because of improved preparedness over previous years—some 1.5 million tons of food and ample supplies of medicine had been strategically stockpiled, and some 3,000 civilian and military medical teams were dispatched—the loss of human life was mitigated: just over 1,600 died from the direct cause of flooding, and about 500 died from diseases resulting from the floods. The nation's infrastructure, however, suffered considerably. More than 40 railroad bridges, nearly 640 kilometers of railroad track, and nearly 68,000 kilometers of roads were damaged, and more than 10,000 education institutions were partially or completely destroyed. The international community responded with in-kind and financial relief and rehabilitation aid of more than US$500 million.

Government efforts to rebuild water control projects destroyed in previous years' flooding were too little and too late to withstand the major floods of 1988. In the midst of the flooding, President Ershad called for the cooperation of China, India, Bhutan, and Nepal—the location of the sources of the major rivers that flow from the Himalayas and foothills of the Himalayas into Bangladesh—in determining the cause of his country's misery. Environmental factors upriver, such as heavy deforestation, burgeoning populations, and overutilization of critical resources, were seen as having exacerbated the 1988 flooding. Heavy runoff through the flat, overpopulated, and heavily planted Bangladesh Plain—the catch basin

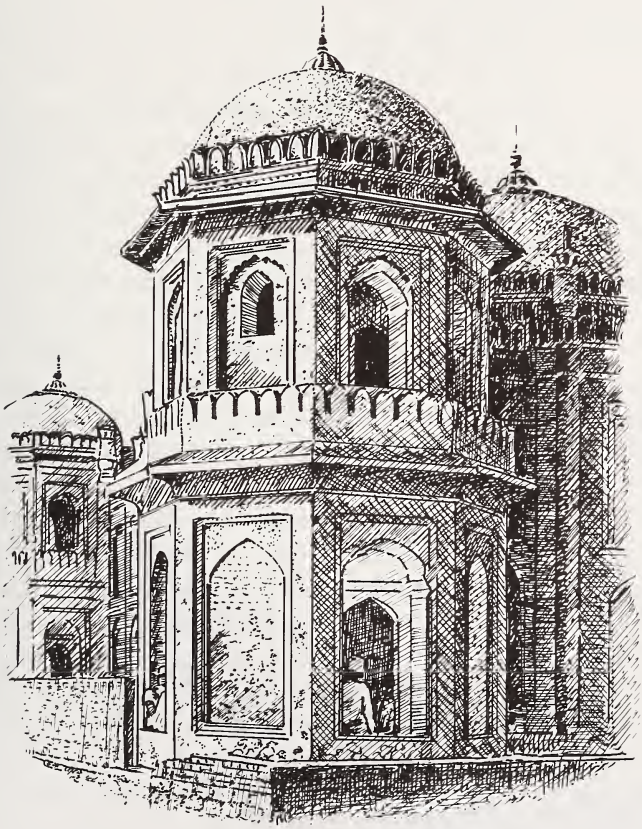
for the great Himalayan rivers—was too much for the manmade drainage system still recovering from the 1987 floods. Although flood control was seen by some observers as the responsibility of Bangladesh, regional cooperation in water management and land-use policy was essential.

Just three months after the summer floods had hit and the fertile soil was again green with crops, a cyclone hit southeastern Bangladesh November 29–30. About 600 persons were killed, and more than 100 ships and smaller vessels sank or ran aground as 2-meter surges hit coastal areas.

Amidst perennial disasters, Bangladesh continued to gird itself for the 1990s. The number one priority continued to be efforts to reduce the rate of population growth from 2.6 percent to 1.8 percent per annum by 1990. Self-sufficiency in food was next in the order of targeted goals, followed by efforts to further industrialize the country in the ready-made garment, frozen seafood, jute, and leather products industries. The manufacture of electronic components, started only in 1985 and designed for export to Singapore, Hong Kong, and the United States, was seen in 1989 as a key sector for improvement.

May 20, 1989 James Heitzman and Robert L. Worden

Chapter 1. Historical Setting





Detail of the Seven Dome Mosque in Dhaka,
Mughal period, 1526–1858

BANGLADESH, FORMERLY THE East Wing of Pakistan, emerged as an independent nation in December 1971. The exclamation on the occasion—"Joi Bangla! Joi Bangla!" (Victory to Bengal! Victory to Bengal!) was a collective and plaintive cry following a particularly bitter and bloody struggle for freedom. These words echoed the cultural and ethnic disposition of the new state—in short, the ethos of the people—that Bangladesh was to be a culturally and linguistically cohesive unit. Pakistan itself had been created on August 15, 1947, largely the result of communal passions pitting Hindus against Muslims. Pakistan was divided into two wings, separated by 1,600 kilometers of Indian territory, with Islam only a tenuous link between the two wings. Of paramount importance to East Pakistanis was the Bangla (before 1971 usually referred to as Bengali) language and culture, a consideration not appreciated by the West Wing of Pakistan until it was too late.

When Bangladesh joined the community of nations, it was at first recognized by only India and Bhutan. With its fragile and underdeveloped economic infrastructure under extreme duress, its law and order situation challenged by numerous well-armed contingents of unemployed former freedom fighters, its impoverished population agitated by the unfulfilled promise of rising expectations, Bangladesh was, in international circles, given the unfortunate label of "international basket case."

Bangladeshis rejoiced at their attainment of independence and offered their adulation to the first national leader of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib), or the Bangabandhu, the "Beloved of Bangladesh." Yet the future of Bangladesh, envisioned by the Bangabandhu and enshrined in the 1972 Constitution as nationalism, socialism, secularism, and democracy, was as uncertain and ephemeral as the Bengal monsoon. In 1975 Mujib, by then discredited for presiding over a bankrupt and corrupt regime, was assassinated along with most of his family. In the ensuing years, a number of regimes rose and fell in the violent legacy of Bangladeshi politics. Authoritarian and military rule has dominated the short history of Bangladesh. But Bengali society is known for its mercurial politics, and popular demands for a more open government in Bangladesh, while under control in the late 1980s, continued unabated.

Early History, 1000 B.C.–A.D. 1202

For most of its history, the area known as Bangladesh was a political backwater—an observer rather than a participant in the great political and military events of the Indian subcontinent (see fig. 1). Historians believe that Bengal, the area comprising present-day Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal, was settled in about 1000 B.C. by Dravidian-speaking peoples who were later known as the Bang. Their homeland bore various titles that reflected earlier tribal names, such as Vanga, Banga, Bangala, Bangal, and Bengal.

The first great indigenous empire to spread over most of present-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh was the Mauryan Empire (ca. 320–180 B.C.), whose most famous ruler was Asoka (ca. 273–232 B.C.). Although the empire was well administered and politically integrated, little is known of any reciprocal benefits between it and eastern Bengal. The western part of Bengal, however, achieved some importance during the Mauryan period because ships sailed from its ports to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. During the time of the Mauryan Empire, Buddhism came to Bengal, and it was from there that Asoka's son, Mahinda, carried the message of the Enlightened One to Sri Lanka. After the decline of the Mauryan Empire the eastern portion of Bengal became the kingdom of Samatata; although politically independent, it was a tributary state of the Indian Gupta Empire (A.D. ca. 319–ca. 540).

The third great empire was the Harsha Empire (A.D. 606–47), which drew Samatata into its loosely administered political structure. The disunity following the demise of this short-lived empire allowed a Buddhist chief named Gopala to seize power as the first ruler of the Pala Dynasty (A.D. 750–1150). He and his successors provided Bengal with stable government, security, and prosperity while spreading Buddhism throughout the state and into neighboring territories. Trade and influence were extensive under Pala leadership, as emissaries were sent as far as Tibet and Sumatra.

The Senas, orthodox and militant Hindus, replaced the Buddhist Palas as rulers of a united Bengal until the Turkish conquest in 1202. Opposed to the Brahmanic Hinduism of the Senas with its rigid caste system, vast numbers of Bengalis, especially those from the lower castes, would later convert to Islam (see Religion, ch. 2).

Islamization of Bengal, 1202–1757

The Turkish conquest of the subcontinent was a long, drawn-out process covering several centuries. It began in Afghanistan with



Ancient ruins at Paharpur
Courtesy Bangladesh
Ministry of Information

the military forays of Mahmud of Ghazni in 1001. By the early thirteenth century, Bengal fell to Turkish armies. The last major Hindu Sena ruler was expelled from his capital at Nadia in western Bengal in 1202, although lesser Sena rulers held sway for a short while after in eastern Bengal.

Bengal was loosely associated with the Delhi Sultanate, established in 1206, and paid a tribute in war elephants in order to maintain autonomy. In 1341 Bengal became independent from Delhi, and Dhaka was established as the seat of the governors of independent Bengal. Turks ruled Bengal for several decades before the conquest of Dhaka by forces of the Mughal emperor Akbar the Great (1556–1605) in 1576. Bengal remained a Mughal province until the beginning of the decline of the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century.

Under the Mughals, the political integration of Bengal with the rest of the subcontinent began, but Bengal was never truly subjugated. It was always too remote from the center of government in Delhi. Because lines of communications were poor, local governors found it easy to ignore imperial directives and maintain their independence. Although Bengal remained provincial, it was not isolated intellectually, and Bengali religious leaders from the fifteenth century onward have been influential throughout the subcontinent.

The Mughals in their heyday had a profound and lasting effect on Bengal. When Akbar ascended the throne at Delhi, a road

connecting Bengal with Delhi was under construction and a postal service was being planned as a step toward drawing Bengal into the operations of the empire. Akbar implemented the present-day Bengali calendar (see Glossary), and his son, Jahangir (1605–27), introduced civil and military officials from outside Bengal who received rights to collect taxes on land. The development of the zamindar (tax collector and later landlord—see Glossary) class and its later interaction with the British would have immense economic and social implications for twentieth-century Bengal. Bengal was treated as the "breadbasket of India" and, as the richest province in the empire, was drained of its resources to maintain the Mughal army. The Mughals, however, did not expend much energy protecting the countryside or the capital from Arakanese or Portuguese pirates; in one year as many as 40,000 Bengalis were seized by pirates to be sold as slaves, and still the central government did not intervene. Local resistance to imperial control forced the emperor to appoint powerful generals as provincial governors. Yet, despite the insecurity of the Mughal regime, Bengal prospered. Agriculture expanded, trade was encouraged, and Dhaka became one of the centers of the textile trade in South Asia.

In 1704 the provincial capital of Bengal was moved from Dhaka to Murshidabad. Although they continued to pay tribute to the Mughal court, the governors became practically independent rulers after the death in 1707 of Aurangzeb, the last great Mughal emperor. The governors were strong enough to fend off marauding Hindu Marathas from the Bombay area during the eighteenth century. When the Mughal governor Alivardi died in 1756, he left the rule of Bengal to his grandson Siraj ud Daulah, who would lose Bengal to the British the following year.

European Colonization, 1757–1857

Early Settlements

The Indian subcontinent had had indirect relations with Europe by both overland caravans and maritime routes, dating back to the fifth century B.C. The lucrative spice trade with India had been mainly in the hands of Arab merchants. By the fifteenth century, European traders had come to believe that the commissions they had to pay the Arabs were prohibitively high and therefore sent out fleets in search of new trade routes to India. The arrival of the Europeans in the last quarter of the fifteenth century marked a great turning point in the history of the subcontinent. The dynamics of the history of the subcontinent came to be shaped chiefly by the Europeans' political and trade relations with India

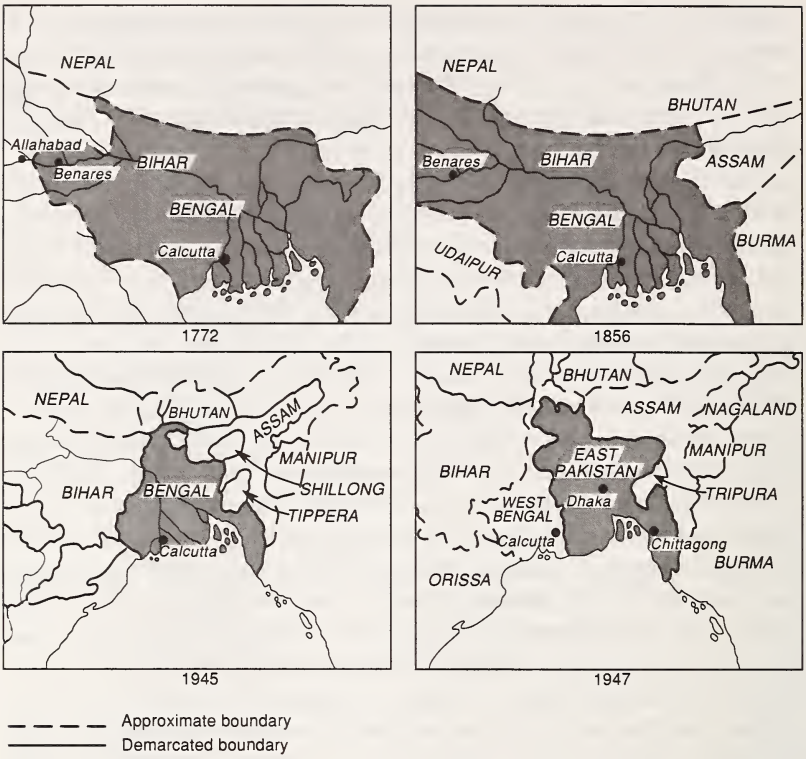
as India was swept into the vortex of Western power politics. The arrival of the Europeans generally coincided with the gradual decline of Mughal power, and the subcontinent became an arena of struggle not only between Europeans and the indigenous rulers but also among the Europeans.

The British East India Company, a private company formed in 1600 during the reign of Akbar and operating under a charter granted by Queen Elizabeth I, established a factory on the Hooghly River in western Bengal in 1650 and founded the city of Calcutta in 1690. Although the initial aim of the British East India Company was to seek trade under concessions obtained from local Mughal governors, the steady collapse of the Mughal Empire (1526–1858) enticed the company to take a more direct involvement in the politics and military activities of the subcontinent. Capitalizing on the political fragmentation of South Asia, the British ultimately rose to supremacy through military expeditions, annexation, bribery, and playing one party off against another. Aside from the superior military power of the British, their ascendancy was fostered by the tottering economic foundations of the local rulers, which had been undermined by ravaging dynastic wars and the consequent displacement of the peasants from the land, which was the principal source of state revenue.

Siraj ud Daulah, governor of Bengal, unwisely provoked a military confrontation with the British at Plassey in 1757. He was defeated by Robert Clive, an adventurous young official of the British East India Company. Clive's victory was consolidated in 1764 at the Battle of Buxar on the Ganges, where he defeated the Mughal emperor. As a result, the British East India Company was granted the title of *diwan* (collector of the revenue) in the areas of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, making it the supreme, but not titular, governing power. Henceforth the British would govern Bengal and from there extend their rule to all of India. By 1815 the supremacy of the British East India Company was unchallengeable, and by the 1850s British control and influence had extended into territories essentially the same as those that became the independent states of India and Pakistan in 1947 (see fig. 2).

The British Raj

Beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century, when the foundations of British rule were effectively laid, the British government showed increasing interest in the welfare of the people of India, feeling the need to curb the greed, recklessness, and corrupt activities of the private British East India Company. Beginning in 1773, the British Parliament sought to regulate the



Source: Based on information from Michael Edwards, *A History of India,* Bombay, 1961, 219, 287, and 343.

Figure 2. Bengal: 1772, 1856, 1945, and 1947

company's administration. By 1784 the company was made responsible to Parliament for its civil and military affairs and was transformed into an instrument of British foreign policy.

Some new measures introduced in the spirit of government intervention clearly did not benefit the people of Bengal. The Permanent Settlement (Landlease Act) of Lord Charles Cornwallis in 1793, which regulated the activities of the British agents and imposed a system of revenue collection and landownership, stands as a monument to the disastrous effects of the good intentions of Parliament. The traditional system for collecting land taxes involved the zamindars, who exercised the dual function of revenue collectors and local magistrates. The British gave the zamindars the status and rights of landlords, modeled mainly on the British landed gentry and aristocracy. Under the new system the revenue-collecting rights were often auctioned to the highest bidders, whether or not they

had any knowledge of rural conditions or the managerial skills necessary to improve agriculture. Agriculture became a matter of speculation among urban financiers, and the traditional personal link between the resident zamindars and the peasants was broken. Absentee landlordship became commonplace, and agricultural development stagnated.

Most British subjects who had served with the British East India Company until the end of the eighteenth century were content with making profits and leaving the Indian social institutions untouched. A growing number of Anglican and Baptist evangelicals in Britain, however, felt that social institutions should be reformed. There was also the demand in Britain, first articulated by member of Parliament and political theorist Edmund Burke, that the company's government balance its exploitative practices with concern for the welfare of the Indian people. The influential utilitarian theories of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill stated that societies could be reformed by proper laws. Influenced in part by these factors, British administrators in India embarked on a series of social and administrative reforms that were not well received by the conservative elements of Bengali society. Emphasis was placed on the introduction of Western philosophy, technology, and institutions rather than on the reconstruction of native institutions. The early attempts by the British East India Company to encourage the use of Sanskrit and Persian were abandoned in favor of Western science and literature; elementary education was taught in the vernacular, but higher education in English. The stated purpose of secular education was to produce a class of Indians instilled with British cultural values. Persian was replaced with English as the official language of the government. A code of civil and criminal procedure was fashioned after British legal formulas. In the field of social reforms, the British suppressed what they considered to be inhumane practices, such as suttee (self-immolation of widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands), female infanticide, and human sacrifice.

British policy viewed colonies as suppliers of raw materials and purchasers of manufactured goods. The British conquest of India coincided with the Industrial Revolution in Britain, led by the mechanization of the textile industry. As a result of the British policy of dumping machine-made goods in the subcontinent, India's domestic craft industries were thoroughly ruined, and its trade and commerce collapsed. Eastern Bengal was particularly hard hit. Muslin cloth from Dhaka had become popular in eighteenth-century Europe until British muslin drove it off the market.

The Uprising of 1857

A Great Divide in South Asian History

On May 10, 1857, Indian soldiers of the British Indian Army, drawn mostly from Muslim units from Bengal, mutinied at the Meerut cantonment near Delhi, starting a year-long insurrection against the British. The mutineers then marched to Delhi and offered their services to the Mughal emperor, whose predecessors had suffered an ignoble defeat 100 years earlier at Plassey. The uprising, which seriously threatened British rule in India, has been called many names by historians, including the Sepoy Rebellion, the Great Mutiny, and the Revolt of 1857; many people of the subcontinent, however, prefer to call it India's "first war of independence." The insurrection was sparked by the introduction of cartridges rumored to have been greased with pig or cow fat, which was offensive to the religious beliefs of Muslim and Hindu sepoys (soldiers). In a wider sense, the insurrection was a reaction by the indigenous population to rapid changes in the social order engineered by the British over the preceding century and an abortive attempt by the Muslims to resurrect a dying political order. When mutinous units finally surrendered on June 20, 1858, the British exiled Emperor Bahadur Shah to Burma, thereby formally ending the Mughal Empire. As a direct consequence of the revolt, the British also dissolved the British East India Company and assumed direct rule over India, beginning the period of the British Raj. British India was thereafter headed by a governor general (called viceroy when acting as the direct representative of the British crown). The governor general, who embodied the supreme legislative and executive authority in India, was responsible to the secretary of state for India, a member of the British cabinet in London.

Reappraisal of British Policy

The uprising precipitated a dramatic reappraisal of British policy—in effect a retreat from the reformist and evangelical zeal that had accompanied the rapid territorial expansion of British rule. This policy was codified in Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858 delivered to "The Princes, Chiefs, and Peoples of India." Formal annexations of princely states virtually ceased, and the political boundaries between British territories and the princely states became frozen. By this time the British territories occupied about 60 percent of the subcontinent, and some 562 princely states of varying size occupied the remainder. The relationship the British maintained with the princely states was governed by the principle of paramountcy, whereby the princely states exercised sovereignty in

their internal affairs but relinquished their powers to conduct their external relations to Britain, the paramount power. Britain assumed responsibility for the defense of the princely states and reserved the right to intervene in cases of maladministration or gross injustice.

Despite Queen Victoria's promise in 1858 that all subjects under the British crown would be treated equally under the law, the revolt left a legacy of mistrust between the ruler and the ruled. In the ensuing years, the British often assumed a posture of racial arrogance as "sahibs" who strove to remain aloof from "native contamination." This attitude was perhaps best captured in Rudyard Kipling's lament that Englishmen were destined to "take up the white man's burden."

As a security precaution, the British increased the ratio of British to Indian troops following the mutiny. In 1857 British India's armies had had 45,000 Britons to 240,000 Indian troops. By 1863 this ratio had changed to a "safer mix" of 65,000 British to 140,000 Indian soldiers. In the aftermath of the revolt, which had begun among Bengalis in the British Indian Army, the British formed an opinion, later refined as a theory, that there were martial and nonmartial races in India. The nonmartial races included the Bengalis; the martial included primarily the Punjabis and the Pathans, who supported the British during the revolt (see Colonial Origins, ch. 5).

The transfer of control from the British East India Company to the British crown accelerated the pace of development in India. A great transformation took place in the economy in the late nineteenth century. The British authorities quickly set out to improve inland transportation and communications systems, primarily for strategic and administrative reasons. By 1870 an extended network of railroads, coupled with the removal of internal customs barriers and transit duties, opened up interior markets to domestic and foreign trade and improved links between what is now Bangladesh and Calcutta. India also found itself within the orbit of worldwide markets, especially with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Foreign trade, though under virtual British monopoly, was stimulated. India exported raw materials for world markets, and the economy was quickly transformed into a colonial agricultural arm of British industry.

The Nationalist Movement and the Rise of Muslim Consciousness, 1857–1947

The recovery of the Muslim community from its low status after the 1857 mutiny was a gradual process that went on throughout

the ensuing century. In education, commerce, and government service the Muslims lagged behind the Hindus, who more quickly adapted themselves to rapidly changing socioeconomic conditions. During British rule in India, most industry was Hindu-owned and Hindu-operated. Muslims lagged behind in business and in industry, especially those from eastern Bengal, which had long been regarded as remote from the hub of commerce. The words of Bengali commentator Mansur Ali succinctly describe the Hindu dominance and Muslim inferiority in virtually all spheres of society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: "In Bengal, the landlord is Hindu, the peasant Muslim. The money lender is Hindu, the client is Muslim. The jailor is Hindu, the prisoner is Muslim. The magistrate is Hindu, the accused is Muslim." By remaining aloof from the Western-oriented education system, the Muslims alienated themselves from the many new avenues opening up for the emerging middle class. This self-imposed isolation led to an intensified awareness of their minority role. Curiously, however, it was Muslim opposition to the extension of representative government—a political stance taken out of fear of Hindu dominance—that helped to reestablish rapport with the British, who by 1900 welcomed any available support against mounting Hindu nationalism.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, under the leadership of a Muslim noble and writer, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–98), a beginning was made toward reconciling the traditional views of Indian Muslims and the new ideas and education system being introduced by the British. Syed was responsible for the founding in 1875 of the Muhammadan-Anglo Oriental College (renamed the Muslim University of Aligarh in 1921), where Islamic culture and religious instruction were combined with a British university system. Syed was one of the first Muslims to recognize the problems facing his community under a government ruled by the Hindu majority. He did not propose specific alternatives to majority rule, but he warned that safeguards were necessary to avoid the possibility of open violence between the religious communities of India.

The Division of Bengal, 1905–12

In 1905 the British governor general, Lord George Curzon, divided Bengal into eastern and western sectors in order to improve administrative control of the huge and populous province. Curzon established a new province called Eastern Bengal and Assam, which had its capital at Dhaka. The new province of West Bengal (the present-day state of West Bengal in India) had its capital at Calcutta, which also was the capital of British India. During the next



Procession in Dhaka honoring the martyrdom of Muhammad's grandson shows clothing, buildings, and other aspects of early nineteenth-century society. Watercolor by Alam Musavvir, ca. 1820 Courtesy Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka

few years, the long neglected and predominantly Muslim eastern region of Bengal made strides in education and communications. Many Bengali Muslims viewed the partition as initial recognition of their cultural and political separation from the Hindu majority population. Curzon's decision, however, was ardently challenged by the educated and largely Hindu upper classes of Calcutta. The Indian National Congress (Congress), a Hindu-dominated political organization founded in 1885 and supported by the Calcutta elite, initiated a well-planned campaign against Curzon, accusing him of trying to undermine the nationalist movement that had been spearheaded by Bengal. Congress leaders objected that Curzon's partition of Bengal deprived Bengali Hindus of a majority in either new province—in effect a tactic of divide and rule. In response, they launched a movement to force the British to annul the partition. A *swadeshi* (a devotee of one's own country) movement boycotted British-made goods and encouraged the production and use of Indian-made goods to take their place. *Swadeshi* agitation spread throughout India and became a major plank in the Congress platform. Muslims generally favored the partition of Bengal but could not compete with the more politically articulate and economically

powerful Hindus. In 1912 the British voided the partition of Bengal, a decision that heightened the growing estrangement between the Muslims and Hindus in many parts of the country. The reunited province was reconstituted as a presidency and the capital of India was moved from Calcutta to the less politically electric atmosphere of New Delhi. The reunion of divided Bengal was perceived by Muslims as a British accommodation to Hindu pressures.

Development of the Muslim League, 1906–20

In 1906 the All-India Muslim League (Muslim League) met in Dhaka for the first time. The Muslim League used the occasion to declare its support for the partition of Bengal and to proclaim its mission as a "political association to protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Mussalmans of India." The Muslim League initially professed its loyalty to the British government and its condemnation of the *swadeshi* movement. It was of an altogether different nature from Congress. Congress claimed to fight for only secular goals that represented Indian national aspirations regardless of religious community. Yet despite its neutral stance on religion, Congress encountered opposition from some leaders in the Muslim community who objected to participation in Congress on the grounds that the party was Hindu dominated. The Muslim League strictly represented only the interests of the Muslim community. Both parties originally were elitist, composed of intellectuals and the middle class, and lacked a mass following until after 1930. The Muslim League looked to the British for protection of Muslim minority rights and insisted on guarantees for Muslim minority rights as the price of its participation with Congress in the nationalist movement. In 1916 the two parties signed the Congress-Muslim League Pact (often referred to as the Lucknow Pact), a joint platform and call for national independence. The essence of the alliance was the endorsement by the Muslim League of demands for democratization in representation; Indianization of administration and racial equality throughout India in return for acceptance by the Congress of separate communal electorates (Muslims voted for and were represented by Muslims, Sikhs voted for and were represented by Sikhs, while the remainder of the population was termed "general" and included mostly Hindus); a reserved quota of legislative seats for Muslims; and the Muslim League's right to review any social legislation affecting Muslims. The Lucknow Pact was a high-water mark of unity in the nationalist cause, but it also endorsed a scheme that engendered communal rather than national identity. The plan for separate electorates for Muslims, first put into law by the Indian Councils

Act of 1909, was further strengthened and expanded by the India Act of 1919 (the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms).

World War I had a profound impact on the nationalist movement in India. Congress enthusiastically supported the war effort in the hope that Britain would reward Indian loyalty with political concessions, perhaps independence, after the war. The Muslim League was more ambivalent. Part of this ambivalence had to do with the concerns expressed by Muslim writers over the fate of Turkey. The Balkan wars, the Italo-Turkish War, and World War I were depicted in India as a confrontation between Islam and Western imperialism. Because the sultan of Turkey claimed to be the caliph (*khalifa;* literally, successor of the Prophet) and therefore spiritual leader of the Islamic community, many Muslims felt fervently that the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire presaged the destruction of the last great Islamic power. Muslims in India also were alarmed over reports that the Allied Powers contemplated placing some of the holy places of Islam under non-Muslim jurisdiction. In 1920 the Khalifat Movement was launched in response to the news of the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire (see Islam, ch. 2). The Khalifat Movement combined Indian nationalism and pan-Islamic sentiment with strong anti-British overtones.

For several years the Khalifat Movement replaced the Muslim League as the major focus of Muslim activism. An agreement between the leaders of the movement and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi, 1869–1948), the leading figure in Congress, resulted in the joint advocacy of self-rule for India on the one hand and agitation for the protection of Islamic holy places and the restoration of the caliph of Turkey on the other hand. The Khalifat Movement coincided with the inception of Gandhi's call for satyagraha (truth force), a strategy of nonviolent civil disobedience to British rule. The fusion of these two movements was short lived, briefly giving the illusion of unity to India's nationalist agitation.

In 1922 the Hindu-Muslim accord suffered a double blow when their noncooperation movement miscarried and the Khalifat Movement foundered. The outbreak of rioting, which had communal aspects in a number of places, caused Gandhi to call off the joint noncooperation movement. The Khalifat Movement lost its purpose when the postwar Turkish nationalists under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (later known as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) abolished the sultanate, proclaimed Turkey a secular republic, abolished the religious office of the caliph, and sent the last of the Ottoman ruling family into exile.

After the eclipse of the Hindu-Muslim accord, the spirit of communal unity was never reestablished in the subcontinent. Congress took an uncompromising stand on the territorial integrity of any proposed postpartition India, downplaying communal differences and seriously underestimating the intensity of Muslim minority fears that were to strengthen the influence and power of the Muslim League. As late as 1938 Gandhi's deputy, Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), said, "There is no religious or cultural problem in India. What is called the religious or communal problem is really a dispute among upper-class people for a division of the spoils of office or a representation in a legislature." Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the fiery leader of the untouchables (referred to in Gandhian terminology as harijan—"children of God"), however, described the twenty years following 1920 as "civil war between Hindus and Muslims, interrupted by brief intervals of armed peace."

Two Nations Concept, 1930–47

The political tumult in India during the late 1920s and the 1930s produced the first articulations of a separate state as an expression of Muslim consciousness. Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1873–1938), an Islamic revivalist poet and philosopher, discussed contemporary problems in his presidential address to the Muslim League conference at Allahabad in 1930. He saw India as Asia in miniature, in which a unitary form of government was inconceivable and community rather than territory was the basis for identification. To Iqbal, communalism in its highest sense was the key to the formation of a harmonious whole in India. Therefore, he demanded the creation of a confederated India that would include a Muslim state consisting of Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind, and Baluchistan. In subsequent speeches and writings, Iqbal reiterated the claims of Muslims to be considered a nation "based on unity of language, race, history, religion, and identity of economic interests."

Iqbal gave no name to his projected state; that was done by Chaudhari Rahmat Ali and a group of students at Cambridge University who issued a pamphlet in 1933 entitled "Now or Never." They opposed the idea of federation, denied that India was a single country, and demanded partition into regions, the northwest receiving national status as "Pakistan." They made up the name *Pakistan* by taking the P from Punjab, A from Afghania (Rahmat's name for North-West Frontier Province), K from Kashmir, S from Sind, and Tan from Baluchistan. (When written in Urdu, the word *Pakistan* has no letter *i* between the *k* and the *s*.) The name means "the land of the Paks, the spiritually pure



Ruins of Mainamati, center of a seventh- and eighth-century Buddhist kingdom, near modern Comilla
Courtesy Bangladesh Ministry of Information

and clean.'' There was a proliferation of articles on the theme of Pakistan expressing the subjective conviction of nationhood, but there was no coordination of political effort to achieve it. There was no reference to Bengal.

In 1934 Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876–1948) took over the leadership of the Muslim League, which was without a sense of mission and unable to replace the Khalifat Movement, which had combined religion, nationalism, and political adventure. Jinnah set about restoring a sense of purpose to Muslims. He emphasized the ''Two Nations'' theory based on the conflicting ideas and conceptions of Hinduism and Islam.

By the late 1930s, Jinnah was convinced of the need for a unifying issue among Muslims, and the proposed state of Pakistan was the obvious answer. In its convention on March 23, 1940, in Lahore, the Muslim League resolved that the areas of Muslim majority in the northwest and the northeast of India should be grouped in ''constituent states to be autonomous and sovereign'' and that no independence plan without this provision would be acceptable to the Muslims. Federation was rejected and, though confederation on common interests with the rest of India was envisaged, partition was predicated as the final goal. The Pakistan issue brought a positive goal to the Muslims and simplified the task

of political agitation. It was no longer necessary to remain "yoked" to Hindus, and the amended wording of the Lahore Resolution issued in 1940 called for a "unified Pakistan." It would, however, be challenged by eastern Bengalis in later years.

After 1940 reconciliation between Congress and the Muslim League became increasingly difficult. Muslim enthusiasm for Pakistan grew in direct proportion to Hindu condemnation of it; the concept took on a life of its own and became a reality in 1947.

During World War II, the Muslim League and Congress adopted different attitudes toward the British government. When in 1939 the British declared India at war without first consulting Indian politicians, Muslim League politicians followed a course of limited cooperation with the British. Officials who were members of Congress, however, resigned from their offices. When in August 1942 Gandhi launched the revolutionary "Quit India" movement against the British Raj, Jinnah condemned it. The British government retaliated by arresting about 60,000 individuals and outlawing Congress. Meanwhile, the Muslim League stepped up its political activity. Communal passions rose, as did the incidence of communal violence. Talks between Jinnah and Gandhi in 1944 proved as futile as did the negotiations between Gandhi and the viceroy, Lord Archibald Wavell.

In July 1945 the Labour Party came to power in Britain with a vast majority. Its choices in India were limited by the decline of British power and the spread of Indian unrest, even to the armed services. Some form of independence was the only alternative to forcible retention of control over an unwilling dependency. The viceroy held discussions with Indian leaders in Simla in 1945 in an attempt to decide what form an interim government might take, but no agreement emerged.

New elections to provincial and central legislatures were ordered, and a three-man British cabinet mission arrived to discuss plans for India's self-government. Although the mission did not directly accept plans for self-government, concessions were made by severely limiting the power of the central government. An interim government composed of the parties returned by the election was to start functioning immediately, as was the newly elected Constituent Assembly.

Congress and the Muslim League emerged from the 1946 election as the two dominant parties. The Muslim League's success in the election could be gauged from its sweep of 90 percent of all Muslim seats in British India—compared with a mere 4.5 percent in 1937 elections. The Muslim League, like Congress, initially accepted the British cabinet mission plan, despite grave

reservations. Subsequent disputes between the leaders of the two parties, however, led to mistrust and bitterness. Jinnah demanded parity for the Muslim League in the interim government and temporarily boycotted it when the demand was not met. Nehru indiscreetly made statements that cast doubts on the sincerity of Congress in accepting the cabinet mission plan. Each party disputed the right of the other to appoint Muslim ministers.

When the viceroy proceeded to form an interim government without the Muslim League, Jinnah called for demonstrations, or "direct action," on August 16, 1946. Communal rioting on an unprecedented scale broke out, especially in Bengal and Bihar; the massacre of Muslims in Calcutta brought Gandhi to the scene. His efforts calmed fears in Bengal, but the rioting spread to other provinces and continued into the following year. Jinnah took the Muslim League into the government in an attempt to prevent additional communal violence, but disagreement among the ministers rendered the interim government ineffective. Over all loomed the shadow of civil war.

In February 1947, Lord Louis Mountbatten was appointed viceroy and was given instructions to arrange for the transfer of power. After a quick assessment of the Indian scene, Mountbatten said that "India was a ship on fire in mid-ocean with ammunition in her hold." Mountbatten was convinced that Congress would be willing to accept partition as the price for stopping bloodshed and that Jinnah was willing to accept a smaller Pakistan. Mountbatten obtained sanction from London for the drastic action he proposed and then persuaded Indian leaders to acquiesce in a general way to his plan.

On July 14, 1947, the British House of Commons passed the India Independence Act, by which two independent dominions were created on the subcontinent and the princely states were left to accede to either. Throughout the summer of 1947, as communal violence mounted and drought and floods racked the land, preparations for partition proceeded in Delhi. The preparations were inadequate. A restructuring of the military into two forces took place, as law and order broke down in different parts of the country (see Pakistan Era, ch. 5). Jinnah and Nehru tried unsuccessfully to quell the passions that neither fully understood. Jinnah flew from Delhi to Karachi on August 7 and took office seven days later as the first governor general of the new Dominion of Pakistan.

Pakistan Period, 1947–71

Transition to Nationhood, 1947–58

Pakistan was born in bloodshed and came into existence on August 15, 1947, confronted by seemingly insurmountable

problems. As many as 12 million people—Muslims leaving India for Pakistan, and Hindus and Sikhs opting to move to India from the new state of Pakistan—had been involved in the mass transfer of population between the two countries, and perhaps 2 million refugees had died in the communal bloodbath that had accompanied the migrations. Pakistan's boundaries were established hastily without adequate regard for the new nation's economic viability. Even the minimal requirements of a working central government—skilled personnel, equipment, and a capital city with government buildings—were missing. Until 1947 the East Wing of Pakistan, separated from the West Wing by 1,600 kilometers of Indian territory, had been heavily dependent on Hindu management. Many Hindu Bengalis left for Calcutta after partition, and their place, particularly in commerce, was taken mostly by Muslims who had migrated from the Indian state of Bihar or by West Pakistanis from Punjab.

After partition, Muslim banking shifted from Bombay to Karachi, Pakistan's first capital. Much of the investment in East Pakistan came from West Pakistani banks. Investment was concentrated in jute production at a time when international demand was decreasing. The largest jute processing factory in the world, at Narayanganj, an industrial suburb of Dhaka, was owned by the Adamjee family from West Pakistan. Because banking and financing were generally controlled by West Pakistanis, discriminatory practices often resulted. Bengalis found themselves excluded from the managerial level and from skilled labor. West Pakistanis tended to favor Urdu-speaking Biharis (refugees from the northern Indian state of Bihar living in East Pakistan), considering them to be less prone to labor agitation than the Bengalis. This preference became more pronounced after explosive labor clashes between the Biharis and Bengalis at the Narayaganj jute mill in 1954.

Pakistan had a severe shortage of trained administrative personnel, as most members of the preindependence Indian Civil Service were Hindus or Sikhs who opted to belong to India at partition. Rarer still were Muslim Bengalis who had any past administrative experience. As a result, high-level posts in Dhaka, including that of governor general, were usually filled by West Pakistanis or by refugees from India who had adopted Pakistani citizenship.

One of the most divisive issues confronting Pakistan in its infancy was the question of what the official language of the new state was to be. Jinnah yielded to the demands of refugees from the Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, who insisted that Urdu be Pakistan's official language. Speakers of the languages of West Pakistan—Punjabi, Sindhi, Pushtu, and Baluchi—were upset that





Kusumba Mosque, Rajshahi,
built in 1558, an outstanding example of pre-Mughal architecture
Lalbagh Mosque, Dhaka, built ca. 1680
Courtesy Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka

their languages were given second-class status. In East Pakistan, the dissatisfaction quickly turned to violence. The Bengalis of East Pakistan constituted a majority (an estimated 54 percent) of Pakistan's entire population. Their language, Bangla (then commonly known as Bengali), shares with Urdu a common Sanskritic-Persian ancestor, but the two languages have different scripts and literary traditions.

Jinnah visited East Pakistan on only one occasion after independence, shortly before his death in 1948. He announced in Dhaka that "without one state language, no nation can remain solidly together and function." Jinnah's views were not accepted by most East Pakistanis, but perhaps in tribute to the founder of Pakistan, serious resistance on this issue did not break out until after his death. On February 22, 1952, a demonstration was carried out in Dhaka in which students demanded equal status for Bangla. The police reacted by firing on the crowd and killing two students. (A memorial, the Shaheed Minar, was built later to commemorate the martyrs of the language movement.) Two years after the incident, Bengali agitation effectively forced the National Assembly to designate "Urdu and Bengali and such other languages as may be declared" to be the official languages of Pakistan.

What kept the new country together was the vision and forceful personality of the founders of Pakistan: Jinnah, the governor general popularly known as the Quaid i Azam (Supreme Leader); and Liaquat Ali Khan (1895–1951), the first prime minister, popularly known as the Quaid i Millet (Leader of the Community). The government machinery established at independence was similar to the viceregal system that had prevailed in the preindependence period and placed no formal limitations on Jinnah's constitutional powers. In the 1970s in Bangladesh, another autocrat, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, would enjoy much of the same prestige and exemption from the normal rule of law.

When Jinnah died in September 1948, the seat of power shifted from the governor general to the prime minister, Liaquat. Liaquat had extensive experience in politics and enjoyed as a refugee from India the additional benefit of not being too closely identified with any one province of Pakistan. A moderate, Liaquat subscribed to the ideals of a parliamentary, democratic, and secular state. Out of necessity he considered the wishes of the country's religious spokesmen who championed the cause of Pakistan as an Islamic state. He was seeking a balance of Islam against secularism for a new constitution when he was assassinated on October 16, 1951, by fanatics opposed to Liaquat's refusal to wage war against India. With both Jinnah and Liaquat gone, Pakistan faced an unstable

period that would be resolved by military and civil service intervention in political affairs. The first few turbulent years after independence thus defined the enduring politico-military culture of Pakistan.

The inability of the politicians to provide a stable government was largely a result of their mutual suspicions. Loyalties tended to be personal, ethnic, and provincial rather than national and issue oriented. Provincialism was openly expressed in the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly. In the Constituent Assembly frequent arguments voiced the fear that the West Pakistani province of Punjab would dominate the nation. An ineffective body, the Constituent Assembly took almost nine years to draft a constitution, which for all practical purposes was never put into effect.

Liaquat was succeeded as prime minister by a conservative Bengali, Governor General Khwaja Nazimuddin. Former finance minister Ghulam Mohammad, a Punjabi career civil servant, became governor general. Ghulam Mohammad was dissatisfied with Nazimuddin's inability to deal with Bengali agitation for provincial autonomy and worked to expand his own power base. East Pakistan favored a high degree of autonomy, with the central government controlling little more than foreign affairs, defense, communications, and currency. In 1953 Ghulam Mohammad dismissed Prime Minister Nazimuddin, established martial law in Punjab, and imposed governor's rule (direct rule by the central government) in East Pakistan. In 1954 he appointed his own "cabinet of talents." Mohammad Ali Bogra, another conservative Bengali and previously Pakistan's ambassador to the United States and the United Nations, was named prime minister.

During September and October 1954 a chain of events culminated in a confrontation between the governor general and the prime minister. Prime Minister Bogra tried to limit the powers of Governor General Ghulam Mohammad through hastily adopted amendments to the de facto constitution, the Government of India Act of 1935. The governor general, however, enlisted the tacit support of the army and civil service, dissolved the Constituent Assembly, and then formed a new cabinet. Bogra, a man without a personal following, remained prime minister but without effective power. General Iskander Mirza, who had been a soldier and civil servant, became minister of the interior; General Mohammad Ayub Khan, the army commander, became minister of defense; and Choudhry Mohammad Ali, former head of the civil service, remained minister of finance. The main objective of the new government was to end disruptive provincial politics and to provide the country with a new constitution. The Federal Court, however,

declared that a new Constituent Assembly must be called. Ghulam Mohammad was unable to circumvent the order, and the new Constituent Assembly, elected by the provincial assemblies, met for the first time in July 1955. Bogra, who had little support in the new assembly, fell in August and was replaced by Choudhry; Ghulam Mohammad, plagued by poor health, was succeeded as governor general in September 1955 by Mirza.

The second Constituent Assembly differed in composition from the first. In East Pakistan, the Muslim League had been overwhelmingly defeated in the 1954 provincial assembly elections by the United Front coalition of Bengali regional parties anchored by Fazlul Haq's Krishak Sramik Samajbadi Dal (Peasants and Workers Socialist Party) and the Awami League (People's League) led by Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy. Rejection of West Pakistan's dominance over East Pakistan and the desire for Bengali provincial autonomy were the main ingredients of the coalition's twenty-one-point platform. The East Pakistani election and the coalition's victory proved pyrrhic; Bengali factionalism surfaced soon after the election and the United Front fell apart. From 1954 to Ayub's assumption of power in 1958, the Krishak Sramik and the Awami League waged a ceaseless battle for control of East Pakistan's provincial government.

Prime Minister Choudhry induced the politicians to agree on a constitution in 1956. In order to establish a better balance between the west and east wings, the four provinces of West Pakistan were amalgamated into one administrative unit. The 1956 constitution made provisions for an Islamic state as embodied in its Directive of Principles of State Policy, which defined methods of promoting Islamic morality. The national parliament was to comprise one house of 300 members with equal representation from both the west and east wings.

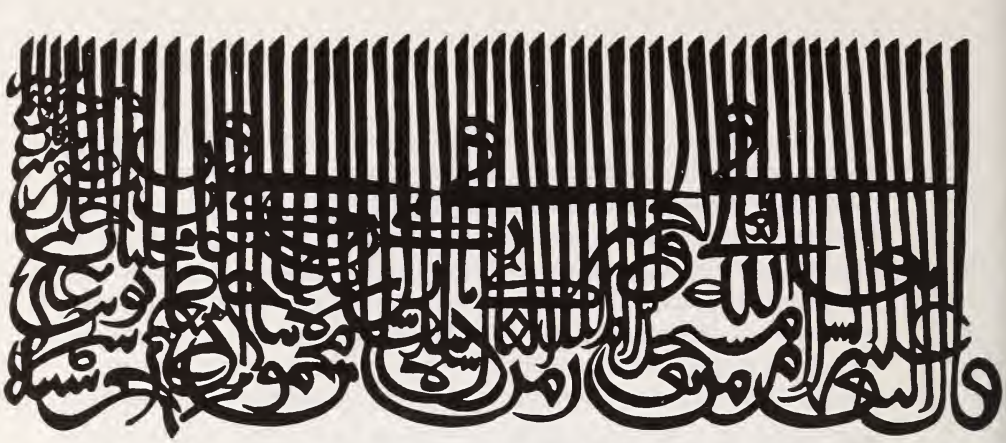
The Awami League's Suhrawardy succeeded Choudhry as prime minister in September 1956 and formed a coalition cabinet. He, like other Bengali politicians, was chosen by the central government to serve as a symbol of unity, but he failed to secure significant support from West Pakistani power brokers. Although he had a good reputation in East Pakistan and was respected for his prepartition association with Gandhi, his strenuous efforts to gain greater provincial autonomy for East Pakistan and a larger share of development funds for it were not well received in West Pakistan. Suhrawardy's thirteen months in office came to an end after he took a strong position against abrogation of the existing "One Unit" government for all of West Pakistan in favor of separate local governments for Sind, Punjab, Baluchistan, and North-West

Frontier Province. He thus lost much support from West Pakistan's provincial politicians. He also used emergency powers to prevent the formation of a Muslim League provincial government in West Pakistan, thereby losing much Punjabi backing. Moreover, his open advocacy of votes of confidence from the Constituent Assembly as the proper means of forming governments aroused the suspicions of President Mirza. In 1957 the president used his considerable influence to oust Suhrawardy from the office of prime minister. The drift toward economic decline and political chaos continued.

The "Revolution" of Ayub Khan, 1958–66

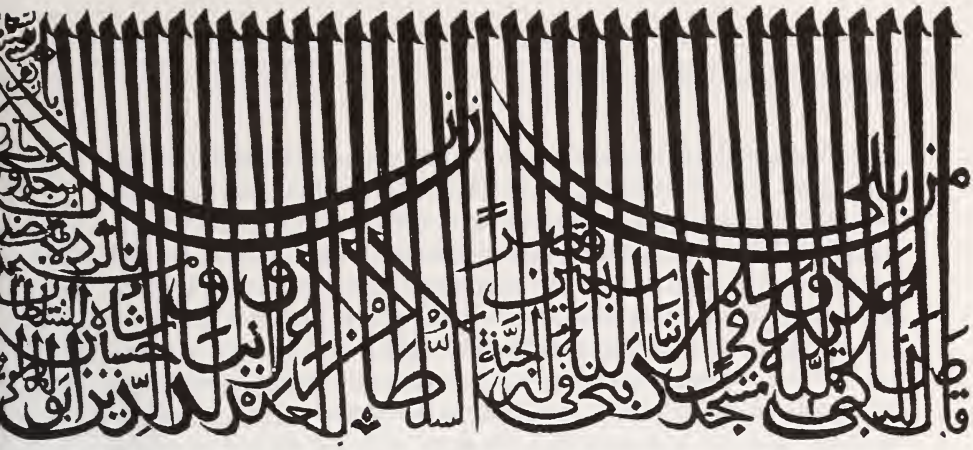
In East Pakistan the political impasse culminated in 1958 in a violent scuffle in the provincial assembly between members of the opposition and the police force, in which the deputy speaker was fatally injured and two ministers badly wounded. Uncomfortable with the workings of parliamentary democracy, unruliness in the East Pakistani provincial assembly elections, and the threat of Baluch separatism in West Pakistan, on October 7, 1958, Mirza issued a proclamation that abolished political parties, abrogated the two-year-old constitution, and placed the country under martial law. Mirza announced that martial law would be a temporary measure lasting only until a new constitution was drafted. On October 27, he swore in a twelve-member cabinet that included Ayub as prime minister and three other generals in ministerial positions. Included among the eight civilians was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a former university lecturer and future leader of Pakistan. On the same day, the generals exiled Mirza to London because "the armed services and the people demanded a clean break with the past." Until 1962, martial law continued and Ayub purged a number of politicians and civil servants from the government and replaced them with army officers. Ayub called his regime a "revolution to clean up the mess of black marketing and corruption."

The new constitution promulgated by Ayub in March 1962 vested all executive authority of the republic in the president. As chief executive, the president could appoint ministers without approval by the legislature. There was no provision for a prime minister. There was a provision for a National Assembly and two provincial assemblies, whose members were to be chosen by the "Basic Democrats"—80,000 voters organized into a five-tier hierarchy, with each tier electing officials to the next tier. Pakistan was declared a republic (without being specifically an Islamic republic) but, in deference to the religious scholars (ulamas—see Glossary), the president was required to be a Muslim, and no law could be passed that was contrary to the tenets of Islam.



The 1962 constitution made few concessions to Bengalis. It was, instead, a document that buttressed centralized government under the guise of "basic democracies" programs, gave legal support to martial law, and turned parliamentary bodies into forums for debate. Throughout the Ayub years, East Pakistan and West Pakistan grew farther apart. The death of the Awami League's Suhrawardy in 1963 gave the mercurial Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—commonly known as Mujib—the leadership of East Pakistan's dominant party. Mujib, who as early as 1956 had advocated the "liberation" of East Pakistan and had been jailed in 1958 during the military coup, quickly and successfully brought the issue of East Pakistan's movement for autonomy to the forefront of the nation's politics.

During the years between 1960 and 1965, the annual rate of growth of the gross domestic product (see Glossary) per capita was 4.4 percent in West Pakistan versus a poor 2.6 percent in East Pakistan. Furthermore, Bengali politicians pushing for more autonomy complained that much of Pakistan's export earnings were generated in East Pakistan by the export of Bengali jute and tea. As late as 1960, approximately 70 percent of Pakistan's export earnings originated in the East Wing, although this percentage declined as international demand for jute dwindled. By the mid-1960s, the East Wing was accounting for less than 60 percent of the nation's export earnings, and by the time of Bangladesh's independence in 1971, this percentage had dipped below 50 percent. This reality did not dissuade Mujib from demanding in 1966 that separate



Two of the finest examples of tughra*-style Arabic calligraphy used in Bangladesh, fifteenth century*
Courtesy Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka (left)
Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi (right)

foreign exchange accounts be kept and that separate trade offices be opened overseas. By the mid-1960s, West Pakistan was benefiting from Ayub's "Decade of Progress," with its successful "green revolution" in wheat, and from the expansion of markets for West Pakistani textiles, while the East Pakistani standard of living remained at an abysmally low level. Bengalis were also upset that West Pakistan, because it was the seat of government, was the major beneficiary of foreign aid.

Emerging Discontent, 1966–70

At a 1966 Lahore conference of both the eastern and the western chapters of the Awami League, Mujib announced his controversial six-point political and economic program for East Pakistani provincial autonomy. He demanded that the government be federal and parliamentary in nature, its members elected by universal adult suffrage with legislative representation on the basis of population; that the federal government have principal responsibility for foreign affairs and defense only; that each wing have its own currency and separate fiscal accounts; that taxation occur at the provincial level, with a federal government funded by constitutionally guaranteed grants; that each federal unit control its own earning of foreign exchange; and that each unit raise its own militia or paramilitary forces.

Mujib's six points ran directly counter to Ayub's plan for greater national integration. Ayub's anxieties were shared by many West Pakistanis, who feared that Mujib's plan would divide Pakistan

by encouraging ethnic and linguistic cleavages in West Pakistan, and would leave East Pakistan, with its Bengali ethnic and linguistic unity, by far the most populous and powerful of the federating units. Ayub interpreted Mujib's demands as tantamount to a call for independence. After pro-Mujib supporters rioted in a general strike in Dhaka, the government arrested Mujib in January 1968.

Ayub suffered a number of setbacks in 1968. His health was poor, and he was almost assassinated at a ceremony marking ten years of his rule. Riots followed, and Bhutto was arrested as the instigator. At Dhaka a tribunal that inquired into the activities of the already-interned Mujib was arousing strong popular resentment against Ayub. A conference of opposition leaders and the cancellation of the state of emergency (in effect since 1965) came too late to conciliate the opposition. On February 21, 1969, Ayub announced that he would not run in the next presidential election in 1970. A state of near anarchy reigned with protests and strikes throughout the country. The police appeared helpless to control the mob violence, and the military stood aloof. At length, on March 25 Ayub resigned and handed over the administration to the commander in chief, General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan. Once again the country was placed under martial law. Yahya assumed the titles of chief martial law administrator and president. He announced that he considered himself to be a transitional leader whose task would be to restore order and to conduct free elections for a new constituent assembly, which would then draft a new constitution. He appointed a largely civilian cabinet in August 1969 in preparation for the election, which was scheduled to take place in December 1970. Yahya moved with dispatch to settle two contentious issues by decree: the unpopular "One Unit" of West Pakistan, which was created as a condition for the 1956 constitution, was ended; and East Pakistan was awarded 162 seats out of the 300-member National Assembly.

On November 12, 1970, a cyclone devastated an area of almost 8,000 square kilometers of East Pakistan's mid-coastal lowlands and its outlying islands in the Bay of Bengal. It was perhaps the worst natural disaster of the area in centuries. As many as 250,000 lives were lost. Two days after the cyclone hit, Yahya arrived in Dhaka after a trip to Beijing, but he left a day later. His seeming indifference to the plight of Bengali victims caused a great deal of animosity. Opposition newspapers in Dhaka accused the central government of impeding the efforts of international relief agencies and of "gross neglect, callous inattention, and bitter indifference." Mujib, who had been released from prison, lamented that "West Pakistan has a bumper wheat crop, but the first shipment of food

grain to reach us is from abroad'' and ''that the textile merchants have not given a yard of cloth for our shrouds.'' ''We have a large army,'' Mujib continued, ''but it is left to the British Marines to bury our dead.'' In an unveiled threat to the unity of Pakistan he added, ''the feeling now pervades . . . every village, home, and slum that we must rule ourselves. We must make the decisions that matter. We will no longer suffer arbitrary rule by bureaucrats, capitalists, and feudal interests of West Pakistan.''

Yahya announced plans for a national election on December 7, 1970, and urged voters to elect candidates who were committed to the integrity and unity of Pakistan. The elections were the first in the history of Pakistan in which voters were able to elect members of the National Assembly directly. In a convincing demonstration of Bengali dissatisfaction with the West Pakistani regime, the Awami League won all but 2 of the 162 seats allotted East Pakistan in the National Assembly. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party came in a poor second nationally, winning 81 out of the 138 West Pakistani seats in the National Assembly. The Awami League's electoral victory promised it control of the government, with Mujib as the country's prime minister, but the inaugural assembly never met.

Yahya and Bhutto vehemently opposed Mujib's idea of a confederated Pakistan. Mujib was adamant that the constitution be based on his six-point program. Bhutto, meanwhile, pleaded for unity in Pakistan under his leadership. As tensions mounted, Mujib suggested he become prime minister of East Pakistan while Bhutto be made prime minister of West Pakistan. It was this action that triggered mass civil disobedience in East Pakistan. Mujib called for a general strike until the government was given over to the ''people's representatives.'' Tiring of the interminable game of politics he was playing with the Bengali leader, Yahya decided to ignore Mujib's demands and on March 1 postponed indefinitely the convening of the National Assembly, which had been scheduled for March 3. March 1 also was a portentous date, for on that day Yahya named General Tikka Khan, who in later years was to earn the dubious title ''Butcher of Baluchistan'' for his suppression of Baluch separatists, as East Pakistan's military governor. The number of West Pakistani troops entering East Pakistan had increased sharply in the preceding weeks, climbing from a precrisis level of 25,000 to about 60,000, bringing the army close to a state of readiness. As tensions rose, however, Yahya continued desperate negotiations with Mujib, flying to Dhaka in mid-March. Talks between Yahya and Mujib were joined by Bhutto but soon collapsed, and on March 23 Bengalis following Mujib's lead

defiantly celebrated "Resistance Day" in East Pakistan instead of the traditional all-Pakistan "Republic Day." Yahya decided to "solve" the problem of East Pakistan by repression. On the evening of March 25 he flew back to Islamabad. The military crackdown in East Pakistan began that same night.

The War for Bangladeshi Independence, 1971

On March 25, the Pakistan Army launched a terror campaign calculated to intimidate the Bengalis into submission. Within hours a wholesale slaughter had commenced in Dhaka, with the heaviest attacks concentrated on the University of Dhaka and the Hindu area of the old town. Bangladeshis remember the date as a day of infamy and liberation. The Pakistan Army came with hit lists and systematically killed several hundred Bengalis. Mujib was captured and flown to West Pakistan for incarceration.

To conceal what they were doing, the Pakistan Army corralled the corps of foreign journalists at the International Hotel in Dhaka, seized their notes, and expelled them the next day. One reporter who escaped the censor net estimated that three battalions of troops—one armored, one artillery, and one infantry—had attacked the virtually defenseless city. Various informants, including missionaries and foreign journalists who clandestinely returned to East Pakistan during the war, estimated that by March 28 the loss of life reached 15,000. By the end of summer as many as 300,000 people were thought to have lost their lives. Anthony Mascarenhas in *Bangladesh: A Legacy of Blood* estimates that during the entire nine-month liberation struggle more than 1 million Bengalis may have died at the hands of the Pakistan Army.

The West Pakistani press waged a vigorous but ultimately futile campaign to counteract newspaper and radio accounts of wholesale atrocities. One paper, the *Morning News,* even editorialized that the armed forces were saving East Pakistanis from eventual Hindu enslavement. The civil war was played down by the government-controlled press as a minor insurrection quickly being brought under control.

After the tragic events of March, India became vocal in its condemnation of Pakistan. An immense flood of East Pakistani refugees, between 8 and 10 million according to various estimates, fled across the border into the Indian state of West Bengal. In April an Indian parliamentary resolution demanded that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi supply aid to the rebels in East Pakistan. She complied but declined to recognize the provisional government of independent Bangladesh.

A propaganda war between Pakistan and India ensued in which Yahya threatened war against India if that country made an attempt to seize any part of Pakistan. Yahya also asserted that Pakistan could count on its American and Chinese friends. At the same time, Pakistan tried to ease the situation in the East Wing. Belatedly, it replaced Tikka, whose military tactics had caused such havoc and human loss of life, with the more restrained Lieutenant General A.A.K. Niazi. A moderate Bengali, Abdul Malik, was installed as the civilian governor of East Pakistan. These belated gestures of appeasement did not yield results or change world opinion.

On December 4, 1971, the Indian Army, far superior in numbers and equipment to that of Pakistan, executed a 3-pronged pincer movement on Dhaka launched from the Indian states of West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura, taking only 12 days to defeat the 90,000 Pakistani defenders. The Pakistan Army was weakened by having to operate so far away from its source of supply. The Indian Army, on the other hand, was aided by East Pakistan's Mukti Bahini (Liberation Force), the freedom fighters who managed to keep the Pakistan Army at bay in many areas (see The Liberation War, ch. 5).

Birth of Bangladesh

Early Independence Period, 1971–72

The ''independent, sovereign republic of Bangladesh'' was first proclaimed in a radio message broadcast from a captured station in Chittagong on March 26, 1971. Two days later, the ''Voice of Independent Bangladesh'' announced that a ''Major Zia'' (actually Ziaur Rahman, later president of Bangladesh) would form a new government with himself occupying the ''presidency.'' Zia's self-appointment was considered brash, especially by Mujib, who in subsequent years would hold a grudge. Quickly realizing that his action was unpopular, Zia yielded his ''office'' to the incarcerated Mujib. The following month a provisional government was established in Calcutta by a number of leading Awami League members who had escaped from East Pakistan. On April 17, the ''Mujibnagar'' government formally proclaimed independence and named Mujib as its president. On December 6, India became the first nation to recognize the new Bangladeshi government. When the West Pakistani surrender came ten days later, the provisional government had some organization in place, but it was not until December 22 that members of the new government arrived in Dhaka, having been forced to heed the advice of the Indian military that order must quickly be restored. Representatives of the

Bangladeshi government and the Mukti Bahini were absent from the ceremony of surrender of the Pakistan Army to the Indian Army on December 16. Bangladeshis considered this ceremony insulting, and it did much to sour relations between Bangladesh and India.

At independence, Mujib was in jail in West Pakistan, where he had been taken after his arrest on March 25. He had been convicted of treason by a military court and sentenced to death. Yahya did not carry out the sentence, perhaps as a result of pleas made by many foreign governments. With the surrender of Pakistani forces in Dhaka and the Indian proclamation of a cease-fire on the western front, Yahya relinquished power to a civilian government under Bhutto, who released Mujib and permitted him to return to Dhaka via London and New Delhi.

On January 10, 1972, Mujib arrived in Dhaka to a tumultuous welcome. Mujib first assumed the title of president but vacated that office two days later to become the prime minister. Mujib pushed through a new constitution that was modeled on the Indian Constitution. The Constitution—adopted on November 4, 1972—stated that the new nation was to have a prime minister appointed by the president and approved by a single-house parliament. The Constitution then enumerated a number of principles on which Bangladesh was to be governed. These came to be known as the tenets of "Mujibism" (or "Mujibbad"), which included the four pillars of nationalism, socialism, secularism, and democracy. In the following years, however, Mujib discarded everything Bangladesh theoretically represented: constitutionalism, freedom of speech, rule of law, the right to dissent, and equal opportunity of employment.

Fall of the Bangabandhu, 1972–75

The country Mujib returned to was scarred by civil war. The number of people killed, raped, or displaced could be only vaguely estimated. The task of economic rehabilitation, specifically the immediate goal of food distribution to a hungry populace, was frustrated by crippled communications and transportation systems. The new nation faced many other seemingly insurmountable problems inhibiting its reconstruction. One of the most glaring was the breakdown of law and order. In the wake of the war of independence, numerous bands of guerrillas still roamed the countryside, fully armed and outside the control of the government. Many fighters of the Mukti Bahini joined the Bangladesh Army and thus could legally retain their weapons, but many others ignored Mujib's plea that they surrender their weapons. Some armed groups took the law into their own hands and set up territories under their own



The founding father of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920–75) Courtesy Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka

Mujib's house in Dhaka Courtesy Siria Lopez

jurisdiction. In time these challenges to central authority contributed to Mujib's suspension of democracy.

Mujib had an unfailing attachment to those who participated in the struggle for independence. He showed favoritism toward those comrades by giving them appointments to the civil government and especially the military. This shortsighted practice proved fatal. Mujib denied himself the skill of many top-level officers formerly employed by the Pakistan Civil Service. Bengali military officers who did not manage to escape from West Pakistan during the war and those who remained at their posts in East Pakistan were discriminated against throughout the Mujib years. The "repatriates," who constituted about half of the army, were denied promotions or choice posts; officers were assigned to functionless jobs as "officers on special duty." Schooled in the British tradition, most believed in the ideals of military professionalism; to them the prospect of serving an individual rather than an institution was reprehensible. Opposed to the repatriates were the freedom fighters, most of whom offered their unquestioning support for Mujib and in return were favored by him. A small number of them, associated with the radical Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (National Socialist Party), even proposed that officers be elected to their posts in a "people's army." From the ranks of the freedom fighters, Mujib established the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini (National Defense Force), whose members took a personal pledge to Mujib and became, in effect, his private army to which privileges and hard-to-get commodities were lavishly given (see Postindependence Period, ch. 5).

Despite substantial foreign aid, mostly from India and the Soviet Union, food supplies were scarce, and there was rampant corruption and black marketeering. This situation prompted Mujib to issue a warning against hoarders and smugglers. Mujib backed up his threat by launching a mass drive against hoarders and smugglers, backed by the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini. The situation only temporarily buoyed the legitimate economy of the country, as hoarding, black marketeering, and corruption in high offices continued and became the hallmarks of the Mujib regime.

Mujib's economic policies also directly contributed to his country's economic chaos. His large-scale nationalization of Bangladeshi manufacturing and trading enterprises and international trading in commodities strangled Bangladesh entrepreneurship in its infancy. The enforced use of the Bangla language as a replacement for English at all levels of government and education was yet another policy that increased Bangladesh's isolation from the dynamics of the world economy.

Most Bangadeshis still revered the Bangabandhu at the time of the first national elections held in 1973. Mujib was assured of victory, and the Awami League won 282 out of 289 directly contested seats. After the election, the economic and security situations began to deteriorate rapidly, and Mujib's popularity suffered further as a result of what many Bangladeshis came to regard as his close alliance with India. Mujib's authoritarian personality and his paternalistic pronouncements to "my country" and "my people" were not sufficient to divert the people's attention from the miserable conditions of the country. Widespread flooding and famine created severe hardship, aggravated by growing law-and-order problems.

In January 1975, the Constitution was amended to make Mujib president for five years and to give him full executive powers. The next month, in a move that wiped out all opposition political parties, Mujib proclaimed Bangladesh a one-party state, effectively abolishing the parliamentary system. He renamed the Awami League the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (Bangladesh Peasants, Workers, and People's League) and required all civilian government personnel to join the party. The fundamental rights enumerated in the Constitution ceased to be observed, and Bangladesh, in its infancy, was transformed into a personal dictatorship.

On the morning of August 15, 1975, Mujib and several members of his family were murdered in a coup engineered by a group of young army officers, most of whom were majors. Some of the officers in the "majors' plot" had a personal vendetta against Mujib, having earlier been dismissed from the army. In a wider sense, the disaffected officers and the several hundred troops they led represented the grievances of the professionals in the military over their subordination to the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini and Mujib's indifference to gross corruption by his political subordinates and family members. By the time of his assassination, Mujib's popularity had fallen precipitously, and his death was lamented by surprisingly few.

The diplomatic status of Bangladesh changed overnight. One day after Mujib's assassination President Bhutto of Pakistan announced that his country would immediately recognize the new regime and offered a gift of 50,000 tons of rice in addition to a generous gift of clothing. India, however, under the rule of Indira Gandhi, suffered a setback in its relations with Bangladesh. The end of the Mujib period once again brought serious bilateral differences to the fore. Many Bangladeshis, although grateful for India's help against Pakistan during the struggle for independence, thought Indian troops had lingered too long after the Pakistan Army was

defeated. Mujibist dissidents who continued to resist central authority found shelter in India (see Foreign Policy, ch. 4).

Restoration of Military Rule, 1975–77

The assassins of Mujib arrested the three senior ranking officers in Mujib's cabinet but installed as president the fourth in charge, a long-time colleague of Mujib and minister of commerce, Khondakar Mushtaque Ahmed. Mushtaque, a conservative member of the Awami League (the name to which the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League reverted after Mujib's death), was known to lean toward the West and to have been troubled by Mujib's close ties with India. Many observers believed him to have been a conspirator in Mujib's assassination. Even so, his role in the new regime was circumscribed by the majors, who even moved into the presidential palace with him. Mushtaque announced that parliamentary democracy would be restored by February 1977, and he lifted Mujib's ban on political parties. He instituted strong programs to reduce corrupt practices and to restore efficiency and public confidence in the government. He also ordered the transfer of all the equipment and assets and most of the personnel of the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini to the army and the eventual abolition of the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini. Mushtaque promised to dissolve the authoritarian powers that Mujib had invested in the office of the presidency, but the continuing unstable situation did not improve enough to permit a significant degree of liberalization. In order to keep Mujib supporters under control, Mushtaque declared himself chief martial law administrator and set up a number of tribunals that fell outside constitutional jurisdiction.

Despite the economic and political instability during the last years of the Mujib regime, the memory of the Bangabandhu evoked strong emotions among his loyalists. Many of these, especially former freedom fighters now in the army, were deeply resentful of the majors. One of these Mujib loyalists, Brigadier Khaled Musharraf, launched a successful coup on November 3, 1975. Chief Justice Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem, who had served Mujib in the Supreme Court, emerged as president. Musharraf had himself promoted to major general, thereby replacing Chief of Staff Zia.

In a public display orchestrated to show his loyalty to the slain Mujib, Musharraf led a procession to Mujib's former residence. The reaction to Musharraf's obvious dedication to Mujibist ideology and the fear that he would renew the former leader's close ties with India precipitated the collapse of the new regime. On November 7, agitators of the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal, a leftist but decidedly anti-Soviet and anti-Indian movement, managed to incite troops

at the Dhaka cantonment against Musharraf, who was killed in a firefight. President Sayem became chief martial law administrator, and the military service chiefs, most significantly the army's Zia, became deputy chief martial law administrators. Zia also took on the portfolios of finance, home affairs, industry, and information, as well as becoming the army chief of staff.

It was not long before Zia, with the backing of the military, supplanted the elderly and frail Sayem. Zia postponed the presidential elections and the parliamentary elections that Sayem had earlier promised and made himself chief marital law administrator in November 1976.

The Zia Regime and Its Aftermath, 1977–82

In the opinion of many observers, Zia, although ruthless with his opponents, was the nation's best leader since independence. A dapper military officer, he transformed himself into a charismatic and popular political figure. Once described as having an air of "serene hesitancy and assured authority," Zia had boundless energy and spent much of his time traveling throughout the country. Zia preached the "politics of hope," continually urging all Bangladeshis to work harder and to produce more. Unlike Mujib, Zia utilized whatever talent he could muster to spur on the economy, and he did not discriminate, as Mujib had, against civil servants who had not fully participated in the freedom struggle. Zia was a well-known figure who first emerged nationally during the independence struggle. His "Z Force" (Z for Zia) had been the first to announce the independence of Bangladesh from a captured radio station in Chittagong.

Zia also tried to integrate the armed forces, giving repatriates a status appropriate to their qualifications and seniority. This angered some of the freedom fighters, who had rapidly reached high positions. Zia deftly dealt with the problem officers by sending them on diplomatic missions abroad. Zia made repatriate Major General Hussain Muhammad Ershad the deputy army chief of staff. Having consolidated his position in the army, Zia became president on April 21, 1977, when Sayem resigned on the grounds of "ill health." Zia now held the dominant positions in the country and seemed to be supported by a majority of Bangladeshis.

In May 1977, with his power base increasingly secure, Zia drew on his popularity to promote a nineteen-point political and economic program. Zia focused on the need to boost Bangladeshi production, especially in food and grains, and to integrate rural development through a variety of programs, of which population planning was the most important. He heeded the advice of international

lending agencies and launched an ambitious rural development program in 1977, which included a highly visible and popular food-for-work program.

Fortified with his manifesto, Zia faced the electorate in a referendum on his continuance in office. The results of what Zia called his "exercise of the democratic franchise," showed that 88.5 percent of the electorate turned out and that 98.9 percent voted for Zia. Although some doubts were cast on how fairly the referendum was conducted, Zia was, nonetheless, a popular leader with an agenda most of the country endorsed. Zia consciously tried to change the military bearing of his government, eventually transferring most of the portfolios held by military officers to civilians. Continuing the process of giving his regime a nonmilitary appearance, in June 1977 he chose as his vice president Supreme Court justice Abdus Sattar, a civilian who had long been involved in Bengali politics.

One of the most important tasks Zia faced was to change the direction of the country. Zia altered the Constitution's ideological statement on the fundamental principles, in particular changing the Mujibist emphasis on secularism to "complete trust and faith in almighty Allah." While distancing Bangladesh from India, Zia sought to improve ties with other Islamic nations. Throughout his regime, Zia pursued an active foreign policy, and the legacy of his efforts continued to bear fruit in the late 1980s. In 1980 Zia proposed a conference for the seven nations of the subcontinent (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) to discuss the prospects for regional cooperation in a number of fields. This initiative was successful in August 1983 when the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC—see Glossary) was established.

Zia's administration reestablished public order, which had deteriorated during the Mujib years. Special civil and military tribunals dealt harshly with the multitudes of professional bandits, smugglers, and guerrilla bands. A continuing problem with one of these armed groups led by Kader "Tiger" Siddiqi, a one-time freedom fighter and former enlisted man in the Pakistan Army, was eased when the Janata Party came to power in India in early 1977. The new Indian prime minister, Morarji Desai, discontinued the assistance and sanctuary that Indira Gandhi's government had given to pro-Mujib rebels working against the government.

President Zia's efforts to quiet the military—divided and politicized since independence—were not entirely successful. In late September 1977, Japanese Red Army terrorists hijacked a Japan Air Lines airplane and forced it to land in Dhaka. On September 30,

while the attention of the government was riveted on this event, a mutiny broke out in Bogra. Although the mutiny was quickly quelled on the night of October 2, a second mutiny occurred in Dhaka. The mutineers unsuccessfully attacked Zia's residence, captured Dhaka Radio for a short time, and killed a number of air force officers at Dhaka International Airport (present-day Zia International Airport), where they were gathered for negotiations with the hijackers. The revolts, which attracted worldwide coverage, were dismissed by the government as a conflict between air force enlisted men and officers regarding pay and service conditions (see Organization of the Armed Forces, ch. 5). The army quickly put down the rebellion, but the government was severely shaken. The government intelligence network had clearly failed, and Zia promptly dismissed both the military and the civilian intelligence chiefs. Three of the aspirants to the army chief of staff post, at the time held by Zia, were also removed; in 1981 one of them, Major General Muhammad Manzur Ahmed, was to lead the coup that resulted in the assassination of Zia.

After the Dhaka mutiny, Zia continued with his plans for political normalization, insisting on being called "president" rather than "major general" and prohibiting his military colleagues from holding both cabinet and military positions. In April 1978, Zia announced that elections would be held to "pave the way to democracy," adding that the Constitution would be amended to provide for an independent judiciary as well as a "sovereign parliament." Zia also lifted the ban on political parties. He was supported by a "national front," whose main party was the Jatiyo Ganatantrik Dal (National Democratic Party). As the candidate of the Jatiyo Ganatantrik Dal-led Nationalist Front, Zia won overwhelmingly, taking 76.7 percent of the vote against a front led by General M.A.G. Osmany, the leader of the Mukti Bahini during the war. Shortly after, Zia expanded the Jatiyo Ganatantrik Dal to include major portions of the parties in the Nationalist Front. His new party was named the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and was headed by Sattar. Parliamentary elections followed in February 1979. After campaigning by Zia, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party won 207 of the 300 seats in Parliament with about 44 percent of the vote.

Zia was assassinated in Chittagong on May 30, 1981, in a plot allegedly masterminded by Major General Manzur, the army commander in Chittagong. Manzur had earlier been chief of the general staff and had been transferred to Chittagong in the aftermath of the October 1977 mutiny. He was scheduled for a new transfer to a noncommand position in Dhaka and was reportedly

disappointed over this. The army, under its chief of staff, Major General Ershad, remained loyal to the Dhaka government and quickly put down the rebellion, killing Manzur. In the trials that followed, a sizable number of officers and enlisted men received the death penalty for complicity.

After Zia's assassination, Vice President Sattar became acting president and, as the Constitution stipulates, called for new elections for president within 180 days. Although there was some speculation that Zia's widow, Begum Khaleda Ziaur Rahman, and Mujib's daughter, Sheikh Hasina Wajed, would be candidates, Sattar ran against a number of political unknowns in the November election and won the presidential election with two-thirds of the vote.

Sattar was an elderly man who his critics thought to be ineffective, but his greatest weakness, in the eyes of the military, was that he was a civilian. Although Zia had downplayed his own military background, given up his position of army chief of staff, and adopted civilian dress and mannerisms, he maintained strong links with the armed services. Immediately following the 1981 election, Ershad pushed Sattar for a constitutional role for the military in the governance of the country. After initial resistance, Sattar, faced with the prospect of a coup, agreed to set up the National Security Council in January 1982 with the president, vice president, and prime minister representing the civilian side and the three service chiefs representing the military. In a last attempt to limit the influence of the military, Sattar relieved a number of military officers from duty in the government.

Sattar's decision to curtail military influence in the government provoked an immediate response from Ershad. On March 24, 1982, Ershad dismissed Sattar, dissolved the cabinet and the Parliament, and assumed full powers under martial law. Echoing the words of many past military leaders, Ershad announced that the military, as the only organized power in the nation, had been forced to take over until elections could be held.

Ershad almost immediately assumed the title of "president of the ministers," or prime minister, but to many Bangladeshis he was a usurper, one who overthrew a legitimately elected president and who would reverse the slow liberalization of Bangladeshi politics—the "politics of hope" begun earlier by Zia. The events of March 1982 reflected much of the tumultuous history of the country and, many critics agreed, foreshadowed a turbulent future for the struggling nation of Bangladesh (see The Ershad Period, ch. 4).

* * *

Although Bangladesh is a young nation state, a number of good general histories are available that cover the period from its painful birth to the late 1980s. These include Charles Peter O'Donnell's *Bangladesh: Biography of a Muslim Nation*; Talukder Maniruzzaman's *The Bangladesh Revolution and Its Aftermath*; Marcus F. Franda's *Bangladesh: The First Decade*; Craig Baxter's concise *Bangladesh: A New Nation in an Old Setting*; and Anthony Mascarenhas's *Bangladesh: A Legacy of Blood*. There are numerous books that deal with Bangladesh's preindependence past as East Pakistan, as part of the British and Mughal empires of India, and as the eastern part of Bengal, a cultural entity reaching back to antiquity. A sampling of some of the excellent general works available might include A.L Basham's masterpiece, *The Wonder That Was India*; Romila Thapar's *A History of India*; Percival Spear's *India: A Modern History*; Ramesh Chandra Majumdar's *The History of Bengal*; and Shahid Javed Burki's *Pakistan: A Nation in the Making*. For those seeking a comprehensive bibliographic index regarding works covering Bangladesh and its historic role in South Asia, the *Bibliography of Asian Studies* should be consulted. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 2. The Society and Its Environment



Royal Bengal Tiger—the pride of Bangladesh's fauna

BANGLADESH IS NOTED for the remarkable ethnic and cultural homogeneity of its population. Over 98 percent of its people are Bengalis; the remainder are Biharis, or non-Bengali Muslims, and indigenous tribal peoples. Bangladeshis are particularly proud of their rich cultural and linguistic heritage because their independent nation is partially the result of a powerful movement to uphold and preserve their language and culture. Bangladeshis identify themselves closely with Bangla, their national language.

One of the world's most densely populated nations, Bangladesh in the 1980s was caught in the vicious cycle of population expansion and poverty. Although the rate of growth had declined marginally in recent years, the rapid expansion of the population continued to be a tremendous burden on the nation. With 82 percent of its people living in the countryside, Bangladesh was also one of the most rural nations in the Third World. The pace of urbanization in the late 1980s was slow, and urban areas lacked adequate amenities and services to absorb even those migrants who trekked from rural areas to the urban centers for food and employment. Frequent natural disasters, such as coastal cyclones and floods, killed thousands, and widespread malnutrition and poor sanitation resulted in high mortality rates from a variety of diseases.

In the late 1980s, poverty remained the most salient aspect of Bangladeshi society. Although the disparity in income between different segments of the society was not great, the incidence of poverty was widespread; the proportion of the population in extreme poverty—those unable to afford even enough food to live a reasonably active life—rose from 43 percent in 1974 to 50 percent in the mid-1980s. The emerging political elite, which constituted a very narrow social class compared with the mass of peasants and urban poor, held the key to political power, controlled all institutions, and enjoyed the greatest economic gains. Urban in residence, fluent in English, and comfortable with Western culture, they were perceived by many observers as socially and culturally alienated from the masses. At the end of the 1980s, Bangladeshi society continued to be in transition—not only from the early days of independence but also from the colonial and Pakistani periods as well—as new values gradually replaced traditional ones.

Nearly 83 percent Muslim, Bangladesh ranked third in Islamic population worldwide, following Indonesia and Pakistan. Sunni Islam was the dominant religion among Bangladeshis. Although

loyalty to Islam was deeply rooted, in many cases beliefs and observances in rural areas tended to conflict with orthodox Islam. However, the country was remarkably free of sectarian strife. For most believers Islam was largely a matter of customary practice and mores. In the late twentieth century fundamentalists were showing some organizational strength, but in the late 1980s their numbers and influence were believed to be limited. Promulgated in June 1988, the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution recognizes Islam as the state religion, but the full implications of this measure were not apparent in the months following its adoption. Hindus constituted the largest religious minority at 16 percent; other minorities included Buddhists and Christians.

Since its birth in 1971, Bangladesh has suffered through both natural calamities and political upheavals. In July–September 1987, for example, the country experienced its worst floods in more than thirty years, and floods during the same period in 1988 were even more devastating. In 1987 more than US$250 million of the economic infrastructure was destroyed, the main rice crop was severely damaged, and an estimated 1,800 lives were lost. The 1988 floods covered more than two-thirds of the country, and more than 2,100 died from flooding and subsequent disease. The country also underwent a period of political unrest fomented by major opposition political parties. Enduring uncertainties as the 1990s approached were bound to have an impact on social development, especially in the areas of education, development of the labor force, nutrition, and the building of infrastructure for adequate health care and population control.

Geography

The Land

The physiography of Bangladesh is characterized by two distinctive features: a broad deltaic plain subject to frequent flooding, and a small hilly region crossed by swiftly flowing rivers. The country has an area of 144,000 square kilometers and extends 820 kilometers north to south and 600 kilometers east to west. Bangladesh is bordered on the west, north, and east by a 2,400-kilometer land frontier with India and, in the southeast, by a short land and water frontier (193 kilometers) with Burma. On the south is a highly irregular deltaic coastline of about 600 kilometers, fissured by many rivers and streams flowing into the Bay of Bengal. The territorial waters of Bangladesh extend 12 nautical miles, and the exclusive economic zone of the country is 200 nautical miles.

Roughly 80 percent of the landmass is made up of fertile alluvial lowland called the Bangladesh Plain. The plain is part of the larger Plain of Bengal, which is sometimes called the Lower Gangetic Plain. Although altitudes up to 105 meters above sea level occur in the northern part of the plain, most elevations are less than 10 meters above sea level; elevations decrease in the coastal south, where the terrain is generally at sea level. With such low elevations and numerous rivers, water—and concomitant flooding—is a predominant physical feature. About 10,000 square kilometers of the total area of Bangladesh is covered with water, and larger areas are routinely flooded during the monsoon season (see Climate; River Systems, this ch.).

The only exceptions to Bangladesh's low elevations are the Chittagong Hills in the southeast, the Low Hills of Sylhet in the northeast, and highlands in the north and northwest (see fig. 5). The Chittagong Hills constitute the only significant hill system in the country and, in effect, are the western fringe of the north-south mountain ranges of Burma and eastern India. The Chittagong Hills rise steeply to narrow ridge lines, generally no wider than 36 meters, 600 to 900 meters above sea level. At 1,046 meters, the highest elevation in Bangladesh is found at Keokradong, in the southeastern part of the hills. Fertile valleys lie between the hill lines, which generally run north-south. West of the Chittagong Hills is a broad plain, cut by rivers draining into the Bay of Bengal, that rises to a final chain of low coastal hills, mostly below 200 meters, that attain a maximum elevation of 350 meters. West of these hills is a narrow, wet coastal plain located between the cities of Chittagong in the north and Cox's Bazar in the south.

About 67 percent of Bangladesh's nonurban land is arable. Permanent crops cover only 2 percent, meadows and pastures cover 4 percent, and forests and woodland cover about 16 percent. The country produces large quantities of quality timber, bamboo, and sugarcane. Bamboo grows in almost all areas, but high-quality timber grows mostly in the highland valleys. Rubber planting in the hilly regions of the country was undertaken in the 1980s, and rubber extraction had started by the end of the decade. A variety of wild animals are found in the forest areas, such as in the Sundarbans on the southwest coast, which is the home of the world-famous Royal Bengal Tiger. The alluvial soils in the Bangladesh Plain are generally fertile and are enriched with heavy silt deposits carried downstream during the rainy season.

Climate

Bangladesh has a subtropical monsoon climate characterized by wide seasonal variations in rainfall, moderately warm temperatures,

and high humidity. Regional climatic differences in this flat country are minor. Three seasons are generally recognized: a hot, humid summer from March to June; a cool, rainy monsoon season from June to October; and a cool, dry winter from October to March. In general, maximum summer temperatures range between 32°C and 38°C. April is the warmest month in most parts of the country. January is the coldest month, when the average temperature for most of the country is 10°C.

Winds are mostly from the north and northwest in the winter, blowing gently at one to three kilometers per hour in northern and central areas and three to six kilometers per hour near the coast. From March to May, violent thunderstorms, called northwesters by local English speakers, produce winds of up to sixty kilometers per hour. During the intense storms of the early summer and late monsoon season, southerly winds of more than 160 kilometers per hour cause waves to crest as high as 6 meters in the Bay of Bengal, which brings disastrous flooding to coastal areas.

Heavy rainfall is characteristic of Bangladesh. With the exception of the relatively dry western region of Rajshahi, where the annual rainfall is about 160 centimeters, most parts of the country receive at least 200 centimeters of rainfall per year (see fig. 1). Because of its location just south of the foothills of the Himalayas, where monsoon winds turn west and northwest, the region of Sylhet in northeastern Bangladesh receives the greatest average precipitation. From 1977 to 1986, annual rainfall in that region ranged between 328 and 478 centimeters per year. Average daily humidity ranged from March lows of between 45 and 71 percent to July highs of between 84 and 92 percent, based on readings taken at selected stations nationwide in 1986 (see fig. 3; table 2, Appendix).

About 80 percent of Bangladesh's rain falls during the monsoon season. The monsoons result from the contrasts between low and high air pressure areas that result from differential heating of land and water. During the hot months of April and May hot air rises over the Indian subcontinent, creating low-pressure areas into which rush cooler, moisture-bearing winds from the Indian Ocean. This is the southwest monsoon, commencing in June and usually lasting through September. Dividing against the Indian landmass, the monsoon flows in two branches, one of which strikes western India. The other travels up the Bay of Bengal and over eastern India and Bangladesh, crossing the plain to the north and northeast before being turned to the west and northwest by the foothills of the Himalayas (see fig. 4).

Natural calamities, such as floods, tropical cyclones, tornadoes, and tidal bores—destructive waves or floods caused by flood tides

rushing up estuaries—ravage the country, particularly the coastal belt, almost every year. Between 1947 and 1988, thirteen severe cyclones hit Bangladesh, causing enormous loss of life and property. In May 1985, for example, a severe cyclonic storm packing 154 kilometer-per-hour winds and waves 4 meters high swept into southeastern and southern Bangladesh, killing more than 11,000 persons, damaging more than 94,000 houses, killing some 135,000 head of livestock, and damaging nearly 400 kilometers of critically needed embankments. Annual monsoon flooding results in the loss of human life, damage to property and communication systems, and a shortage of drinking water, which leads to the spread of disease. For example, in 1988 two-thirds of Bangladesh's sixty-four districts experienced extensive flood damage in the wake of unusually heavy rains that flooded the river systems. Millions were left homeless and without potable water. Half of Dhaka, including the runways at the Zia International Airport—an important transit point for disaster relief supplies—was flooded. About 2 million tons of crops were reported destroyed, and relief work was rendered even more challenging than usual because the flood made transportation of any kind exceedingly difficult.

There are no precautions against cyclones and tidal bores except giving advance warning and providing safe public buildings where people may take shelter. Adequate infrastructure and air transport facilities that would ease the sufferings of the affected people had not been established by the late 1980s. Efforts by the government under the Third Five-Year Plan (1985-90) were directed toward accurate and timely forecast capability through agrometeorology, marine meteorology, oceanography, hydrometeorology, and seismology. Necessary expert services, equipment, and training facilities were expected to be developed under the United Nations Development Programme (see Foreign Assistance, ch. 3).

River Systems

The rivers of Bangladesh mark both the physiography of the nation and the life of the people. About 700 in number, these rivers generally flow south. The larger rivers serve as the main source of water for cultivation and as the principal arteries of commercial transportation. Rivers also provide fish, an important source of protein. Flooding of the rivers during the monsoon season causes enormous hardship and hinders development, but fresh deposits of rich silt replenish the fertile but overworked soil. The rivers also drain excess monsoon rainfall into the Bay of Bengal. Thus, the great river system is at the same time the country's principal resource and its greatest hazard.

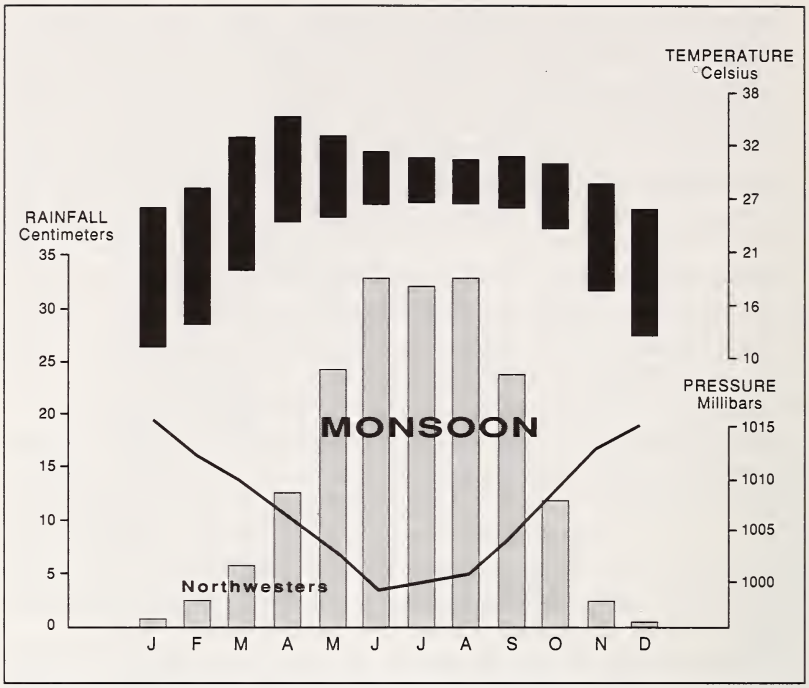


Figure 3. Typical Rainfall, Temperature, and Pressure at Dhaka

The profusion of rivers can be divided into five major networks (see fig. 5). The Jamuna-Brahmaputra is 292 kilometers long and extends from northern Bangladesh to its confluence with the Padma. Originating as the Yarlung Zangbo Jiang in China's Xizang Autonomous Region (Tibet) and flowing through India's state of Arunachal Pradesh, where it becomes known as the Brahmaputra ("Son of Brahma"), it receives waters from five major tributaries that total some 740 kilometers in length. At the point where the Brahmaputra meets the Tista River in Bangladesh, it becomes known as the Jamuna. The Jamuna is notorious for its shifting subchannels and for the formation of fertile silt islands (*chars*). No permanent settlements can exist along its banks.

The second system is the Padma-Ganges, which is divided into two sections: a 258-kilometer segment, the Ganges, which extends from the western border with India to its confluence with the Jamuna some 72 kilometers west of Dhaka, and a 126-kilometer segment, the Padma, which runs from the Ganges-Jamuna confluence to where it joins the Meghna River at Chandpur. The

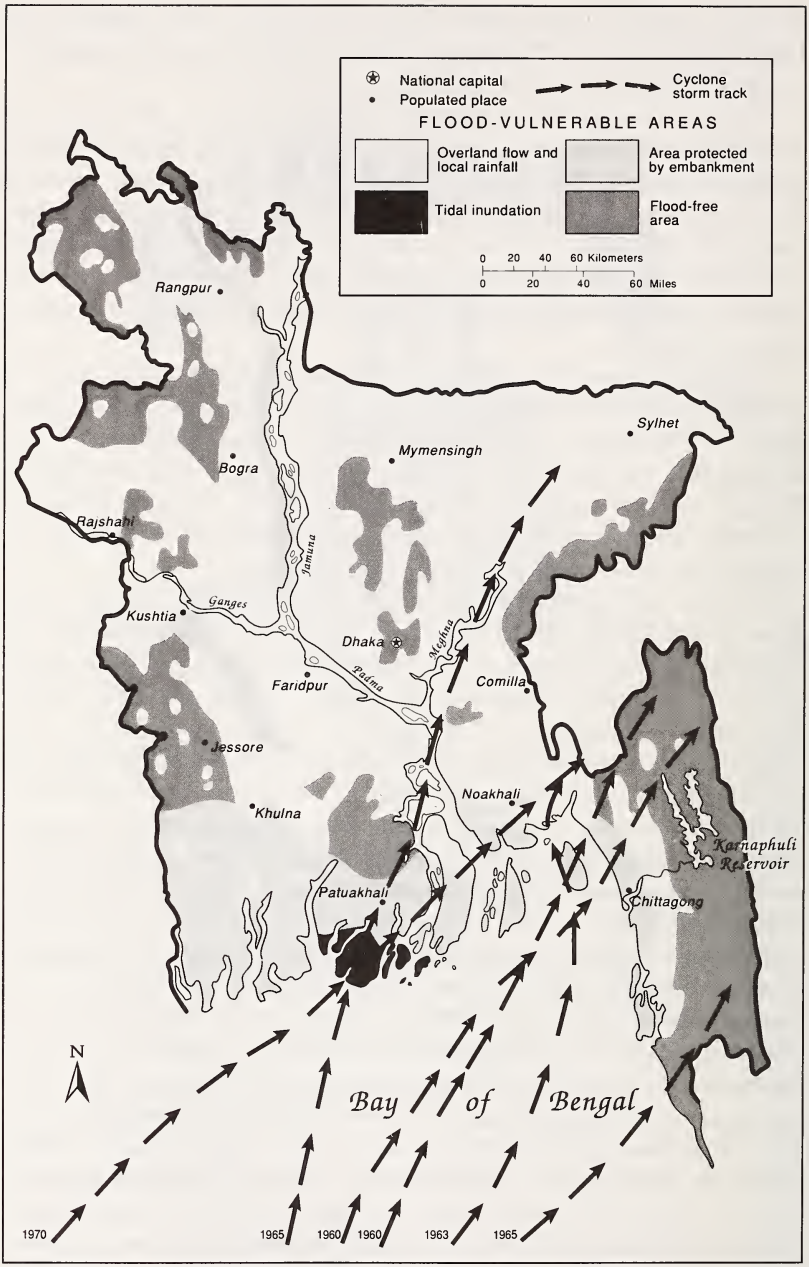
Padma-Ganges is the central part of a deltaic river system with hundreds of rivers and streams—some 2,100 kilometers in length—flowing generally east or west into the Padma.

The third network is the Surma-Meghna system, which courses from the northeastern border with India to Chandpur, where it joins the Padma. The Surma-Meghna, at 669 kilometers by itself the longest river in Bangladesh, is formed by the union of six lesser rivers. Below the city of Kalipur it is known as the Meghna. When the Padma and Meghna join together, they form the fourth river system—the Padma-Meghna—which flows 145 kilometers to the Bay of Bengal.

This mighty network of four river systems flowing through the Bangladesh Plain drains an area of some 1.5 million square kilometers. The numerous channels of the Padma-Meghna, its distributaries, and smaller parallel rivers that flow into the Bay of Bengal are referred to as the Mouths of the Ganges. Like the Jamuna, the Padma-Meghna and other estuaries on the Bay of Bengal are also known for their many *chars*.

A fifth river system, unconnected to the other four, is the Karnaphuli. Flowing through the region of Chittagong and the Chittagong Hills, it cuts across the hills and runs rapidly downhill to the west and southwest and then to the sea. The Feni, Karnaphuli, Sangu, and Matamuhari—an aggregate of some 420 kilometers—are the main rivers in the region. The port of Chittagong is situated on the banks of the Karnaphuli. The Karnaphuli Reservoir and Karnaphuli Dam are located in this area. The dam impounds the Karnaphuli River's waters in the reservoir for the generation of hydroelectric power (see Technological Advances, ch. 3).

During the annual monsoon period, the rivers of Bangladesh flow at about 140,000 cubic meters per second, but during the dry period they diminish to 7,000 cubic meters per second. Because water is so vital to agriculture, more than 60 percent of the net arable land, some 9.1 million hectares, is cultivated in the rainy season despite the possibility of severe flooding, and nearly 40 percent of the land is cultivated during the dry winter months. Water resources development has responded to this "dual water regime" by providing flood protection, drainage to prevent overflooding and waterlogging, and irrigation facilities for the expansion of winter cultivation. Major water control projects have been developed by the national government to provide irrigation, flood control, drainage facilities, aids to river navigation and road construction, and hydroelectric power. In addition, thousands of tube wells and electric pumps are used for local irrigation. Despite severe resource



Source: Based on information from M. Aminul Islam, et al. (eds.), *Bangladesh in Maps,* Dhaka, 1981, 14, 17.

Figure 4. Flood and Cyclone Vulnerability, 1960–80

constraints, the government of Bangladesh has made it a policy to try to bring additional areas under irrigation without salinity intrusion (see Agriculture, ch. 3).

Water resources management, including gravity flow irrigation, flood control, and drainage, were largely the responsibility of the Bangladesh Water Development Board. Other public sector institutions, such as the Bangladesh Krishi Bank, the Bangladesh Rural Development Board, the Bangladesh Bank, and the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation were also responsible for promotion and development of minor irrigation works in the private sector through government credit mechanisms (see Money and Banking, ch. 3).

Population

Population Structure and Settlement Patterns

In the 1980s, Bangladesh faced no greater problem than population growth. Census data compiled in 1901 indicated a total of 29 million in East Bengal (see Glossary), the region that became East Pakistan and eventually Bangladesh. By 1951, four years after partition from India, East Pakistan had 44 million people, a number that grew rapidly up to the first postindependence census, taken in 1974, which reported the national population at 71 million. The 1981 census reported a population of 87 million and a 2.3 percent annual growth rate (see Population Control, this ch.). Thus, in just 80 years, the population had tripled. In July 1988 the population, by then the eighth largest in the world, stood at 109,963,551, and the average annual growth rate was 2.6 percent. According to official estimates, Bangladesh was expected to reach a population of more than 140 million by the year 2000.

Bangladesh's population density provided further evidence of the problems the nation faced. In 1901 an average of 216 persons inhabited one square kilometer. By 1951 that number had increased to 312 per square kilometer and, in 1988, reached 821. By the year 2000, population density was projected to exceed 1,000 persons per square kilometer (see fig. 6; table 3; table 4, Appendix).

The crude birth rate per 1,000 population was 34.6 in 1981. This rate remained unchanged in 1985, following a 20-year trend of decline since 1961, when it had stood at 47 per 1,000. The rural birth rate was higher than birth rates in urban areas; in 1985 there were 36.3 births per 1,000 in the countryside versus 28 per 1,000 in urban areas. The crude death rate per 1,000 population decreased from 40.7 in 1951 to 12 per 1,000 in 1985; the urban crude death

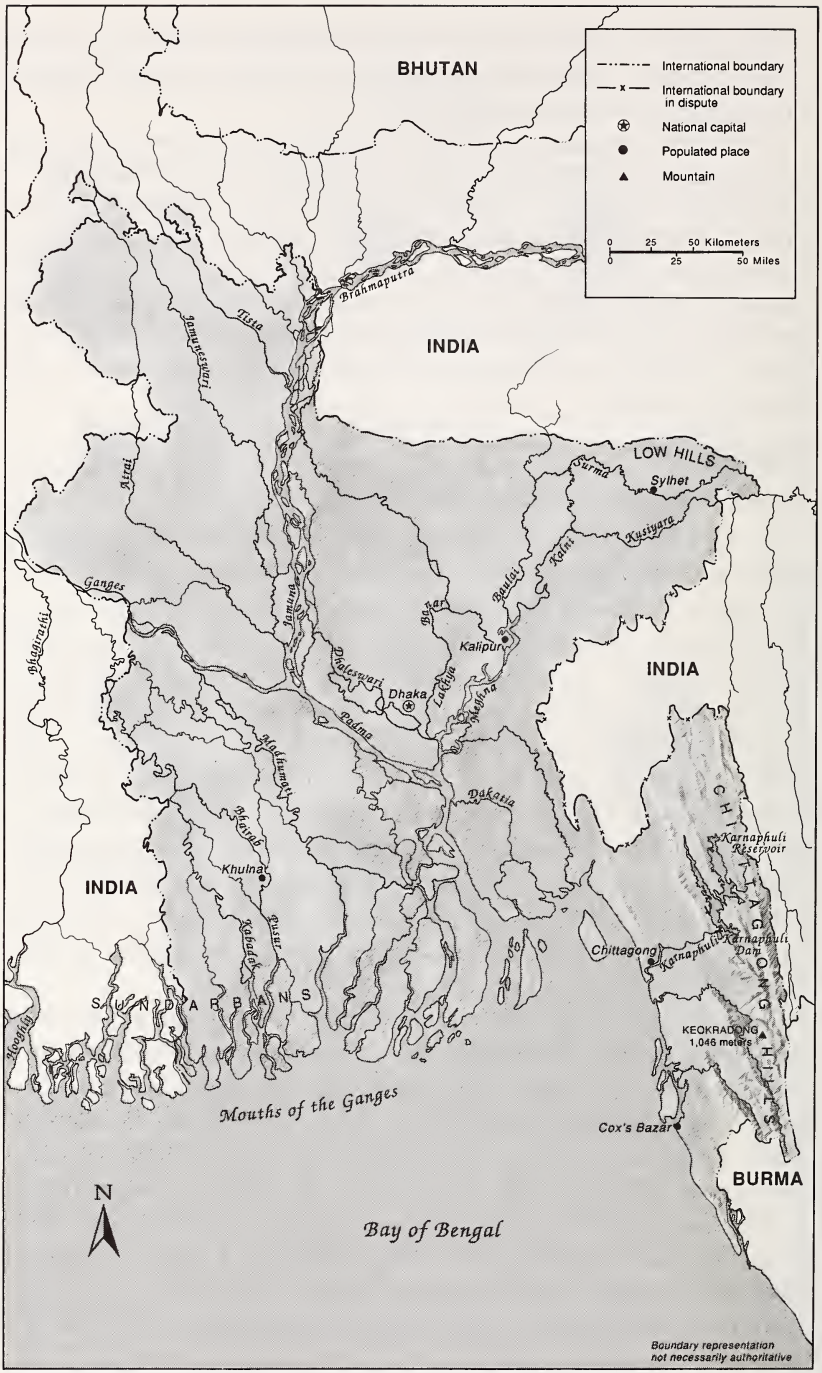


Figure 5. Topography and Drainage, 1988

rate was 8.3, and the rural crude death rate was 12.9. The infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births was 111.9 in 1985, a distinct improvement from as recently as 1982, when the rate was 121.9. Life expectancy at birth was estimated at 55.1 years in 1986. Men and women have very similar life expectancies at 55.4 and 55, respectively. With an average life expectancy of 58.8 years, urban dwellers in 1986 were likely to live longer than their rural counterparts (average life expectancy 54.8 years). The sex ratio of the population in 1981 was 106 males to 100 females (see fig. 7; table 5, Appendix).

In the late 1980s, about 82 percent of the population of Bangladesh (a total of 15.1 million households) resided in rural areas. With the exception of parts of Sylhet and Rangamati regions, where settlements occurred in nucleated or clustered patterns, the villages were scattered collections of homesteads surrounded by trees. Continuous strings of settlements along the roadside were also common in the southeastern part of the country.

Until the 1980s, Bangladesh was the most rural nation in South Asia. In 1931 only 27 out of every 1,000 persons were urban dwellers in what is now Bangladesh. In 1931 Bangladesh had fifty towns; by 1951 the country had eighty-nine towns, cities, and municipalities. During the 1980s, industrial development began to have a small effect on urbanization. The 1974 census had put the urban population of Bangladesh at 8.8 percent of the total; by 1988 that proportion had reached 18 percent and was projected to rise to 30 percent by the year 2000.

In 1981 only two cities, Dhaka and Chittagong, had more than 1 million residents. Seven other cities—Narayanganj, Khulna, Barisal, Saidpur, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, and Comilla—each had more than 100,000 people. Of all the expanding cities, Dhaka, the national capital and the principal seat of culture, had made the most gains in population, growing from 335,928 in 1951 to 3.4 million in 1981. In the same period, Chittagong had grown from 289,981 to 1.4 million. A majority of the other urban areas each had between 20,000 and 50,000 people. These relatively small cities had grown up in most cases as administrative centers and geographically suitable localities for inland transportation and commercial facilities. There was no particular concentration of towns in any part of the country. In fact, the only large cities close to each other were Dhaka and Narayanganj.

Migration

Although Bangladesh has absorbed several waves of immigrants since the onset of the twentieth century, the overall trend has been

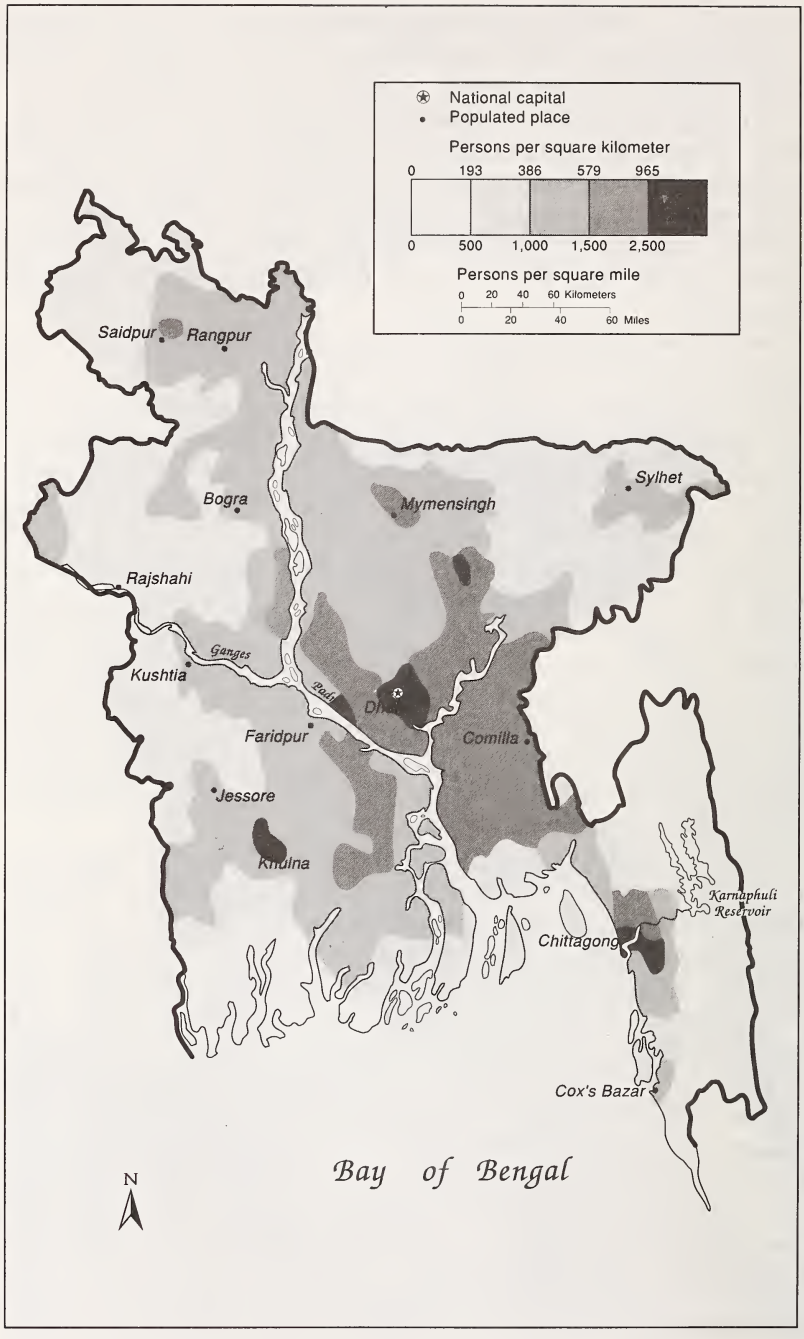


Figure 6. Population Distribution, 1988

a steady emigration of people driven *out* by political and economic problems. Following the partition of British India in 1947, more than 3 million Hindus may have migrated from East Pakistan; during the same period some 864,000 Muslim refugees immigrated to East Pakistan from India. The operation of the Pakistani military in East Pakistan in 1971 caused an estimated 8 to 10 million refugees to cross the border into India in one of the great mass movements of modern times (see Birth of Bangladesh, ch. 1). After the independence of Bangladesh, most of these refugees returned, although an undetermined number remained in India. After independence, Bangladesh received some 100,000 stranded Bangladeshis from former West Pakistan. About 600,000 non-Bengali Muslims, known as Biharis, who had declared their allegiance to Pakistan during the 1971 war, continued to reside in Bangladesh.

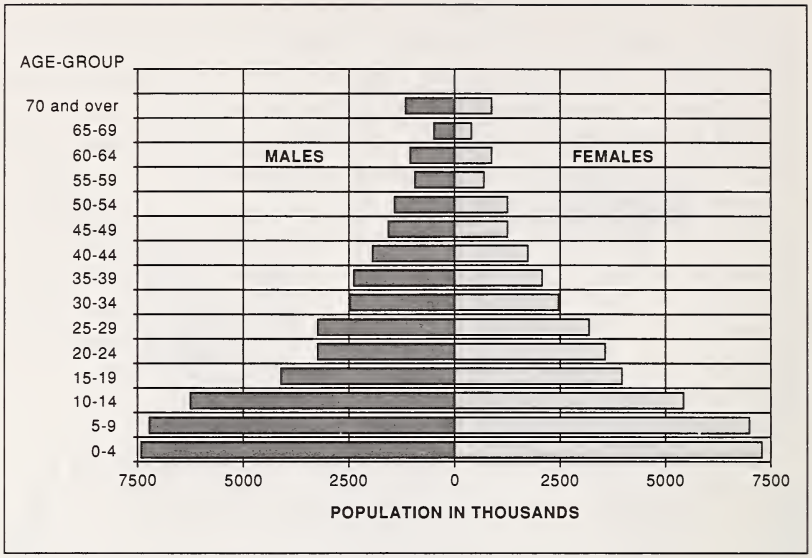
It has been reported that, beginning in 1974, thousands of Bangladeshis moved to the Indian state of Assam, and, in the 1980s, some tribal groups from the Chittagong Hills crossed into the Indian state of Tripura for political reasons, contributing to bilateral problems with India (see Foreign Policy, ch. 4; Insurgency in the Chittagong Hills, ch. 5). Bangladeshis also migrated to the Middle East and other regions, where a large number of skilled and unskilled persons found work (see table 6, Appendix; Export Sectors, ch. 3). Bangladesh also lost some highly skilled members of the work force to Western Europe and North America.

Internal migration indicated several recognizable trends. Because of increasing population pressure, people in the 1980s were moving into areas of relatively light habitation in the Chittagong Hills and in parts of the Sundarbans previously considered marginally habitable. Agrarian distress caused some movement to urban areas, especially Dhaka. Because of the inhospitable urban environment and the lack of jobs, many newcomers returned at least temporarily to their villages, especially during the harvest season. Unemployment, however, was even higher in the countryside and was a long-term national problem in the mid-1980s (see table 7, Appendix).

Population Control

Bangladesh's working-age population was increasing almost 1.5 million per year in the 1980s. This rate of population growth kept the people poor and the country dependent on foreign aid. Population control and family planning, therefore, were a top priority of the government and social workers.

In the mid-1980s, there were indications that government and nongovernment agency efforts were beginning to pay off.



Source: Based on information from Bangladesh, Ministry of Planning, Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1987,* Dhaka, July 1988, 40-41.

Figure 7. Age-Sex Distribution, 1981 Census

Population growth had declined from 3 percent to 2.3 percent between 1961 and 1981. Contraceptive practices increased from 12.7 percent of eligible couples in 1979 to 25 percent in mid-1985. Of the methods available, sterilization was the most commonly sought in government plans through fiscal year (FY—see Glossary) 1990. A continuous demographic survey also showed a decline in fertility rates and an increase in the female marriage age. But undercutting this progress was the uneven application of the family planning program in rural areas, which constituted the most populous sections of the nation.

In 1985 there were reported only 3,716 family planning facilities in the country and a total of 15,619 family planning personnel, of whom 4,086 were male in a country where the females were traditionally reserved when discussing sexual matters with men. Even when they were physicians, men were reluctant to discuss sexual matters with women. From 1980 to 1985, only about 55 percent of national family planning goals were achieved.

Ethnicity and Linguistic Diversity

Bangladesh is noted for the ethnic homogeneity of its population. Over 98 percent of the people are Bengalis, predominantly

Bangla-speaking peoples. People speaking Arabic, Persian, and Turkic languages also have contributed to the ethnic characteristics of the region.

A member of the Indo-European family of languages, Bangla (sometimes called Bengali) is the official language of Bangladesh. Bangladeshis closely identify themselves with their national language. Bangla has a rich cultural heritage in literature, music, and poetry, and at least two Bengali poets are well known in the West: Rabindranath Tagore, a Hindu and a Nobel laureate; and Kazi Nazrul Islam, a Muslim known as the "voice of Bengali nationalism and independence." Bangla has been enriched by several regional dialects. The dialects of Sylhet, Chittagong, and Noakhali have been strongly marked by Arab-Persian influences. English, whose cultural influence seemed to have crested by the late 1980s, remained nonetheless an important language in Bangladesh.

Biharis, a group that included Urdu-speaking non-Bengali Muslim refugees from Bihar and other parts of northern India, numbered about 1 million in 1971 but had decreased to around 600,000 by the late 1980s. They once dominated the upper levels of Bengali society. Many also held jobs on the railroads and in heavy industry. As such they stood to lose from Bangladesh independence and sided with Pakistan during the 1971 war. Hundreds of thousands of Biharis were repatriated to Pakistan after the war.

Bangladesh's tribal population consisted of 897,828 persons, just over 1 percent of the total population, at the time of the 1981 census. They lived primarily in the Chittagong Hills and in the regions of Mymensingh, Sylhet, and Rajshahi. The majority of the tribal population (778,425) lived in rural settings, where many practiced shifting cultivation. Most tribal people were of Sino-Tibetan descent and had distinctive Mongoloid features. They differed in their social organization, marriage customs, birth and death rites, food, and other social customs from the people of the rest of the country. They spoke Tibeto-Burman languages. In the mid-1980s, the percentage distribution of tribal population by religion was Hindu 24, Buddhist 44, Christian 13, and others 19.

The four largest tribes were the Chakmas, Marmas (or Maghs), Tipperas (or Tipras), and Mros (or Moorangs). The tribes tended to intermingle and could be distinguished from one another more by differences in their dialect, dress, and customs than by tribal cohesion. Only the Chakmas and Marmas displayed formal tribal organization, although all groups contained distinct clans. By far the largest tribe, the Chakmas were of mixed origin but reflected more Bengali influence than any other tribe. Unlike the other tribes, the Chakmas and Marmas generally lived in the highland

valleys. Most Chakmas were Buddhists, but some practiced Hinduism or animism.

Of Burmese ancestry, the Marmas regarded Burma as the center of their cultural life. Members of the Marma tribe disliked the more widely used term *maghs*, which had come to mean pirates. Although several religions, including Islam, were represented among the Marmas, nearly all of the Marmas were Buddhists (see Buddhism, this ch.).

The Tipperas were nearly all Hindus and accounted for virtually the entire Hindu population of the Chittagong Hills. They had migrated gradually from the northern Chittagong Hills. The northern Tipperas were influenced by Bengali culture. A small southern section known as the Mrungs showed considerably less Bengali influence.

The Mros, considered the original inhabitants of the Chittagong Hills, lived on hilltops and often fortified their villages. They had no written language of their own, but some could read the Burmese and Bangla scripts. Most of them claimed to be Buddhists, but their religious practices were largely animistic.

Tribal groups in other parts of the country included Santals in Rajshahi and Dinajpur, and Khasis, Garos, and Khajons in Mymensingh and Sylhet regions. Primarily poor peasants, these people all belonged to groups in the adjoining tribal areas of India.

Social System

Transition to a New Social Order

Bangladesh did not exist as a distinct geographic and ethnic unity until independence. The region had been a part of successive Indian empires, and during the British period it formed the eastern part of a hinterland of Bengal, which was dominated by the British rulers and Hindu professional, commercial, and landed elites. After the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, present-day Bangladesh came under the hegemony of the non-Bengali Muslim elites of the West Wing of Pakistan. The establishment of Bangladesh, therefore, implied the formation of both a new nation and a new social order.

Until the partition of British India in 1947, Hindus controlled about 80 percent of all large rural holdings, urban real estate, and government jobs in East Bengal and dominated finance, commerce, and the professions. Following partition, a massive flight of East Bengali Hindus effectively removed the Hindu economic and political elite and cut the territory's ties to Calcutta (see Pakistan Period, 1947–71, ch. 1). After the emigration of the Hindus,

Muslims moved quickly into the vacated positions, creating for the first time in East Bengal an economy and government predominantly in Muslim hands. These vastly increased opportunities, especially in the civil service and the professions, however, soon came to be dominated by a West Pakistani-based elite whose members were favored by the government both directly and indirectly. Soon after independence in 1971, an ill-prepared Bangladeshi elite moved into the areas vacated by West Pakistanis. Except for members of small non-Bengali caste-like Muslim groups known as "trading communities," Bangladeshi Muslims almost immediately established control over all small- and medium-sized industrial and commercial enterprises. The 1972 nationalization of non-Bengali-owned large industries accelerated the establishment of control and influence by the indigenous community (see The Economic Context, ch. 3).

The sudden rise of a new managerial class and the expansion of the civil and military bureaucracy upset the balance in both the urban and the rural sectors. Party affiliation, political contacts, and documented revolutionary service became the main prerequisites for admission to the rapidly growing new elite of political and industrial functionaries; the established middle class and its values played lesser roles. In the countryside, new elites with links to the villages bought property to establish their socio-political control. Also taking advantage of the situation, the rural political elite amassed fortunes in land- and rural-based enterprises. The result was the growth of a new, land-based, rural elite that replaced many formerly entrenched wealthy peasants (in Bangla, *jotedars*).

Rural Society

The basic social unit in a village is the family (*paribar* or *gushti*), generally consisting of a complete or incomplete patrilineally extended household (*chula*) and residing in a homestead (*bari*). The individual nuclear family often is submerged in the larger unit and might be known as the house (*ghar*). Above the *bari* level, patrilineal kin ties are linked into sequentially larger groups based on real, fictional, or assumed relationships.

A significant unit larger than that of close kin is the voluntary religious and mutual benefit association known as the "the society" (*samaj* or *millat*). Among the functions of a *samaj* might be the maintenance of a mosque and support of a mullah. An informal council of *samaj* elders (*matabdars* or *sardars*) settles village disputes. Factional competition between the *matabdars* is a major dynamic of social and political interaction (see Dominance of Local Elites, ch. 4).

Groups of homes in a village are called *paras,* and each *para* has its own name. Several *paras* constitute a *mauza,* the basic revenue and census survey unit. The traditional character of rural villages was changing in the latter half of the twentieth century with the addition of brick structures of one or more stories scattered among the more common thatched bamboo huts.

Although farming has traditionally ranked among the most desirable occupations, villagers in the 1980s began to encourage their children to leave the increasingly overcrowded countryside to seek more secure employment in the towns. Traditional sources of prestige, such as landholding, distinguished lineage, and religious piety were beginning to be replaced by modern education, higher income, and steadier work. These changes, however, did not prevent rural poverty from increasing greatly. According to the FY 1986 Household Expenditure Survey conducted by the Ministry of Planning's Bureau of Statistics, 47 percent of the rural population was below the poverty line, with about 62 percent of the poor remaining in extreme poverty. The number of landless rural laborers also increased substantially, from 25 percent in 1970 to 40 percent in 1987.

Urban Society

In 1988 about 18 percent of the population lived in urban areas, most of which were villages or trade centers in rural areas. Urban centers grew in number and population during the 1980s as a result of an administrative decentralization program that featured the creation of subdistricts (*upazilas*—see Glossary; Local Administration, ch. 4). In appearance these small urban areas were generally shabby. Most of the urban population merely congregated in ramshackle structures with poor sanitation and an almost total lack of modern amenities. Towns were populated mostly by government functionaries, merchants, and other business personnel. Most dwellings contained nuclear families and some extended family lodgers. A few households or a neighborhood would constitute a *para,* which might develop some cohesiveness but would have no formal leadership structure. With the exception of a small number of transients, most town populations consisted of permanent inhabitants who maintained connections with their ancestral villages through property or family ties. Most towns had social and sporting clubs and libraries. Unlike in the rural areas, kinship ties among the town population were limited and fragile.

Family, Household, and Kinship

Family and kinship were the core of social life in Bangladesh. A family group residing in a *bari* would function as the basic unit

of economic endeavor, landholding, and social identity. In the eyes of rural people, the *chula* defined the effective household—an extended family exploiting jointly held property and being fed from a jointly operated kitchen. A *bari* might consist of one or more such functional households, depending on the circumstances of family relationship. Married sons generally lived in their parents' household during the father's lifetime. Although sons usually built separate houses for their nuclear families, they remained under their fathers' authority, and wives under their mothers-in-law's authority. The death of the father usually precipitated the separation of adult brothers into their own households. Such a split generally caused little change in the physical layout of the *bari,* however. Families at different stages of the cycle would display different configurations of household membership.

Patrilineal ties dominated the ideology of family life, but in practice matrilineal ties were almost as important. Married women provided especially important links between their husbands' brothers' families. Brothers and sisters often visited their brothers' households, which were in fact the households of their deceased fathers. By Islamic law, women inherited a share of their fathers' property and thus retained a claim on the often scanty fields worked by their brothers. By not exercising this claim, however, they did their brothers the important service of keeping the family lands in the patrilineal line and thus ensured themselves a warm welcome and permanent place in their brothers' homes.

Marriage is a civil contract rather than a religious sacrament in Islam, and the parties to the contract represent the interests of families rather than the direct personal interests of the prospective spouses (see Islam, this ch.). In Bangladesh, parents ordinarily select spouses for their children, although men frequently exercise some influence over the choice of their spouses. In middle-class urban families men negotiate their own marriages. Only in the most sophisticated elite class does a woman participate in her own marriage arrangements. Marriage generally is made between families of similar social standing, although a woman might properly marry a man of somewhat higher status. Financial standing came to outweigh family background in the late twentieth century in any case. Often a person with a good job in a Middle Eastern country was preferred over a person of highly regarded lineage.

Marriages are often preceded by extensive negotiations between the families of the prospective bride and groom. One of the functions of the marriage negotiations is to reduce any discrepancy in status through financial arrangements. The groom's family ordinarily pledges the traditional cash payment, or bride-price, part

or all of which can be deferred to fall due in case of divorce initiated by the husband or in case the contract is otherwise broken. As in many Muslim countries, the cash payment system provides women some protection against the summary divorce permitted by Islam. Some families also adopt the Hindu custom of providing a dowry for the bride.

Of the total population in 1981, an estimated 34 million were married. A total of 19 million citizens of marriageable age were single or had never married, 3 million were widowed, and 322,000 were divorced. Although the majority of married men (10 million) had only one wife, there were about 580,000 households, between 6 and 10 percent of all marriages, in which a man had two or more wives.

Although the age at marriage appeared to be rising in the 1980s, early marriage remained the rule even among the educated, and especially among women. The mean age at marriage in 1981 for males was 23.9, and for females 16.7. Women students frequently married in their late teens and continued their studies in the households of their fathers-in-law. Divorce, especially of young couples without children, was becoming increasingly common in Bangladesh, with approximately one in six marriages ending in this fashion in the 1980s.

Typical spouses knew each other only slightly, if at all, before marriage. Although marriages between cousins and other more distant kin occurred frequently, segregation of the sexes generally kept young men and women of different households from knowing each other well. Marriage functioned to ensure the continuity of families rather than to provide companionship to individuals, and the new bride's relationship with her mother-in-law was probably more important to her well-being than her frequently impersonal relationship with her husband.

A woman began to gain respect and security in her husband's or father-in-law's household only after giving birth to a son. Mothers therefore cherished and indulged their sons, while daughters were frequently more strictly disciplined and were assigned heavy household chores from an early age. In many families the closest, most intimate, and most enduring emotional relationship was that between mother and son. The father was a more distant figure, worthy of formal respect, and the son's wife might remain a virtual stranger for a long time after marriage.

The practice of purdah (the traditional seclusion of women) varied widely according to social milieu, but even in relatively sophisticated urban circles the core of the institution, the segregation of the sexes, persisted. In traditional circles, full purdah required the

complete seclusion of women from the onset of puberty. Within the home, women inhabited private quarters that only male relatives or servants could enter, and a woman properly avoided or treated with formal respect even her father-in-law or her husband's older brother. Outside the home, a woman in purdah wore a veil or an enveloping, concealing outer garment.

The trappings of full purdah required both a devotion to traditional practice and the means to dispense with the labor of women in the fields. For most rural families the importance of women's labor made full seclusion impossible, although the idea remained. In some areas, for example, women went unveiled within the confines of the *para* or village but donned the veil or the outer garment for trips farther from the community. In any case, contact with men outside the immediate family was avoided.

The segregation of the sexes extended into social groups that had rejected full purdah as a result of modern education. Although urban women could enjoy more physical freedom than was traditional and the opportunity to pursue a professional career, they moved in a different social world from their husbands and often worked at their professions in a specifically feminine milieu.

Women's Role in Society

Available data on health, nutrition, education, and economic performance indicated that in the 1980s the status of women in Bangladesh remained considerably inferior to that of men. Women, in custom and practice, remained subordinate to men in almost all aspects of their lives; greater autonomy was the privilege of the rich or the necessity of the very poor. Most women's lives remained centered on their traditional roles, and they had limited access to markets, productive services, education, health care, and local government. This lack of opportunities contributed to high fertility patterns, which diminished family well-being, contributed to the malnourishment and generally poor health of children, and frustrated educational and other national development goals. In fact, acute poverty at the margin appeared to be hitting hardest at women. As long as women's access to health care, education, and training remained limited, prospects for improved productivity among the female population remained poor.

About 82 percent of women lived in rural areas in the late 1980s. The majority of rural women, perhaps 70 percent, were in small cultivator, tenant, and landless households; many worked as laborers part time or seasonally, usually in post-harvest activities, and received payment in kind or in meager cash wages. Another 20 percent, mostly in poor landless households, depended on casual

labor, gleaning, begging, and other irregular sources of income; typically, their income was essential to household survival. The remaining 10 percent of women were in households mainly in the professional, trading, or large-scale landowning categories, and they usually did not work outside the home.

The economic contribution of women was substantial but largely unacknowledged. Women in rural areas were responsible for most of the post-harvest work, which was done in the *chula,* and for keeping livestock, poultry, and small gardens. Women in cities relied on domestic and traditional jobs, but in the 1980s they increasingly worked in manufacturing jobs, especially in the ready-made garment industry (see Ready-made Garments, ch. 3). Those with more education worked in government, health care, and teaching, but their numbers remained very small. Continuing high rates of population growth and the declining availability of work based in the *chula* meant that more women sought employment outside the home. Accordingly, the female labor force participation rate doubled between 1974 and 1984, when it reached nearly 8 percent. Female wage rates in the 1980s were low, typically ranging between 20 and 30 percent of male wage rates.

Social Classes and Stratification

Society in Bangladesh in the 1980s, with the exception of the Hindu caste system, was not rigidly stratified; rather, it was open, fluid, and diffused, without a cohesive social organization and social structure (see Hinduism, this ch.). Social class distinctions were mostly functional, however, and there was considerable mobility among classes. Even the structure of the Hindu caste system in Bangladesh was relatively loose because most Hindus belonged to the lower castes.

Ostensibly, egalitarian principles of Islam were the basis of social organization. Unlike in other regions of South Asia, the Hindu caste-based social system had a very limited effect on Bangladeshi Muslim social culture. Even the low-caste *jolhas* (weavers) had improved their social standing since 1971. Although several hierarchically arranged groups—such as the *syeds* (noble born) and the *sheikhs,* or *shaykhs* (also noble born)—were noticeable in Bangladesh Muslim society, there were no impenetrable hereditary social distinctions. Rather, fairly permeable classes based on wealth and political influence existed both in the cities and in the villages.

Traditional Muslim class distinctions had little importance in Bangladesh. The proscription against marriage between individuals of high-born and low-born families, once an indicator of the social gap between the two groups, had long ago disappeared; most

Women serve as a major part of the Bangladeshi work force. Courtesy Embassy of Bangladesh, Washington



Women at work in a telephone assembly plant, Dhaka Courtesy Bangladesh Ministry of Information

matrimonial alliances were based on wealth and power and not on the ties of family distinction. Also, many so-called upper class families, because of their traditional use of the Urdu language, had become alienated in independent Bangladesh.

Although Hindu society is formally stratified into caste categories, caste did not figure prominently in the Bangladeshi Hindu community. About 75 percent of the Hindus in Bangladesh belonged to the lower castes, notably *namasudras* (lesser cultivators), and the remainder belonged primarily to outcaste or untouchable groups. Some members of higher castes belonged to the middle or professional class, but there was no Hindu upper class. With the increasing participation of the Hindus in nontraditional professional mobility, the castes were able to interact in wider political and socioeconomic arenas, which caused some erosion of caste consciousness. Although there is no mobility between Hindu castes, caste distinctions did not play as important a role in Bangladesh as in they did in the Hindu-dominated Indian state of West Bengal. Bangladeshi Hindus seemed to have become part of the mainstream culture without surrendering their religious and cultural distinctions.

Religion

Religion and Society

Nearly 83 percent of the population of Bangladesh claimed Islam as its religion in the 1980s, giving the country one of the largest concentrations of Muslims in the world. Although initially Bangladesh opted for a secular nationalist ideology as embodied in its Constitution, the principle of secularism was subsequently replaced by a commitment to the Islamic way of life through a series of constitutional amendments and government proclamations between 1977 and 1988 (see Constitution, ch. 4). In spite of a history of religious strife, Bangladeshi Muslims tended to be accommodating toward adherents of other religions. The Muslim community in the Bengal region developed independent of the dominant Islamic trends in India. The preservation of pre-Islamic cultural elements from Buddhist and Hindu periods made the commitment to Islam uniquely Bangladeshi. Features of Bangladeshi Hinduism, which differed in some respects from Hinduism in other parts of South Asia, influenced both the practices and the social structure of the Bangladeshi Muslim community (see table 8, Appendix).

In spite of the general personal commitment to Islam by the Muslims of Bangladesh, observance of Islamic rituals and tenets varies according to social position, locale, and personal considerations. In rural regions, some beliefs and practices tend to incorporate

elements that differ from and often conflict with orthodox Islam. Islamic fundamentalists, although a rather limited force in the past, had begun to gain a following, especially among the educated urban youth, by the 1980s.

Estimated to make up 18.5 percent of East Pakistan's population in 1961, the Hindu proportion of the population had shrunk to about 13.5 percent by 1971. Steady Hindu emigration to India and Burma throughout the 1960s accounted for most of the decline. Although the Hindu population increased in size after 1971 and had reached 10.6 million by 1981, its relative proportion of the total population continued to decrease. In 1987 Hindus represented nearly 16 percent of the population. Other minority religious groups counted in the 1981 census included approximately 538,000 Buddhists, about 275,000 Christians, and nearly 250,00 categorized as "others," probably members of tribal religions.

Islam

Tenets of Islam

In the Arabian town of Mecca in A.D. 610, the Prophet Muhammad preached the first of a series of divine revelations. Muhammad, an uncompromising monotheist, made himself unpopular with his fellow Meccans, who benefitted from the town's thriving pilgrimage business and numerous polytheist religious sites. Censured by Mecca's leaders, in 622 Muhammad and a group of his followers were invited to the town of Yathrib, which came to be known as Medina (from Madinat an Nabi, meaning the Prophet's City), and made it the center of their activities. This move, or *hijra,* marked the beginning of the Islamic era and of Islam as a historical force. The Muslim calendar, based on a 354-day lunar year, begins in 622. In Medina, Muhammad continued to preach, eventually defeating his opponents in battle and consolidating the temporal and spiritual leadership of Arabia before his death in 632.

After Muhammad's death, his followers compiled his divinely inspired speeches in the Quran, the scripture of Islam. Other sayings and teachings of Muhammad and the examples of his personal behavior became the *hadith.* Together they form the Muslim's comprehensive guide to spiritual, ethical, and social living.

The *shahadah,* or testimony, succinctly states the central belief of Islam: "There is no god but God [Allah], and Muhammad is his Prophet." This simple profession of faith is repeated on many occasions; recital in full and unquestioning sincerity makes one a Muslim. Islam means "submission to God," and he who submits

is a Muslim. The God whom Muhammad preached was not unknown to his countrymen, for Allah is the Arabic word for God rather than a particular name. Instead of introducing a new deity, Muhammad denied the existence of the minor gods and spirits worshiped before his ministry.

Muhammad is called the "seal of the Prophets"; his revelation is said to complete for all time the series of biblical revelations received by the Jews and the Christians. Prophets and sages of the Judeo-Christian tradition, such as Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (Ibrahim, Musa, and Isa, respectively, in the Arabic Islamic canon) are recognized as inspired vehicles of God's will. Islam, however, reveres as sacred only God's message, rejecting Christianity's deification of the messenger. It accepts the concepts of guardian angels, the Day of Judgment, the general resurrection, heaven and hell, and the immortality of the soul.

The duties of the Muslim, which form the "five pillars" of the faith, are recitation of the *shahadah* (*kalima* in Bangla), daily prayer (*salat;* in Bangla, *namaj*), almsgiving (*zakat;* in Bangla, *jakat*), fasting (*sawm*; in Bangla, *roja*), and pilgrimage (*hajj).* The devout believer prays after purification through ritual oblations at dawn, midday, mid-afternoon, sunset, and nightfall. Prescribed genuflections and prostrations accompany the prayers that the worshiper recites while facing Mecca. Whenever possible, men pray in congregation at a mosque, led by a prayer leader; on Fridays they are obliged to do so. Women may attend public worship at mosques, where they are segregated from men, although most women commonly pray at home. A special functionary, the muezzin, intones a call to prayer to the entire community at the appropriate hours; those out of earshot determine the prayer time from the position of the sun. Public prayer is a conspicuous and widely practiced aspect of Islam in Bangladesh.

Almsgiving consists of a variety of donations to the poor, debtors, slaves, wayfarers, beggars, and charitable organizations. Once obligatory, although not strictly a tax, almsgiving in modern times is voluntary but usually expected.

The ninth month of the Muslim calendar is Ramadan, a period of obligatory fasting in commemoration of Muhammad's receipt of God's revelation. During the month all but the sick, the weak, pregnant or lactating women, soldiers on duty, travelers on necessary journeys, and young children are enjoined, as appropriate to their state in life, from eating, drinking, smoking, and sexual intercourse during daylight hours. The wealthy usually do little or no work during this period, and some businesses close for all or part of the day. Since the months of the lunar calendar revolve

through the solar year, Ramadan falls at various seasons in different years. Summertime fasting imposes considerable hardship on those who must do physical work. Id al Fitr, a feast celebrated throughout the Islamic world, marks the end of the month of fasting. Gifts, the wearing of new garments, exchanges of sweetmeats, almsgiving, and visits to friends and relatives are some of the customs of this great religious festival.

Islam dictates that at least once in his or her lifetime every Muslim should, if possible, make the *hajj* to Mecca to participate in special rites held there during the twelfth month of the Muslim calendar. The Prophet instituted this requirement, modifying pre-Islamic custom to emphasize the significance of the sites associated with the history of Abraham, the founder of monotheism and the father of the Arabs through his son Ishmail (Ismail in the Arabic Islamic Canon). The pilgrim, dressed in a white seamless garment, abstains from sexual relations, shaving, haircutting, and nail-paring. Highlights of the pilgrimage include kissing a sacred black stone; circumambulating the Kaabah shrine (the sacred structure reportedly built by Abraham that houses a stone sacred to Islam); running between the hills of Safa and Marwa in imitation of Hagar, Ishmail's mother, during her travail in the desert; and standing in prayer on the Plain of Arafat.

The permanent struggle for the triumph of the word of God on earth—the jihad—represents an additional duty of all Muslims. Although this concept continues to be used to justify holy wars, modernist Muslims see the jihad in a broader context of civic and personal action. In addition to specific duties, Islam imposes a code of ethical conduct that encourages generosity, fairness, honesty, and respect and that forbids adultery, gambling, usury, and the consumption of carrion, blood, pork, and alcohol.

A Muslim stands in a personal relationship to God; there is neither intermediary nor clergy in orthodox Islam. Those who lead prayers, preach sermons, and interpret the law do so by virtue of their superior knowledge and scholarship rather than any special powers or prerogatives conferred by ordination.

During his lifetime, Muhammad was both spiritual and temporal leader of the Muslim community. He established the concept of Islam as a total and all-encompassing way of life for both individuals and society. Muslims believe that God revealed to Muhammad the rules governing decent behavior. It is therefore incumbent on the individual to live in the manner prescribed by revealed law and on the community to perfect human society on earth according to the holy injunctions. Islam recognizes no distinction between religion and state. Religious and secular life merge,

as do religious and secular law. In keeping with this conception of society, all Muslims traditionally have been subject to religious law.

Early Developments in Islam

After Muhammad's death in A.D. 632 the leaders of the Muslim community chose Abu Bakr, the Prophet's father-in-law and one of his earliest followers, to succeed him as caliph (from *khalifa;* literally, successor of the Prophet). At that time, some persons favored Ali, the Prophet's cousin and husband of his daughter Fatima, but Ali and his supporters recognized the community's choice. The next two caliphs, Umar and Uthman, enjoyed the recognition of the entire community, although Uthman was murdered. When Ali finally succeeded to the caliphate in 656, Muawiyah, governor of Syria, rebelled in the name of his kinsman Uthman. After the ensuing civil war Ali moved his capital to Kufa (present-day Karbala in Iraq), where a short time later he too was assassinated.

Ali's death ended the last of the so-called four orthodox caliphates and the period in which the entire Islamic community recognized a single caliph. Muawiyah then proclaimed himself caliph of Damascus. Ali's supporters, however, refused to recognize Muawiyah or his line, the Umayyad caliphs; they withdrew in the first great schism of Islam and established a dissident faction known as the Shias (or Shiites), from Shiat Ali (Party of Ali) in support of the claims of Ali's line to the caliphate based on descent from the Prophet. The larger faction of Islam, the Sunnis, claims to follow the orthodox teaching and example of Muhammad as embodied in the Sunna, the traditions of the Prophet. The Sunni majority was further developed into four schools of law: Maliki, Hanafi, Shafii, and Hanbali. All four are equally orthodox, but Sunnis in one country usually follow only one school.

Originally political in nature, the difference between the Sunni and Shia interpretations took on theological and metaphysical overtones. Ali's two sons, killed in the wars following the schisms, became martyred heroes to Shia Islam and repositories of the claims of Ali's line to mystical preeminence among Muslims. The Sunnis retained the doctrine of leadership by consensus. Despite these differences, reputed descent from the Prophet still carries great social and religious prestige throughout the Muslim world. Meanwhile, the Shia doctrine of rule by divine right grew more firmly established, and disagreements over which of several pretenders had the truer claim to the mystical power of Ali precipitated further schisms. Some Shia groups developed doctrines of divine leadership, including a belief in hidden but divinely chosen leaders. The Shia creed,

for example, proclaims: "There is no god but God: Muhammad is the Prophet of God, and Ali is the Saint of God."

Islam in Bangladesh

The wholesale conversion to Islam of the population of what was to become Bangladesh began in the thirteenth century and continued for hundreds of years (see Islamization of Bengal, 1202–1757, ch. 1). Conversion was generally collective rather than individual, although individual Hindus who became outcastes or who were ostracized for any reason often became Muslims. Islamic egalitarianism, especially the ideals of equality, brotherhood, and social justice, attracted numerous Buddhists and lower caste Hindus. Muslim missionaries and mystics, some of whom were subsequently regarded as saints (usually known as *pirs* in Bangladesh) and who wandered about in villages and towns, were responsible for many conversions.

Most Muslims in Bangladesh are Sunnis, but there is a small Shia community. Most of those who are Shia reside in urban areas. Although these Shias are few in number, Shia observance commemorating the martyrdom of Ali's sons, Hasan and Husayn, is widely observed by the nation's Sunnis.

The tradition of Islamic mysticism known as Sufism appeared very early in Islam and became essentially a popular movement emphasizing love of God rather than fear of God. Sufism stresses a direct, unstructured, personal devotion to God in place of the ritualistic, outward observance of the faith. An important belief in the Sufi tradition is that the average believer may use spiritual guides in his pursuit of the truth. These guides—friends of God or saints—are commonly called fakirs or *pirs*. In Bangladesh the term *pir* is more commonly used and combines the meanings of teacher and saint. In Islam there has been a perennial tension between the ulama—Muslim scholars—and the Sufis; each group advocates its method as the preferred path to salvation. There also have been periodic efforts to reconcile the two approaches. Throughout the centuries many gifted scholars and numerous poets have been inspired by Sufi ideas even though they were not actually adherents.

Sufi masters were the single most important factor in South Asian conversions to Islam, particularly in what is now Bangladesh. Most Bangladeshi Muslims are influenced to some degree by Sufism, although this influence often involves only occasional consultation or celebration rather than formal affiliation. Both fakirs and *pirs* are familiar figures on the village scene, and in some areas the shrines of saints almost outnumber the mosques. In some regions

the terms fakir and *pir* are used interchangeably, but in general the former connotes an itinerant holy man and the latter an established *murshid,* a holy man who has achieved a higher spiritual level than a fakir and who has a larger following.

Ever since Sufism became a popular movement, pious men of outstanding personality reputed to have gifts of miraculous powers have found disciples (*murids*) flocking to them. The disciple can be a kind of lay associate earning his living in secular occupations, consulting the *pir* or *murshid* at times, participating in religious ceremonies, and making contributions to the support of the *murshid.* In addition, he may be initiated into a brotherhood that pledges its devotion to the *murshid,* lives in close association with him, and engages in pious exercises intended to bring about mystical enlightenment.

The Qadiri, Naqshbandi, and Chishti orders were among the most widespread Sufi orders in Bangladesh in the late 1980s. The beliefs and practices of the first two are quite close to those of orthodox Islam; the third, founded in Ajmer, India, is peculiar to the subcontinent and has a number of unorthodox practices, such as the use of music in its liturgy. Its ranks have included many musicians and poets.

Pirs do not attain their office through consensus and do not normally function as community representatives. The villager may expect a *pir* to advise him and offer inspiration but would not expect him to lead communal prayers or deliver the weekly sermon at the local mosque. Some *pirs,* however, are known to have taken an active interest in politics either by running for public office or by supporting other candidates. For example, Pir Hafizi Huzur ran as a candidate for president in the 1986 election. The *pirs* of Atroshi and Sarsina apparently also exerted some political influence. Their visitors have included presidents and cabinet ministers.

Although a formal organization of ordained priests has no basis in Islam, a variety of functionaries perform many of the duties conventionally associated with a clergy and serve, in effect, as priests. One group, known collectively as the ulama, has traditionally provided the orthodox leadership of the community. The ulama unofficially interpret and administer religious law. Their authority rests on their knowledge of sharia, the corpus of Islamic jurisprudence that grew up in the centuries following the Prophet's death.

The members of the ulama include *maulvis,* imams (see Glossary), and mullahs. The first two titles are accorded to those who have received special training in Islamic theology and law. A *maulvi* has pursued higher studies in a *madrasa,* a school of religious





The Star Mosque in Dhaka
Courtesy Siria Lopez
An example of colonial-era architecture, a house in old Dhaka
Courtesy Siria Lopez

education attached to a mosque (see Religious Education, this ch.). Additional study on the graduate level leads to the title *maulana.*

Villagers call on the mullah for prayers, advice on points of religious practice, and performance of marriage and funeral ceremonies. More often they come to him for a variety of services far from the purview of orthodox Islam. The mullah may be a source for amulets, talismans, and charms for the remedying of everything from snakebite to sexual impotence. These objects are also purported to provide protection from evil spirits and bring good fortune. Many villagers have implicit faith in such cures for disease and appear to benefit from them. Some mullahs derive a significant portion of their income from sales of such items.

In Bangladesh, where a modified Anglo-Indian civil and criminal legal system operates, there are no official sharia courts (see Judiciary, ch. 4). Most Muslim marriages, however, are presided over by the *qazi,* a traditional Muslim judge whose advice is also sought on matters of personal law, such as inheritance, divorce, and the administration of religious endowments (*waqfs*).

In the late 1980s, the ulama of Bangladesh still perceived their function as that of teaching and preserving the Islamic way of life in the face of outside challenges, especially from modern sociopolitical ideas based on Christianity or communism. Any effort at modernization was perceived as a threat to core religious values and institutions; therefore, the ulama as a class was opposed to any compromise in matters of sharia. Many members of the ulama favored the establishment of an Islamic theocracy in Bangladesh and were deeply involved in political activism through several political parties. Most members of the ulama were also engaged in carrying on the *tabliqh* (preaching movement), an effort that focuses on the true sociopolitical ideals of Islam and unequivocally discards all un-Islamic accretions. *Tabliqh* attracted many college and university graduates, who found the movement emotionally fulfilling and a practical way to deal with Bangladesh's endemic sociopolitical malaise.

A number of Islamic practices are particular to South Asia, and several of them have been subject to reforms over the years. For example, the anniversary of the death of a *pir* is observed annually. Popular belief holds that this anniversary is an especially propitious time for seeking the intercession of the *pir.* Large numbers of the faithful attend anniversary ceremonies, which are festive occasions enjoyed by the followers of the *pir* as well as orthodox Muslims. The ceremonies are quite similar in form and content to many Hindu festivals. Several nineteenth- and twentieth-century fundamentalist reform movements, aimed at ridding Islam

of all extraneous encroachments, railed against these and similar practices. Nevertheless, the practice of *pir* worship continued unabated in the 1980s.

Nonorthodox interpretations of Islamic beliefs and practices pervaded popular religion in Bangladesh in the 1980s. Hindu influences can be seen in the practice of illuminating the house for the celebration of Shabi Barat (Festival of the Bestowal of Fate), a custom derived from the Hindu practices at Diwali (Festival of Lights). Rituals to exorcise evil spirits (jinni) from possessed persons also incorporated Hindu influence. Often, villagers would fail to distinguish between Hindu and Muslim shrines. For example, shrines called *satyapir,* which dot rural Bangladesh, are devoted to a Hindu-Muslim synthesis known as Olabibi, the deity for the cure of cholera. This synthesis is an intriguing superimposition of the Hindu concept of divine consort on the stern monotheistic perception of Allah.

Post-1971 regimes sought to increase the role of the government in the religious life of the people. The Ministry of Religious Affairs provided support, financial assistance, and endowments to religious institutions, including mosques and community prayer grounds (*idgahs*). The organization of annual pilgrimages to Mecca also came under the auspices of the ministry because of limits on the number of pilgrims admitted by the government of Saudi Arabia and the restrictive foreign exchange regulations of the government of Bangladesh. The ministry also directed the policy and the program of the Islamic Foundation, which was responsible for organizing and supporting research and publications on Islamic subjects. The foundation also maintained the Bayt al Mukarram (National Mosque), and organized the training of imams. Some 18,000 imams were scheduled for training once the government completed establishment of a national network of Islamic cultural centers and mosque libraries. Under the patronage of the Islamic Foundation, an encyclopedia of Islam in the Bangla language was being compiled in the late 1980s.

Another step toward further government involvement in religious life was taken in 1984 when the semiofficial Zakat Fund Committee was established under the chairmanship of the president of Bangladesh. The committee solicited annual *zakat* contributions on a voluntary basis. The revenue so generated was to be spent on orphanages, schools, children's hospitals, and other charitable institutions and projects. Commercial banks and other financial institutions were encouraged to contribute to the fund. Through these measures the government sought closer ties with religious establishments within the country and with Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

Although Islam played a significant role in the life and culture of the people, religion did not dominate national politics because Islam was not the central component of national identity. When in June 1988 an "Islamic way of life" was proclaimed for Bangladesh by constitutional amendment, very little attention was paid outside the intellectual class to the meaning and impact of such an important national commitment. Most observers believed that the declaration of Islam as the state religion might have a significant impact on national life, however. Aside from arousing the suspicion of the non-Islamic minorities, it could accelerate the proliferation of religious parties at both the national and the local levels, thereby exacerbating tension and conflict between secular and religious politicians. Unrest of this nature was reported on some college campuses soon after the amendment was promulgated.

Hinduism

Unlike Islam, Hinduism lacks a single authoritative scripture and a historically known founder. In a sense Hinduism is a synthesis of the religious expression of the people of South Asia and an anonymous expression of their worldview and cosmology, rather than the articulation of a particular creed. The term *Hinduism* applies to a large number of diverse beliefs and practices. Although religion can best be understood in a regional context, the caste system, beliefs, rituals, and festivals of the Hindus in Bangladesh—about 16 percent of the population—are peculiarly Bengali.

A distinction has sometimes been made between the religion of the "great tradition" and the popular religion of the "little tradition." The great (or Sanskritic) tradition, sometimes called Brahmanism, developed under the leadership of Hinduism's highest caste group, the Brahmans, who as the traditional priests, teachers, and astrologers enjoy numerous social privileges. The great tradition preserves refined and abstract philosophical concepts that exhibit very little regional variation. At this level, there is emphasis on unity in diversity and a pervasive attitude of relativism.

Hindu philosophy recognizes the Absolute (Brahma) as eternal, unbounded by time, space, and causality and consisting of pure existence, consciousness, and bliss. The highest goal is release (*moksha*) from the cycle of birth and rebirth and the union of the individualized soul (*atman*) with Brahma. To attain this goal, a person may follow one of several methods or paths of discipline depending on his or her own temperament or capacity. The first of these paths is known as the way of works (*karma marga*). Followed by most Hindus, it calls for disinterested right action—the performance of one's caste duties and service to others—without

personal involvement in the consequences of action. The way of knowledge (*jnana marga*) stresses union by eliminating ignorance; mental error rather than moral transgression is considered the root of human misery and evil. The way of devotion (*bhakti marga*) advocates union by love; its essence is a complete and passionate faith in a personal deity.

For most of its adherents, Hinduism encompasses a variety of devotions and sects that center on one or more of the great gods and are expressed at least partly in a regional context. The great tradition recognizes a trinity of gods, who are actually forms of absolute Brahman: Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer. Brahma receives little notice; everyday devotion tends to center on the worship of Vishnu and Shiva (known by a variety of names) and their countless respective consorts.

The worship of Shiva has generally found adherents among the higher castes in Bangladesh. Worship of Vishnu more explicitly cuts across caste lines by teaching the fundamental oneness of humankind in spirit. Vishnu worship in Bengal expresses the union of the male and female principles in a tradition of love and devotion. This form of Hindu belief and the Sufi tradition of Islam have influenced and interacted with each other in Bengal. Both were popular mystical movements emphasizing the personal relationship of religious leader and disciple instead of the dry stereotypes of the Brahmans or the ulama. As in Bengali Islamic practice, worship of Vishnu frequently occurs in a small devotional society (*samaj*). Both use the language of earthly love to express communion with the divine. In both traditions, the Bangla language is the vehicle of a large corpus of erotic and mystical literature of great beauty and emotional impact.

On the level of the little tradition, Hinduism admits worship of spirits and godlings of rivers, mountains, vegetation, animals, stones, or disease. Ritual bathing, vows, and pilgrimages to sacred rivers, mountains, shrines, and cities are important practices. An ordinary Hindu will worship at the shrines of Muslim *pirs,* without being concerned with the religion to which that place is supposed to be affiliated. Hindus revere many holy men and ascetics conspicuous for their bodily mortifications. Some people believe they attain spiritual benefit merely by looking at a great holy man.

Hindu ethics generally center on the principle of ahimsa, noninjury to living creatures—especially the cow, which is held sacred. The principle is expressed in almost universally observed rules against eating beef. By no means are all Hindus vegetarians, but abstinence from all kinds of meat is regarded as a "higher" virtue.





A musical "duel" between two poets
Courtesy Bangladesh Ministry of Information

High-caste Bangladeshi Hindus, unlike their counterparts elsewhere in South Asia, ordinarily eat fish.

Common among Hindus is the acceptance of the caste system as the structure of society. For virtually all Hindus, even those in revolt against some aspects of the system, caste is taken for granted as the way of life. To be considered Hindu, a group must identify itself in some way as a unit in the caste hierarchy. One cannot join a caste; one is born into it and lives, marries, and dies in it.

Hindus in Bangladesh in the late 1980s were almost evenly distributed in all regions, with concentrations in Khulna, Jessore, Dinajpur, Faridpur, and Barisal. The contributions of Hindus in arts and letters were far in excess of their numerical strength. In politics, they had traditionally supported the liberal and secular ideology of the Awami League (People's League) (see Early Independence Period, 1971–72, ch. 1; Party Politics, ch. 4). Hindu institutions and places of worship received assistance through the Bangladesh Hindu Kalyan Trust (Bangladesh Hindu Welfare Trust), which was sponsored by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Government-sponsored television and radio also broadcast readings and interpretations of Hindu scriptures and prayers.

Buddhism

Buddhism in various forms appears to have been prevalent at the time of the Turkish conquest in 1202 (see Islamization of Bengal, 1202–1757, ch. 1). The invading armies apparently found numerous monasteries, which they destroyed in the belief that they were military fortresses. With the destruction of its centers of learning, Buddhism rapidly disintegrated. In subsequent centuries and up through the 1980s nearly all the remaining Buddhists lived in the region around Chittagong, which had not been entirely conquered until the time of the British Raj (1858–1947; see Glossary). In the Chittagong Hills, Buddhist tribes formed the majority of the population, and their religion appeared to be a mixture of tribal cults and Buddhist doctrines. According to the 1981 census, there were approximately 538,000 Buddhists in Bangladesh, representing less than 1 percent of the population.

The ethical teachings of the Buddha, Siddartha Gautama (ca. 550–486 B.C.), stress a middle path between physical indulgence and ascetic mortification. The practice of Buddhism is concerned with salvation rather than with metaphysical speculation. Salvation consists of freeing oneself from the cycle of rebirth into lives of evil, pain, and sorrow; to accomplish this, one must renounce society and live a simple life of self-discipline. Those who renounce society often are organized into one of the many monastic orders.

There are several monasteries in the Chittagong Hills area, and in most Buddhist villages there is a school (*kyong*) where boys live and learn to read Burmese and some Pali (an ancient Buddhist scriptural language). It is common for men who have finished their schooling to return at regular intervals for periods of residence in the school. The local Buddhist shrine is often an important center of village life.

Essentially tolerant, Buddhism outside the monastic retreats has absorbed and adapted indigenous popular creeds and cults of the regions to which it has spread. In most areas religious ritual focuses on the image of the Buddha, and the major festivals observed by Buddhists in Bangladesh commemorate the important events of his life. Although doctrinal Buddhism rejects the worship of gods and preserves the memory of the Buddha as an enlightened man, popular Buddhism contains a pantheon of gods and lesser deities headed by the Buddha.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs provides assistance for the maintenance of Buddhist places of worship and relics. The ancient monasteries at Paharpur (in Rajshahi Region) and Mainamati (in Comilla Region), dating from the seventh to ninth century A.D., are considered unique for their size and setting and are maintained as state-protected monuments.

Christianity

Christianity's first contact with the Indian subcontinent is attributed to the Apostle Thomas, who is said to have preached in southern India. Although Jesuit priests were active at the Mughal courts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the first Roman Catholic settlements in what became Bangladesh appear to have been established by the Portuguese, coming from their center in Goa on the west coast of India. During the sixteenth century the Portuguese settled in the vicinity of Chittagong, where they were active in piracy and slave trading. In the seventeenth century some Portuguese moved to Dhaka.

Serious Protestant missionary efforts began only in the first half of the nineteenth century. Baptist missionary activities beginning in 1816, the Anglican Oxford Mission, and others worked mainly among the tribal peoples of the Low Hills in the northern part of Mymensingh and Sylhet regions. Many of the Christian churches, schools, and hospitals were initially set up to serve the European community. They subsequently became centers of conversion activities, particularly among the lower caste Hindus.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs provided assistance and support to the Christian institutions in the country. In the late 1980s,

the government was not imposing any restrictions on the legitimate religious activities of the missions and the communities. Mission schools and hospitals were well attended and were used by members of all religions. The Christian community usually enjoyed better opportunities for education and a better standard of living. In the late 1980s, Christianity had about 600,000 adherents, mainly Roman Catholic, and their numbers were growing rapidly.

Education

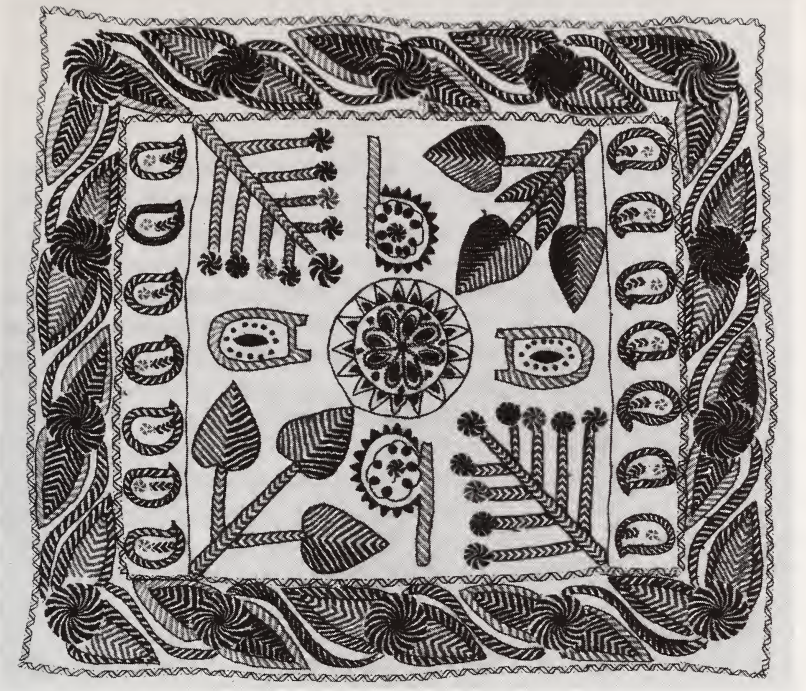
The British Legacy

At the beginning of the nineteenth century a system of liberal English-language schools based on the British model was instituted in the region that now constitutes Bangladesh. The emphasis on British education led to the growth of an elite class that provided clerical and administrative support to the colonial administration but did not develop practical skills or technical knowledge. The new elite became alienated from the masses of the people, who had no access to the new education system.

During the Pakistan period, there was a general awareness of the need to restructure the education system to meet the needs of the new nation. A 1959 report by Pakistan's National Commission on Education recommended a series of reforms that would reorganize the structure of education. These reforms included emphasis on broad-based and technical education. In the successive five-year plans and other national economic policy documents developed during the Pakistan period, a need was articulated to shift the focus of education away from rote memorization and to expand facilities for scientific and technological education (see The Economic Context, ch. 3). But the impact of such policies was not felt in East Pakistan, and, with only a few exceptions, a liberal elite-based education system with very little awareness of life in the countryside was in place when Bangladesh became independent.

Education System

In the 1981 census only 19.7 percent of the total population was counted as literate. The literacy rate was 17 percent in rural areas and 35 percent in urban areas. The urban-rural gap shrank slightly between 1961 and 1981, primarily because of the influx of rural Bangladeshis to urban areas. The adult literacy rate in 1988 remained about equal to the 1981 level, officially given as 29 percent but possibly lower. The education system also had had a discriminatory effect on the education of women in a basically patriarchal society. The female literacy rate in 1981 (13.2 percent) was



Nakshi kantha-*style embroidered quilt from Chapai, Nawabganj*
Courtesy Joyce Rahim

about half the literacy rate among men (26 percent) nationally. The gap was even greater in rural areas, where 11.2 percent women and 23 percent of men were literate. (In 1988 the literacy rate was 18 percent for women and 39 percent for men.) The national school attendance rate in 1982 was 58.9 percent for ages 5 to 9; 20.9 percent for ages 10 to 14; and 1.9 percent for ages 15 to 24. The estimated 1988 student-teacher ratio was fifty-four to one in primary schools, twenty-seven to one in secondary schools, and thirteen to one in universities. Approximately 10 million students of all ages attended school in 1981.

The base of the school system was five years of primary education. The government reported a total of nearly 44,000 primary schools enrolling nearly 44 million students in 1986. Recognizing the importance of increasing enrollments and improving quality, the government made universal primary education a major objective of its educational development plans, which focused on increasing access to school, improving teacher training, and revising the primary school curricula. As a result, the share of primary education by the mid-1980s increased to about 50 percent of the public education expenditure. Although enrollment in the entry class rose over time, the ability of the primary education sector to retain students in school and increase the literacy rate did not match

government goals. Throughout the system a high annual dropout rate of 20 percent existed in 1988. Studies suggested that no more than 10 to 15 percent of those attending primary schools retained a permanent ability to read and write. The Third Five-Year Plan (1985–90) envisaged reducing the rural-urban gap in education, establishing facilities for the enrollment of 70 percent of children of primary-school age, and placing emphasis on keeping children in school longer.

Bangladesh had 8,790 secondary schools with 2.7 million students in 1986. Secondary education was divided into two levels. The five years of lower secondary (grades six through ten) concluded with a secondary school certificate examination. Students who passed this examination proceeded to two years of higher secondary or intermediate training, which culminated in a higher secondary school examination after grade twelve. Higher secondary school was viewed as preparation for college rather than as the conclusion of high school. Development efforts in the late 1980s included programs to provide low-cost vocational education to the rural populace. Efforts also focused on the establishment of science teaching facilities in rural schools, as compulsory science courses were introduced at the secondary level. The government also had provided training for science teachers and supplies of scientific equipment. In spite of many difficulties over the years, the number of both secondary schools and students, particularly females, increased steadily. For example, whereas there were 7,786 secondary schools for boys and 1,159 for girls in 1977, the number of boys' schools had decreased to 7,511 while girls' schools had increased to 1,282 by 1986. The number of students increased as well. In 1977 there were 1.3 million boys and 450,000 girls in secondary schools; by 1986 there were 1.9 million boys and 804,000 girls. Enrollment in technical and vocational schools increased in a similar manner. Secondary education for the most part was private but was heavily subsidized by the state budget. Nationalization of private schools was a standing government policy.

Development of the education system depended largely on the supply of trained teachers. In 1986 about 20 percent of the estimated 190,000 primary-school teachers were adequately trained; at the secondary-school level, only 30 percent of the teachers were trained. Contributing to the shortage of trained teachers was the low socioeconomic standing of educators. The social image of teachers had been gradually eroded, making it difficult to recruit young graduates to the profession. The high proportion of poorly trained teachers led to lower standards of instruction. Despite these problems, the number of secondary-school teachers increased from 83,955 in 1977 to 99,016 in 1986, according to government figures.

In 1986 there were forty-nine primary-school teacher training institutes and ten secondary-school teacher training colleges. In addition to regular degree, diploma, and certificate programs, various crash programs and correspondence courses also were available. The Bangladesh Institute of Distance Education also had started an experimental program of teacher training under the auspices of Rajshahi University.

At the postsecondary level in 1986, there were 7 universities, 758 general colleges, and 50 professional (medical, dental, engineering, and law) colleges. More than 25 percent of the colleges were government managed; the rest were private but received substantial government grants. The private colleges were gradually being nationalized. In the 1980s, emphasis was being placed on the development of science teaching facilities in nongovernment colleges. Twelve government colleges were selected to offer graduate courses during the Third Five-Year Plan.

In addition to four general-curriculum universities—the University of Dhaka, Rajshahi University, Chittagong University, and Jahangir Nagar University—there were the University of Engineering and Technology in Dhaka, the Agricultural University in Mymensingh, and the Islamic University in Tongi (near Dhaka). The total enrollment in the 7 universities in 1986 was estimated at 27,487, of which 80 percent were male. Universities were self-governing entities with 95 percent of their total expenditures paid through government block grants. The University Grants Commission, created in 1973, coordinated the funding and activities of the universities. A large number of scholarships and stipends were offered to students in education institutions at all levels.

The number of college students increased from 238,580 in 1980 to 603,915 in 1986, according to government statistics. During that period, female enrollment increased from 29,000 to 115,000. Qualitative improvement, enrollment stabilization, interuniversity rationalization of departments, and controlled expansion were some of the government objectives for college education in the mid- and late 1980s.

Curricula in nongovernment institutions of higher education focused mostly on the humanities and social sciences. Many government colleges and universities, however, offered advanced courses in natural, physical, and biological sciences. Sophisticated courses in language and literature, philosophy and philology, fine arts, and folk culture also were offered at the universities. Advanced research degrees, including doctorates, were offered in several disciplines of science, the arts, the humanities, and the social sciences. Faculty

members at the government colleges and universities were usually well qualified, but research facilities were limited.

To remove the heavy bias toward liberal arts education, greater attention was being focused in the late 1980s on technical education, which received the third highest allocation, after primary and secondary education, in the Third Five-Year Plan. In addition to four engineering colleges, Bangladesh had eighteen polytechnic institutes, four law colleges, two agricultural colleges, a graphic arts institute, an institute of glass and ceramics, a textile college, a college of leather technology, sixteen commercial institutes, and fifty-four vocational institutes in 1986. The nation also had ten medical colleges and one dental college, offering both graduate and postgraduate training. In addition, there were twenty-one nursing institutes, a music college, and a college of physical education.

Because secondary and higher education benefited the small middle and upper classes and because the government defrayed a portion of the costs of private higher institutions through grants, the poor in effect subsidized the education of the affluent. This situation was most evident at the university level, where about 15 percent of the education budget was devoted to less than 0.5 percent of the student population. The technical education sector, which experienced some growth in the late 1980s, nevertheless failed to provide the numbers and kinds of personnel required for economic development. Most university training also failed to equip its recipients with marketable professional skills.

Religious Education

The national government supported Islamic education at several levels. In the late 1980s, efforts were being made to modernize the *madrasa* (school of religious education attached to a mosque) system and to introduce secular subjects in the *madrasa* curriculum under the Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board. In 1986 there were 4,118 *madrasas* and 638,926 students under the aegis of the government-supervised system. By 1985 forty *madrasas* had been established for female students. There were primary, secondary, and postsecondary *madrasas,* which, except for one in Sylhet run directly by the government, were attached to mosques and dependent on public charity and endowments. Most of these institutions had poor physical facilities and equipment. The objective of *madrasa* education during the Third Five-Year Plan was to modernize the system through the introduction of science courses. The program included the provision of science laboratories and equipment to 200 *madrasas* as part of the ongoing scheme for development of secondary education. In addition, similar facilities were to be

provided in a limited way to another 125 *madrasas*. Furthermore, financial benefits to the *madrasa* teachers were raised so they would achieve parity with teachers at secular secondary schools.

Madrasa graduates usually assumed posts as imams at mosques or became teachers at nominally secular schools. Traditionally, they often would take up both occupations, since many primary schools were located in village mosques.

Role of English and Arabic in Education

Following the birth of Bangladesh, Bangla came to replace English as the medium of instruction. Bangla also became the sole national language and the standard language of communications. The initial shortage of Bangla textbooks and other instructional materials was alleviated by the accelerated production of textbooks in the vernacular under the patronage of government education departments. The Bangla Academy also played a pioneering role in this area. In the 1980s, British education was maintained marginally through private English-language institutions attended by upper class children. English continued to be offered as an elective subject in most institutions of higher education and was offered as a subject for bachelor's and master's degrees.

Initially, Arabic also lost ground in independent Bangladesh. This trend ended in the late 1970s, however, after Bangladesh strengthened its ties with Saudi Arabia and other oil-rich, Arabic-speaking countries. An unsuccessful attempt was made in 1983 to introduce Arabic as a required language in primary and secondary levels (see The Ershad Period, ch. 4). In the late 1980s, Arabic was studied in many Muslim homes in Bangladesh as an integral part of religious instruction. Aside from courses in religious schools, however, Arabic was not a popular subject at the college and university level.

Education Planning and Policy

Public expenditures for education were very low in Bangladesh. As a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary), the level of expenditure for education in 1983 was approximately 1.3 percent, a figure that did not rise substantially through 1988. On the average, the sectoral share of education in the total development expenditure of the government between 1973 and 1983 was only 4.1 percent; in 1985 it was only 3.1 percent.

The Third Five-Year Plan included efforts to improve quality by restructuring higher secondary and college education, making it more cost effective, and introducing management controls and performance evaluations. Community-based nonformal education

approaches seemed to hold promise as an alternative means of providing basic arithmetic and reading skills. For instance, the Bangladesh Rural Development Board has been able to achieve low dropout rates, especially for females, in nonformal primary schooling, keeping operating costs fairly low and capital expenditures at a minimum.

The Ministry of Education and Culture was responsible for planning, financing, and managing education at all levels. The ad hoc Bangladesh Education Commission was appointed in 1972 to investigate and report on all major aspects of education. In 1987 another high-level body—the National Education Commission—was instituted. Its August 1988 recommendations were for compulsory free education; reforms in *madrasa,* medical, and law education; and removal of student politics from the campus. It was expected that the commission's recommendations would be addressed in the fourth and fifth five-year plans covering the period up to the year 2000.

Health

Although Bangladesh had a basic health care infrastructure in the 1980s, much remained to be done, particularly in rural areas, where the majority of the people faced critical health problems. The main dangers to health in the late 1980s were much the same as they were at the time of independence. The incidence of communicable disease was extensive, and there was widespread malnutrition, inadequate sewage disposal, and inadequate supplies of safe drinking water. The fertility rate was also extremely high. Only 30 percent of the population had access to primary health care services, and overall health care performance remained unacceptably low by all conventional measurements (see table 9, Appendix). Life expectancy at birth in FY 1985, according to official Bangladesh statistics was estimated at 55.1 years, as opposed to 61 years in comparable developing countries. Morbidity and mortality rates for women and children were high. Infant mortality rates exceeded 125 deaths per 1,000 live births, the maternal mortality rate was 6 per 1,000 live births, and 56.1 percent of infants suffered from chronic malnutrition. More than 45 percent of rural families and 76 percent of urban families were below the acceptable caloric intake level. About two-thirds of all families received insufficient protein and vitamins.

Disease and Disease Control

Communicable diseases were the major health hazards in the 1980s. Poor nutrition and sanitation fostered the spread of

infections. Infectious diseases—cholera, dysentery, diarrhea, measles, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, and poliomyelitis—and parasitic diseases such as malaria, filariasis, and helminthiasis—were responsible for widespread illness and numerous deaths. Although not reported among government statistics, tuberculosis was believed to be an increasingly serious health problem, with 90,000 deaths and 110,000 new cases occurring annually. Disease in the late 1980s was most prevalent in rural areas; treatment was more readily available in the cities. A mid-1980s survey indicated that deaths due to diarrheal diseases, malnutrition, and pneumonia accounted for 16.3 percent, 13.1 percent, and 10.8 percent of all deaths, respectively. The percentages for other diseases were as follows: prematurity and birth injury (8.6 percent), cardiovascular accidents (4.5 percent), tetanus (4.4 percent), pulmonary tuberculosis (3.3 percent), measles (2.7 percent), and other causes (36.3 percent).

Young children suffered disproportionately from diseases, and they accounted for 40 percent of deaths annually. Major killers of young children were severe diarrhea and neonatal tetanus caused by unsanitary treatment of the umbilicus. Until the mid-1980s, only 3 percent of Bangladeshi children received immunization against common infectious diseases. Consequently, potentially avoidable illnesses like tetanus, pertussis, and measles accounted for nearly half of infant deaths and more than a third of childhood deaths.

By the late 1980s, a massive immunization program had eliminated smallpox, and highly effective treatments had contained cholera. Malaria, however, once thought to have been eradicated, again had became a major health problem by 1988. The ongoing malaria control program needed to be strengthened by improving indigenous scientific knowledge of the disease and by spraying wider areas with effective chemicals. Several national and international research facilities were involved in disease control research.

Noncommunicable diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, mental illness, gastrointestinal disorders, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, respiratory disease, and urogenital diseases were increasing in frequency in the 1980s. Cases of vitamin A deficiency causing night blindness and xerophthalmia, iron deficiency anemia, iodine deficiency, protein-calories deficiency, and marasmus also were on the increase.

Although no incidence of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) had been reported in Bangladesh through mid-1988, the National Committee on AIDS was formed in April 1986. The committee drew up a short-term action plan that called for public awareness programs, augmented laboratory facilities, training of relevant

personnel, publication of informational booklets, and health education programs.

Before the mid-1980s, disease control programs focused mainly on Western-style curative services, but the emphasis was shifting in the late 1980s toward a larger role for prevention. The government's main preventive health program—the Universal Immunization Program—was initiated in 1986 with the assistance of the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund in eight pilot subdistricts (*upazilas;* see Local Administration, ch. 4). The government aimed to provide protection through immunization against six major diseases for children under two years of age and to vaccinate women of childbearing age against tetanus. The program helped to increase the rate of full immunization of children below 1 year of age from less than 3 percent to 36.5 percent, and of children between 12 and 24 months from less than 3 percent to 55.8 percent.

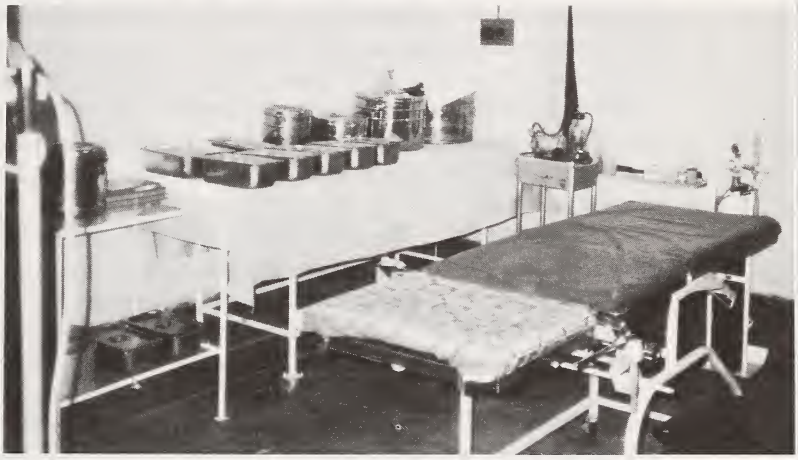
In the case of maternal health care, a national program to train and supervise traditional birth attendants (*dhais*) was started in 1987. In addition, a long-range program to improve maternal and neonatal care, which addressed issues of health care delivery and referral on a national scale, was approved in 1987. The government in 1988 upgraded its nutrition policy-making capacity by creating the National Nutrition Council, but planning and implementation of specific programs remained insufficient. Other programs with nutrition implications include food-for-work, "vulnerable-group feeding," and vitamin A distribution programs.

Alternative systems of medicine, including the traditional Hindu *ayurvedic* medical system based largely on homeopathy and naturopathy, the Muslim *unani* (so-called "Greek" medicine) herbal medical practice, and Western allopathic medicine were available. For most villagers, the most accessible medical practitioner was the village curer (*kobiraj*). It is estimated that 70 percent of the rural population did not have access to modern medical facilities in the late 1980s.

Health Care Facilities

The Ministry of Health and Family Planning was responsible for developing, coordinating, and implementing the national health and mother-and-child health care programs. Population control also was within the purview of the ministry (see Population Control, this ch.). The government's policy objectives in the health care sector were to provide a minimum level of health care services for all, primarily through the construction of health facilities in rural areas and the training of health care workers. The strategy of





A rural family planning center
Courtesy Bangladesh Ministry of Information
An operating table at a
voluntary sterilization clinic in Sylhet
Courtesy Siria Lopez

universal health care by the year 2000 had become accepted, and government efforts toward infrastructure development included the widespread construction of rural hospitals, dispensaries, and clinics for outpatient care. Program implementation, however, was limited by severe financial constraints, insufficient program management and supervision, personnel shortages, inadequate staff performance, and insufficient numbers of buildings, equipment, and supplies.

In the late 1980s, government health care facilities in rural areas consisted of subdistrict health centers, union-level health and family welfare centers, and rural dispensaries. A subdistrict health center in the mid-1980s typically had a thirty-one-bed hospital, an outpatient service, and a home-service unit staffed with field workers.

Some of the services, however, were largely nonoperative because of staffing problems and a lack of support services. Health services in urban areas also were inadequate, and their coverage seemed to be deteriorating. In many urban areas, nongovernment organizations provide the bulk of urban health care services. Programming and priorities of the nongovernment organizations were at best loosely coordinated.

A union-level health and family welfare center provided the first contact between the people and the health care system and was the nucleus of primary health care delivery. As of 1985 there were 341 functional subdistrict health centers, 1,275 rural dispensaries (to be converted to union-level health and family welfare centers), and 1,054 union-level health and family welfare centers. The total number of hospital beds at the subdistrict level and below was 8,100.

District hospitals and some infectious-disease and specialized hospitals constituted the second level of referral for health care. In the mid-1980s, there were 14 general hospitals (with capacities ranging from 100 to 150 beds), 43 general district hospitals (50 beds each), 12 tuberculosis hospitals (20 to 120 beds each), and 1 mental hospital (400 beds). Besides these, there were thirty-eight urban outpatient clinics, forty-four tuberculosis clinics, and twenty-three school health clinics. Ten medical college hospitals and eight postgraduate specialized institutes with attached hospitals constituted the third level of health care.

In the mid-1980s, of the country's 21,637 hospital beds, about 85 percent belonged to the government health services. There was only about one hospital bed for every 3,600 people. In spite of government plans, the gap between rural and urban areas in the availability of medical facilities and personnel remained wide. During the monsoon season and other recurrent natural disasters, the already meager services for the rural population were severely disrupted.

Medical Education and Training

In 1986 Bangladesh had about 16,000 physicians, 6,900 nurses, 5,200 midwives, and 1,580 "lady health visitors," all registered by the government. The annual output of new physicians (both graduate and postgraduate) and dentists, despite some annual fluctuations, helped improve health care in the 1978–86 period. In 1978 there were 822 graduates. A high of 1,848 was reached in 1982, but the number of graduates slumped to 985 in 1986.

Medical education and training was provided by ten medical colleges and eight postgraduate specialized medical institutes. One dental college, twenty-one nursing institutes, eight medical assistant training schools, and two paramedical institutes trained ancillary

medical personnel. The quality of medical education and training was considered satisfactory by observers. The Third Five-Year Plan incorporated several measures to expand facilities for the training of specialists and for in-service training of health administrators in management skills. For example, eight field-training subdistrict health complexes had been developed to impart education and training in community medicine. Schemes for improving education in indigenous systems of medicine were taken up, and their implementation was continued as the 1990s approached. The general shortage of physicians and nurses was aggravated by their emigration to the oil-rich countries of the Middle East and to the industrialized countries of the West. Immediately after independence, about 50 percent of the medical graduates sought employment abroad; this trend was later arrested, but special incentives had to be provided to keep medical professionals in the country.

Medicinal Drugs and Drug Policy

The per capita consumption of Western drugs in Bangladesh was about US$1 per year in the late 1980s. According to a government statement in 1982, although most people had no access to life-saving drugs, a large number of wasteful and undesirable medicinal products were manufactured and marketed mostly under commercial pressure. A national drug policy promulgated in 1982 was aimed at simplifying the range of drugs available and at improving the logistics of drug distribution at reasonable prices. The policy identified sixteen guidelines for the evaluation of medicinal products for the purpose of registration. The registration of more than 1,700 products was canceled and these were gradually withdrawn from use. *Unani, ayurvedic,* and other homeopathic medicines were also brought under this policy.

Under the new policy, in order to promote local enterprise, foreign companies were no longer allowed to manufacture antacid and vitamin preparations. The policy identified 150 essential drugs for therapeutic purposes. Attempts to increase local production of drugs continued, and the government provided Bangladeshi firms with generous industrial loans and other assistance. Some essential drugs were also being manufactured at government plants.

As the 1980s came to a close, Bangladeshi society had made some remarkable advances in social development, education, and health care. Severe national disasters, however, in addition to political discontent, contributed to the negation of any net advances. Ever optimistic, Bangladeshis continued their age-old struggle against the land and sought ways to accommodate the burgeoning society.

* * *

Nafis Ahmad's *An Economic Geography of East Pakistan,* although outdated, remains the most useful broad survey of the geography of Bangladesh. It can be supplemented by Ahmad's *A New Economic Geography of Bangladesh,* Haroun er Rashid's *An Economic Geography of Bangladesh,* and O.H.K. Spate and A.T.A. Learmonth's standard work, *India and Pakistan: A General and Regional Geography.*

The most useful sources on population are the Bangladesh government's *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, Statistical Pocketbook of Bangladesh,* and *Third Five-Year Plan, 1985–1990,* and the World Bank's *World Development Report* on Bangladesh.

Despite a general dearth of writing on Islam in Bangladesh, works worth considering include Rafiuddin Ahmed's *Islam in Bangladesh* and *Essays on the Muslims of Bengal.* Peter J. Bertocci's "Bangladesh: Composite Cultural Identity and Modernization in a Muslim-Majority State" is also helpful.

The standard work on the Bangladeshi social system is A.K. Nazmul Karim's *The Dynamics of Bangladesh Society.* Mohammad Afsaruddin's *Rural Life in East Pakistan* provides insight into rural social dynamics. Much of this book remains relevant to the changing society of Bangladesh. A collection of readings, edited by Robert D. Stevens, Hamzi Alavi, and Peter J. Bertocci, *Rural Development in Bangladesh and Pakistan,* examines changes in rural society. A.K.M. Aminul Islam's *A Bangladesh Village* is a study of change and tension in a village society in the process of transformation.

Shamsul Huque's *Education in Bangladesh* briefly reviews education issues. *Disaster in Bangladesh,* edited by Lincoln C. Chen, deals with several health, nutrition, and work force issues. *Family Planning Program in Bangladesh,* published by the Ministry of Health and Family Planning, is a useful review of family planning initiatives and programs. The annual *Bibliography of Asian Studies,* published by the Association for Asian Studies, has entries for numerous useful studies on Bangladesh since independence. *Bangladesh: A Select Bibliography of English Language Periodical Literature, 1971–1986* by Joyce L. and Enayetur Rahim provides a comprehensive survey of periodical literature since independence. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 3. The Economy



Drying and sifting rice, Bangladesh's main staple

IN THE LATE 1980s, Bangladesh continued to be called the "largest poorest" country and to be singled out as "the test case for development." A great deal that had happened in the economy since independence in 1971 supported the hope that the country would eventually overcome its dependence on foreign aid and would approach relative self-sufficiency. In the meantime, success was measured in more limited and immediate accomplishments: greater production of food grains year by year, greater vigor shown by the private sector in generating investment capital and using it productively, and measurable growth and diversification of exports. The government continued to depend on the donor community to provide the bulk of the resources needed to promote human development in the form of nutrition, health, and education programs. The most active donors continued to give Bangladesh good marks for its economic performance.

In 1971, the year Bangladesh achieved independence from Pakistan, the new nation was referred to in foreign circles as an "international basket case," a wounded combatant almost beyond hope of recovery. Bangladeshis themselves, recalling the "international basket case" characterization, often choose the metaphor "bottomless basket," implying that no matter how much assistance is given to the economy, there will always be a need for more. It is a tribute to the Bangladeshi people, to the constructiveness and generosity of other nations, and to the strength of the human spirit that the gloomiest fears have not materialized. The first-time observer of Bangladesh may still perceive the country as poverty stricken, overpopulated, and with little prospect for a sunnier future. In its first seventeen years of independence, Bangladesh did not prosper, nor was it able to improve substantially the quality of life for its huge population, but it did not lose ground either. If the prospects for rapid economic development were not noticeably better in 1988 than they were in 1972, it was encouraging that Bangladesh was active in economic fields that were not foreseen even a few years earlier—e.g., as a major producer and exporter of ready-made garments and frozen seafood. And if the economy still seemed dangerously poised on the brink of disaster—a drought, a typhoon, or excessive flooding threatens every year—the government, the people, and the international community had combined to limit the scope of disasters, and the economy of Bangladesh had continued to struggle upward.

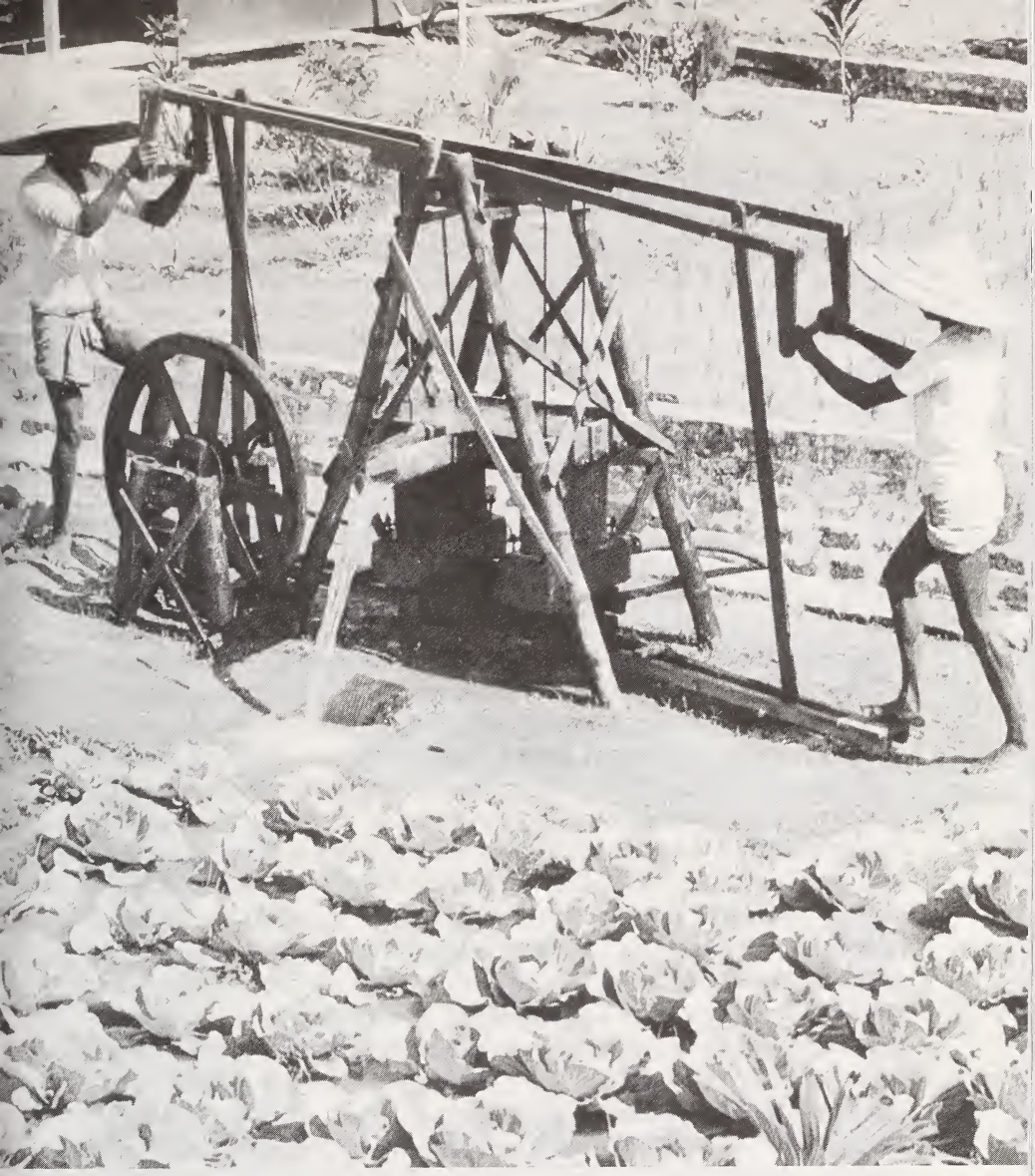
The Economic Context

Historical Perspective

East Bengal—the region that was to become East Pakistan and later Bangladesh—was a prosperous region of South Asia until modern times. It had the advantages of a mild, almost tropical climate, fertile soil, ample water, and an abundance of fish, wildlife, and fruit. The standard of living compared favorably with other parts of South Asia. As early as the thirteenth century, the region was developing as an agrarian economy. It was not entirely without commercial centers, and Dhaka in particular grew into an important entrepôt during the Mughal Empire (see Islamization of Bengal, 1202–1757, ch. 1). The British, however, on their arrival in the early seventeenth century, chose to develop Calcutta as their commercial and administrative center in South Asia. The development of East Bengal was thereafter limited to agriculture. The colonial infrastructure of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reinforced East Bengal's function as the primary producer—chiefly of rice and jute—for processors and traders in Calcutta and beyond.

Some of the same factors that had made East Bengal a prosperous region became disadvantages during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As life expectancy increased, the limitations of land and the annual floods increasingly became constraints on economic growth. Traditional agricultural methods became obstacles to the modernization of agriculture. Geography severely limited the development and maintenance of a modern transportation and communications system (see Geography, ch. 2).

The partition of British India and the emergence of India and Pakistan in 1947 severely disrupted the former colonial economic system that had preserved East Bengal (now East Pakistan) as a producer of jute and rice for the urban industrial economy around Calcutta. East Pakistan had to build a new industrial base and modernize agriculture in the midst of a population explosion. The united government of Pakistan expanded the cultivated area and some irrigation facilities, but the rural population generally became poorer between 1947 and 1971 because improvements did not keep pace with rural population increase. Pakistan's five-year plans opted for a development strategy based on industrialization, but the major share of the development budget went to West Pakistan, that is, contemporary Pakistan. The lack of natural resources meant that East Pakistan was heavily dependent on imports, creating a balance of payments problem. Without a substantial industrialization program or adequate agrarian expansion, the economy of East Pakistan steadily declined. Blame was placed by various observers, but especially those in East Pakistan, on the West Pakistani leaders



A traditional method of irrigation still used in the water-rich countryside
Courtesy Bangladesh Ministry of Information

who not only dominated the government but also most of the fledgling industries in East Pakistan.

Economic Reconstruction after Independence

The economic situation facing Bangladesh as it emerged from the war of independence in 1971 included the highest rural

population density in the entire world, an annual population growth rate between 2.5 and 3 percent, chronic malnutrition for perhaps the majority of the people, and the dislocation of between 8 and 10 million people who had fled to India and returned to independent Bangladesh by 1972 (see Migration, ch. 2). The new nation had few experienced entrepreneurs, managers, administrators, engineers, or technicians. There were critical shortages of essential food grains and other staples because of wartime disruptions. External markets for jute had been lost because of the instability of supply and the increasing popularity of synthetic substitutes. Foreign exchange resources were minuscule, and the banking and monetary system was unreliable. Although Bangladesh had a large work force, the vast reserves of undertrained and underpaid workers were largely illiterate, unskilled, and underemployed. Commercially exploitable industrial resources, except for natural gas, were lacking. Inflation, especially for essential consumer goods, ran between 300 and 400 percent. The war of independence had crippled the transportation system. Hundreds of road and railroad bridges had been destroyed or damaged, and rolling stock was inadequate and in poor repair. The new country was still recovering from a severe cyclone that hit the area in 1970 and caused 250,000 deaths. India, by no means a wealthy country and without a tradition of giving aid to other nations, came forward immediately with massive economic assistance in the first months after the fighting ended. Between December 1971 and January 1972, India committed US$232 million in aid to Bangladesh, almost all of it for immediate disbursement. The largest single element in Indian aid was 900,000 tons of food grains. The United States and the World Bank (see Glossary) thereafter became leading foreign aid donors, and the World Bank organized a consortium known as the Bangladesh Aid Group, comprising twenty-six international financial institutions and foreign governments interested in assisting Bangladesh's development.

Managing the Economy

Economic Policy and Planning

After West Pakistani owners of industrial enterprises fled in 1971, the government of Bangladesh seized their plants as abandoned properties. The government suddenly found itself managing and operating more than 300 medium- and large-scale industrial plants, which represented nearly 90 percent of the value of all such enterprises in the new nation. It organized public corporations to oversee the major industries: jute, textiles, sugar, steel, paper and

paperboard, fertilizer, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, engineering and shipbuilding, minerals, oil and gas, food and allied products, and forest products. With government control over major industries and massive inputs of foreign aid, the economy gradually returned to the levels of the late 1960s, but it was still among the world's poorest and least developed countries.

The main government institution responsible for coordinating national rehabilitation and development was the Planning Commission. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib), the first president of Bangladesh, led the formation of the national-level Planning Commission, which prepared plans that directed economic priorities for five-year periods. The First Five-Year Plan covered the period July 1973 to June 1978. It was succeeded by a two-year plan, covering the period July 1978 to June 1980, which was followed by a year-long hiatus. The Second Five-Year Plan (1981–85) and the Third Five-Year Plan (1985–90) put the planning process back on track. The broad objectives of the Third Five-Year Plan were to reduce poverty, bring down the rate of population growth to 1.8 percent annually, increase exports by 5.9 percent and domestic savings by 10 percent, attain self-sufficiency in food production, and realize an annual growth of the gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary) of 5.4 percent. These ambitious goals went well beyond the previous actual performance of the economy.

Five-year plans are financed through the development, or capital budget, which was separate from the government's revenue, or administrative, budget. The Third Five-Year Plan envisaged a total outlay of more than US$12 billion, approximately 65 percent of which was destined for public sector projects. About 55 percent of the needed funds were to come from foreign sources, including private investment, the aid programs of international financial institutions, and bilateral donor nations. Foreign commitments in the early and mid-1980s were around US$1.7 billion per year (exclusive of external private investment, which in any case was not significant). The portion of the development budget to come from domestic sources (45 percent) represented a substantial increase from the 15 to 20 percent of earlier development budgets.

The Planning Commission translates the multiyear development plan into public investment through the Annual Development Programme. The commission also ensures that public programs and policies are in conformity with its long-term strategy through its project approval process and through its advisory position on the country's highest economic decision-making bodies, the National Economic Council and its Executive Committee. The National Economic Council in the late 1980s was chaired by the

president of Bangladesh and included all government ministers plus the governor of the Bangladesh Bank and the deputy chairman and members of the Planning Commission. The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council made most of the decisions on major development projects and development issues in general. The committee included the ministers of key economic sectors (finance, planning, industries, commerce, and public works) and, according to the agenda, any other sectors concerned. A third organization involved in the planning mechanism is the Project Evaluation Committee, which monitors the progress of five-year-plan programs.

Government Budget Process

Revenue Budget

The annual budget is prepared by the Ministry of Finance and presented to Parliament for approval each year, except during periods of martial law, when the budget has been announced by the martial law administration. It is divided into a revenue budget and a development budget, on both the receipts and the expenditures sides.

The revenue budget pays for the normal functioning of the government and is intended to be fully financed from domestically generated sources. The fiscal year (FY—see Glossary) 1988 revenue budget was based on anticipated receipts of about US$1.6 billion, or approximately Tk48.9 billion (for value of the taka—see Glossary). Expenditures were to be US$1.5 billion, leaving a surplus of US$130 million for development. The previous year a revenue surplus of US$246 million was applied to the development budget.

Tax revenues, almost half of them from customs duties, accounted for about 80 percent of revenue receipts. Excise duties and sales taxes also were important, each producing more revenue than taxes on income, which yielded only about US$150 million according to the revised budget in FY 1985. That amount represented less than US$2 per capita income tax. The largest part of the nontax revenue—making up 20 percent of the revenue budget in the late 1980s—came from the nationalized sector of the economy, including industrial enterprises, banks, and insurance companies.

Even by the standards of developing countries, Bangladesh's ratio of taxes to GDP, and of direct tax revenue to total tax revenue, was very low. In 1984 taxes amounted to only 8.1 percent of GDP, just half the percentage for India, less than half the average for 82 other developing countries, and far below the average of



Country boats on the Buriganga River; larger craft can be seen in the background
Courtesy Biman Bangladesh Airlines

29.7 percent for the developed countries. Similarly, the 20.1 percent of tax revenue coming from direct taxation was one of the lowest in the world (the average for developing countries was 29.3 percent, for industrialized countries 34.2 percent). Most of the population was exempted from direct taxation because its income fell below the poverty line; the cost of collection probably would have exceeded the revenue potential. For higher incomes, the system provided incentives for savings and investment, rather than seeking to maximize tax revenue. The central government operated on revenue of less than US$20 per person.

The expenditures side of the revenue budget put the largest single block of funds into education, totaling 17.3 percent of the FY 1988 budget. Defense spending took 17.2 percent of the budget; if expenditures for paramilitary forces and the police are added to the portion for defense, the figure rises to nearly 23.8 percent of the budget (see Defense Spending, ch. 5). Debt service, general administration, and health, population, and social planning each accounted for about 20 percent of expenditures.

Development Budget

The development budget is presented to Parliament at the same time as the revenue budget each year. The FY 1988 development

budget called for resource mobilization of US$1.6 billion, the majority of which—more than 85 percent—was to be provided by foreign grants and loans. The great bulk of capital expenditures went to the Annual Development Programme.

The FY 1988 Annual Development Programme provided financing for 818 projects, including 684 investment projects, 80 technical assistance projects, and 54 public sector-funded projects. Almost all the projects were carryovers continued from previous years. The Annual Development Programme directed new project financing to particular sectors, consistent with the goals of the five-year plans. For example, large portions of the FY 1988 Annual Development Programme were earmarked for power projects (17.5 percent of expenditures), water resources development (11 percent), and infrastructure (23.4 percent). Looked at from another perspective, the FY 1988 program called for overall expenditures 11.3 percent higher than the previous year, but certain sectors were to receive much greater increases than the average: agriculture, 40.7 percent; rural development, 32.3 percent; water resources, 26.5 percent; health, 28.8 percent; family planning, 23.1 percent; education, 33.6 percent; and oil, gas, and natural resources, 26.5 percent. Since independence these trends changed annually because demands of particular projects absorbed disproportionate amounts of capital and because some sectors were more capital intensive than others.

Joint Ventures and Foreign Investment

Despite its early concentration on developing a socialist economy, the government became increasingly open to private investment. The 1974 New Investment Policy restored certain rights to private and foreign investors. In December 1975, President Ziaur Rahman promulgated the Revised Investment Policy, which allowed greater private sector activity and authorized joint ventures with public sector corporations in a number of previously reserved areas, provided that the government retained 51 percent ownership. The Dhaka Stock Exchange was reactivated in 1976, and the Bangladesh Investment Corporation was established the same year to provide financing for bridge construction and underwriting facilities to the private sector. Investment ceilings for private industry were abolished in 1978. Then, in 1980, the government delineated a more liberal attitude toward foreign direct investment in the Foreign Private Investment (Promotion and Protection) Act. Growth of investment nonetheless remained slow, and industry was still dominated by relatively inefficient public enterprises and governed by an elaborate system of administrative controls.

In June 1982, the new government of Hussain Muhammad Ershad introduced its own New Industrial Policy, calling for a significant increase in private sector activity and denationalization of selected public sector enterprises. The government transferred 650 industrial enterprises to private hands, leaving only 160 under public ownership. In 1986 the government announced a comprehensive revision of its industrial policy, setting out objectives and strategies to accelerate the pace of industrialization. The policy also emphasized private and foreign investment in high technology, export-oriented, and labor-intensive industries. The revised policy increased the number of sectors open to private investment, liberalized the tariff structure, reduced quantitative import restrictions, and furthered privatization of state-managed enterprises.

The role of the public sector in the late 1980s was limited to seven fields: arms, ammunition, and sensitive defense equipment; electrical power generation, transmission, and distribution; management and exploitation of reserved forests; telecommunications; air, water, and railroad transportation; atomic energy; and currency note printing and coin minting. In addition, public sector involvement was still possible, alone or jointly with private participants, in projects where investment was not forthcoming from the private sector. The only consistent money-makers among public sector industrial corporations were the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (Tk248 crore in FY1986; for value of the crore—see Glossary), the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (Tk18.7 crore), and the Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation (Tk5.8 crore) (see Joint Ventures and Foreign Investment, this ch.).

In 1987 an amendment to the Bangladesh Industrial Enterprises (Nationalisation) Ordinance was adopted, providing the legal basis for plans to sell up to 49 percent of government shares in remaining nationalized enterprises. The fact that the government would retain the majority was understood by some as a political gesture to workers and entrenched management opposed to privatization.

An export processing zone was established officially at the port city of Chittagong in 1980 (see fig. 1). But because of political controversy and indecision surrounding the project from the moment it was proposed, the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority did not actually begin functioning until March 1983, when a program of inducements was offered to investors opening up enterprises. Zone enterprises enjoyed a tax holiday of 5 years (10 years for pioneer industries), subsequent rebate of 50 percent of income tax on export sales, freedom from duties on both imports and exports, and guaranteed full repatriation of profits and capital.

Additional export processing zones were contemplated for Khulna and Dhaka.

Bilateral Investment

In addition to the broad policies encouraging foreign investment, the government of Bangladesh has entered into bilateral investment treaties with eight countries: Belgium, Britain, Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), France, the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Romania, Turkey and the United States. As of early 1988, similar treaties were at various stages of negotiation with ten other countries. These treaties included such assurances as unrestricted currency transfers, compensation for expropriation, dispute settlement procedures, and taxation treatment. In addition, Bangladesh has signed agreements for the avoidance of double taxation with Britain, Canada, Sweden, Singapore, and South Korea.

Even with a reasonably attractive framework in place, the flow of private capital to Bangladesh has been slow. Estimates from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development indicated that for the 1980–84 period foreign direct investment in Bangladesh averaged only US$3.4 million per year. The Bangladesh Ministry of Industries listed just sixty-eight existing and forty-one "sanctioned" joint venture and multinational companies in Bangladesh in 1987. The largest amounts of foreign private investment were from other Asian countries—Japan foremost, with smaller amounts from South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong—and from Britain and other countries in Western Europe. American investment of about US$20 million in 1987 was concentrated in the physical assets of a life insurance company, the manufacturing operations of three pharmaceutical firms, and a vegetable oil processing and storage plant.

Money and Banking

Currency Fluctuation

At independence the value of the taka, Bangladesh's unit of currency, was set between 7.5 and 8.0 to US$1. With the exception of FY 1978, the taka's value relative to the dollar declined every year from 1971 through the end of 1987. To help offset this phenomenon, Bangladesh first used the compensatory financing facility of the International Monetary Fund (IMF—see Glossary) in FY 1974. Despite the increasing need for assistance, the Mujib government was initially unwilling to meet the IMF's conditions on monetary and fiscal policy. By FY1975, however, the

government revised its stance, declaring a devaluation of the taka by 56 percent and agreeing to the establishment by the World Bank of the Bangladesh Aid Group (see Foreign Assistance, this ch.).

Between 1980 and 1983, the taka sustained a decline of some 50 percent because of a deterioration in Bangladesh's balance of payments. Between 1985 and 1987, the taka was adjusted in frequent incremental steps, stabilizing again around 12 percent lower in real terms against the United States dollar, but at the same time narrowing the difference between the official rate and the preferential secondary rate from 15 percent to 7.5 percent. Accompanying this structural adjustment was an expansion in the amount of trade conducted at the secondary rate, to 53 percent of total exports and 28 percent of total imports. In mid-1987, the official rate was relatively stable, approaching Tk31 to US$1.

The Banking System

The banking system at independence consisted of two branch offices of the former State Bank of Pakistan and seventeen large commercial banks, two of which were controlled by Bangladeshi interests and three by foreigners other than West Pakistanis. There were fourteen smaller commercial banks. Virtually all banking services were concentrated in urban areas. The newly independent government immediately designated the Dhaka branch of the State Bank of Pakistan as the central bank and renamed it the Bangladesh Bank. The bank was responsible for regulating currency, controlling credit and monetary policy, and administering exchange control and the official foreign exchange reserves. The Bangladesh government initially nationalized the entire domestic banking system and proceeded to reorganize and rename the various banks. Foreign-owned banks were permitted to continue doing business in Bangladesh. The insurance business was also nationalized and became a source of potential investment funds. Cooperative credit systems and postal savings offices handled service to small individual and rural accounts. The new banking system succeeded in establishing reasonably efficient procedures for managing credit and foreign exchange. The primary function of the credit system throughout the 1970s was to finance trade and the public sector, which together absorbed 75 percent of total advances.

The government's encouragement during the late 1970s and early 1980s of agricultural development and private industry brought changes in lending strategies. Managed by the Bangladesh Krishi Bank, a specialized agricultural banking institution, lending to farmers and fishermen dramatically expanded. The number of rural bank branches doubled between 1977 and 1985, to more than 3,330.

Denationalization and private industrial growth led the Bangladesh Bank and the World Bank to focus their lending on the emerging private manufacturing sector. Scheduled bank advances to private agriculture, as a percentage of sectoral GDP, rose from 2 percent in FY 1979 to 11 percent in FY 1987, while advances to private manufacturing rose from 13 percent to 53 percent.

The transformation of finance priorities has brought with it problems in administration. No sound project-appraisal system was in place to identify viable borrowers and projects. Lending institutions did not have adequate autonomy to choose borrowers and projects and were often instructed by the political authorities. In addition, the incentive system for the banks stressed disbursements rather than recoveries, and the accounting and debt collection systems were inadequate to deal with the problems of loan recovery. It became more common for borrowers to default on loans than to repay them; the lending system was simply disbursing grant assistance to private individuals who qualified for loans more for political than for economic reasons. The rate of recovery on agricultural loans was only 27 percent in FY 1986, and the rate on industrial loans was even worse. As a result of this poor showing, major donors applied pressure to induce the government and banks to take firmer action to strengthen internal bank management and credit discipline. As a consequence, recovery rates began to improve in 1987. The National Commission on Money, Credit, and Banking recommended broad structural changes in Bangladesh's system of financial intermediation early in 1987, many of which were built into a three-year compensatory financing facility signed by Bangladesh with the IMF in February 1987.

One major exception to the management problems of Bangladeshi banks was the Grameen Bank, begun as a government project in 1976 and established in 1983 as an independent bank. In the late 1980s, the bank continued to provide financial resources to the poor on reasonable terms and to generate productive self-employment without external assistance. Its customers were landless persons who took small loans for all types of economic activities, including housing. About 70 percent of the borrowers were women, who were otherwise not much represented in institutional finance. Collective rural enterprises also could borrow from the Grameen Bank for investments in tube wells, rice and oil mills, and power looms and for leasing land for joint cultivation. The average loan by the Grameen Bank in the mid-1980s was around Tk2,000 (US$65), and the maximum was just Tk18,000 (for construction of a tin-roof house). Repayment terms were 4 percent for rural housing and 8.5 percent for normal lending operations.



Rickshaws passing University of Dhaka
Courtesy Siria Lopez

The Grameen Bank extended collateral-free loans to 200,000 landless people in its first 10 years. Most of its customers had never dealt with formal lending institutions before. The most remarkable accomplishment was the phenomenal recovery rate; amid the prevailing pattern of bad debts throughout the Bangladeshi banking system, only 4 percent of Grameen Bank loans were overdue. The bank had from the outset applied a specialized system of intensive credit supervision that set it apart from others. Its success, though still on a rather small scale, provided hope that it could continue to grow and that it could be replicated or adapted to other development-related priorities. The Grameen Bank was expanding rapidly, planning to have 500 branches throughout the country by the late 1980s.

Beginning in late 1985, the government pursued a tight monetary policy aimed at limiting the growth of domestic private credit and government borrowing from the banking system. The policy was largely successful in reducing the growth of the money supply and total domestic credit. Net credit to the government actually declined in FY 1986. The problem of credit recovery remained a threat to monetary stability, responsible for serious resource misallocation and harsh inequities. Although the government had begun effective measures to improve financial discipline, the

draconian contraction of credit availability contained the risk of inadvertently discouraging new economic activity.

Foreign exchange reserves at the end of FY 1986 were US$476 million, equivalent to slightly more than 2 months worth of imports. This represented a 20-percent increase of reserves over the previous year, largely the result of higher remittances by Bangladeshi workers abroad. The country also reduced imports by about 10 percent to US$2.4 billion. Because of Bangladesh's status as a least developed country receiving concessional loans, private creditors accounted for only about 6 percent of outstanding public debt. The external public debt was US$6.4 billion, and annual debt service payments were US$467 million at the end of FY 1986.

Foreign Assistance

Test Case for Development

Independent Bangladesh, from the beginning, has been regarded as a test case for development by economists, policymakers, and program administrators of donor countries and international financial institutions. Interest in the area predated political independence, as East Pakistan represented the world's most extreme case of population growth outstripping resources. Because Pakistan was a single country, project design and approval processes occurred at the national level. West Pakistan, also poor, appropriated most commodity aid, capital, and technical and project assistance. The people of East Pakistan considered the attention they received to be inadequate and inequitable (see Emerging Discontent, 1966–70, ch. 1).

In October 1974, the Bangladesh Aid Group was established under the aegis of the World Bank, with twenty-six participating governments and institutions. Commitments of the aid group were US$551 million in FY 1974 and US$1.2 billion the following year. Aid to Bangladesh has remained at a high level since the consortium came into existence, although with substantial fluctuations in new commitments from year to year. After the high initial commitments, the figure fell to US$964 million in FY 1976 and to US$744 million the following year, before turning upward again. Fiscal year 1979 was another breakthrough period, with new commitments of nearly US$1.8 billion, a figure surpassed 3 years later when the level reached US$1.9 billion, the all-time high through FY 1987 (see table 10, Appendix).

In the 1980s, the value of food aid declined to around 11 to 18 percent of new aid commitments, most of it given on a grant basis. Commodity aid—about 25 percent of aid commitments to

Bangladesh—included key items for increasing productivity, such as fertilizer, cement, steel, pumps, and other equipment. Project assistance accounted for more than 50 percent of new commitments. This form of aid was preferred by the largest donors because their funds are put to work in well-defined ways that can be related to policy objectives. From the beginning, the Bangladesh government has been unable to use project funds at the same rate as they are authorized. As a result, a pipeline of authorized but undisbursed project funds has grown bigger every year. The undisbursed project assistance pipeline was expected to exceed US$5 billion in 1988 and to continue to grow after that. Not until the 1990s at the earliest could Bangladesh hope to begin reducing the backlog of undisbursed funds.

Disbursement figures did not account for Bangladeshi repayments of principal and interest on previous loans. In FY 1986, for example, Bangladesh paid out US$117 million against principal and US$72 million in interest in connection with earlier aid disbursements. Thus the gross US$1.3 billion in disbursement of foreign aid that year netted an inflow of US$1.1 billion. Although these funds were equal to almost 10 percent of Bangladesh's GDP, they averaged only about US$12 per person, hardly a scale to bring about dramatic improvement in the economy's performance.

Because much of the funding for the development budget in the mid-1980s was financed by external donors, the Bangladesh government had to attract financing for high-priority sectors and projects. Coordination was carried on at all times between the government and individual donors, but the keynote each year was a meeting organized by the World Bank as leader of the Bangladesh Aid Group. At these meetings Bangladesh's finance minister presented his government's development plans for the coming year and sought pledges from the major donors for as much of the Annual Development Programme as possible. The donors also made presentations at the meeting, including assessments of the performance of the Bangladesh economy in general and of the development plans of the government in particular, as background to their views on the realism and appropriateness of the priorities adopted in the five-year plan. These meetings, alternating between Washington and Paris, were the formal culmination of a process that went on year-round. In the late 1980s, the main coordination point with foreign donors was the External Resources Division of the Ministry of Finance, which monitored development projects and administrative and management aspects of planning.

Aid Dependence

International Banks

The World Bank has taken the lead in addressing some of the most deep-seated structural constraints in Bangladesh's economy by providing productive employment for those without assets, promoting economic opportunities for women, and addressing the social and economic inadequacies of education, health, nutrition, and population programs. Among aid projects were the Irrigation Management Programme, which supports drainage and flood control as well as the introduction of pumps and drills; support for maintenance of the nation's more than 43,000 primary schools (including repairs to existing buildings, additions to accommodate larger numbers of pupils, and construction of new schools where needed); and the 500,000-ton Ashuganj fertilizer complex, utilizing domestic natural gas, which came on stream in 1981. The World Bank has made loans to Bangladesh only from its "soft window," the International Development Association. These interest-free loans provide for a 10-year grace period before repayment of principal begins and a 40-year repayment schedule, with the addition of a service charge of 1.5 percent.

The Asian Development Bank was the second largest donor, after the International Development Association, to Bangladesh's development in the 1980s. As of the end of 1985, the Bank had approved 66 loans totaling US$1.8 billion. In 1985 alone, the bank approved loans of US$212.3 million for 6 new projects (down from US$306.8 million for 4 projects the year before). In addition, the bank provided local currency financing of US$59.8 million for 3 projects, cofinancing of US$10.5 million to projects with other donors, and a program loan of US$39 million for provision of fertilizer. About half of the Asian Development Bank's financing has gone to agriculture and agro-industry. The 1985 package, for example, included a livestock development project intended to increase food production and improve rural incomes through expansion of veterinary services and livestock nutrition. In 1987 the Asian Development Bank approved a technical assistance grant (cofinanced by the Norwegian government) to explore the feasibility of growing rubber trees commercially in Bangladesh. The Asian Development Bank also has been active in the development of natural gas (see Mineral Development, this ch.). In 1987 the bank approved a US$74 million loan for construction and extension of natural gas transmission and distribution pipelines to 5 districts in eastern Bangladesh. The loan was intended to cover 71 percent of project costs, including all of the foreign exchange requirements for the project. The

bank has also supported transportation projects (development and improvement of feeder roads between local markets and primary roads, inland waterways, and railroads) and social welfare schemes for population control, health, and education.

United Nations

In the mid-1980s, the United Nations Development Programme operated its own development projects and coordinated the activities of other United Nations (UN) agencies with programs in Bangladesh, including the World Food Programme, World Health Organization, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, and United Nations Fund for Population Activities. Typically, these agencies provided technical assistance and training. They often functioned as catalysts by doing analytical and policy development work alongside Bangladesh government authorities, preparing the ground for well-conceived programs requiring capital expenditures to be financed by other donors or even by the Bangladesh treasury.

Foreign Governments and Private Donors

The United States aid program to independent Bangladesh began even before the United States formally established diplomatic relations with the new nation in April 1972. Large quantities of emergency food aid were sent to help cope with the postwar famine situation. Project assistance through the United States Agency for International Development (AID) began in 1973 with a major program of reconstruction and infrastructure rehabilitation. In the course of time, that emphasis evolved into economic development focused primarily on three broad sectors: improved soil fertility, food security, and increased off-farm employment. By September 1987, United States assistance totaled US$2.8 billion. The United States was the most important donor until the early 1980s when Japanese aid reached similar levels.

Food aid has been a mainstay of the AID program. Through 1987 the United States provided more than 6.5 million tons of wheat, more than 1 million tons of rice, and some 350,000 tons of edible oil. Since 1979 all such aid has been on a grant basis. The Public Law 480 (PL–480) program of food and other agricultural commodity assistance has accounted for half of the dollar value of United States government aid over the years. In the mid-1980s, the PL–480 program ranged from US$85 million to US$110 million per year. In FY 1986, a high year, the United States provided 586,000 tons of wheat, 63,000 tons of rice, almost 25,000 tons of edible oil, and 58,000 bales of cotton. Commercially procured

quantities of those commodities by Bangladesh in that period included 1.12 million tons of wheat, 34,000 tons of rice, 146,000 tons of edible oil, and 179,000 bales of raw cotton.

The PL-480 program fit into an overall development strategy to increase agricultural production and provide rural employment. Thus the wheat provided under Title II in the late 1980s was part of food-for-work programs, providing payment to workers who upgraded local footpaths and seasonal roads. The sales proceeds of supplemental PL-480 shipments financed a program of bridge and culvert construction on these food-for-work roads.

The commodities shipped under the larger PL-480 Title III program in the mid-1980s provided support to domestic food production and ensured that food was available to the most nutritionally disadvantaged population. Local currency generated from sales financed agricultural research, irrigation, and employment—projects essential to the Bangladesh government's goal of national food self-sufficiency—and increased personal incomes, thereby effectively increasing demand for food.

Other than food aid, the dollar value of United States development assistance stabilized between US$75 million and US$85 million annually in the mid-1980s and declined to US$58.5 million for FY 1988, largely because of general pressures on the United States budget for foreign development programs. The long-term trend remained intact, with the cash value of United States assistance about evenly divided between food aid and project assistance.

As the ''largest poorest'' country, and because its government has been hospitable to foreign assistance, Bangladesh has been chosen by several of the so-called richer smaller countries as a country of concentration for their own efforts. Thus, in addition to the programs of Britain, Japan, and West Germany, significant aid programs were initiated by Canada, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Australia, and others, in which each country concentrated on areas where it possessed special expertise.

In the mid-1980s, a number of these donor countries—calling themselves ''the like-minded donors''—jointly studied the trend of development assistance in Bangladesh. They concluded that the quality of life in Bangladesh was declining for the vast rural majority, and they faulted the way the Bangladesh government determined and administered its development priorities and the way the aid donors organized and carried out their own assistance programs. They presented a report to the Bangladesh Aid Group in 1986 suggesting changes in emphasis in favor of greater concentration on programs responsive to the deepest needs of the poor: better health care, better nutrition, greater literacy, a more effective

approach to family planning, and greater economic opportunities for poor and landless farmers and for women. Although the analysis and conclusions engendered some controversy, the report influenced the direction of aid efforts by the entire Bangladesh Aid Group, including the most important donor and the group's founder, the World Bank.

Economic assistance has come to Bangladesh through the Soviet Union and East European countries and through oil-producing members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Much of the aid from these donors has taken the form of construction, equipment, and training. Moscow committed US$132 million for aid to Bangladesh immediately after independence, but disbursement proved to be very slow. In subsequent years, the Soviets figured prominently in power generation, and as of the end of 1987 the Soviet Union appeared to have agreed to extend more aid for power generation, transmission, and distribution and also for oil exploration.

Although relatively modest in monetary terms, the assistance of private voluntary organizations from the United States and elsewhere has also been important. They have offered assistance on a grant basis in fields where return-on-investment criteria cannot be applied, such as emergency relief, medical services, and basic education. In addition, because of their modest scale and insulation from international politics, these organizations can sometimes venture into activities with a high degree of social experimentation, sometimes producing models to be replicated on a larger scale by official development assistance. Aside from such well-known secular organizations as the International Red Cross and CARE, most of the private voluntary organizations had religious affiliations.

Agriculture

Structure of Agricultural Production

Despite progress toward greater industrialization, in the late 1980s agriculture still accounted for nearly 50 percent of the value of Bangladesh's GDP. Approximately 82 percent of the country's population lived in rural areas, virtually all of them making their living exclusively or substantially from agriculture (see Rural Society, ch. 2). Domestic production increased at a relatively steady rate in the years following independence, but not fast enough to close the gap created by the continued rapid growth in population. According to official statistics, the real value of all crops and of agricultural production rose every year in the 1980s, but except for a 6.1-percent surge in FY 1981, the gains did not exceed

3.8 percent, and in 3 of the years it was less than 1 percent. The goal of food self-sufficiency by 1990 was asserted as part of the Third Five-Year Plan, but it could be achieved only under optimal conditions. Bangladesh was still importing an average of 2 million tons of food grains each year to meet minimum needs for the subsistence of the population. Most of the imports were on a grant or concessional basis from the United States, the World Food Programme, or other food aid donors (see Foreign Assistance, this ch.).

The agricultural year begins in late February, when the weather is dry and getting warmer. Over a period of several weeks each field is plowed three or four times; using a wooden plow and two oxen, one man can plow 0.02 hectares in an eight- to ten-hour workday. In addition to plowing, field preparation for irrigation involves construction and maintenance of plot boundaries half a meter high, using earth and weeds from the field. These boundaries also serve to retain water in the plots when the rains come a few months later. Traditional methods of irrigation include pitcher, swing basket, and a hollowed-out log fixed on a pivot and fitted with a counterbalance. These methods have a natural grace and beauty and are still practiced in rural areas throughout Bangladesh. They offer the dual advantages of depending entirely on locally available materials and on human power for their operation. In those rural areas where electricity is available, tube wells with electric pumps are becoming an important irrigation device.

Absolute production has increased, and there has been an impressive diversification into a wide variety of seeds and new crops, such as wheat and vegetables. In fact, the patterns of agriculture have been virtually transformed. A previously self-contained and self-reliant subsistence economy has given way to one dependent on inputs, credit, markets, and administrative support from outside. But the price has been high—literally—and in the late 1980s was getting higher. Abu Muhammad Shajaat Ali, in his study of the agricultural village of Shyampur, describes the local economy as a "near-saturated agroecosystem." Continued population pressure has led in many areas to increases in output-per-unit area, but at very high rates of diminishing returns to inputs.

Shyampur exemplified the transformation going on in parts of the rural countryside affected by a modern market economy. The income of farmers in Shyampur, because of its proximity to Dhaka's high-demand urban markets, was greater than in more typical villages of Bangladesh. According to Ali, 31 percent of Shyampur's families in 1980 had a farm income greater than US$278 (Tk7,500) per year; 40 percent earned between US$93 and US$278; and the remaining 29 percent earned less than US$93. Eighty-four percent



Harvesting jute
Courtesy Bangladesh
Ministry of Information



Floating bamboo
to market
Courtesy Bangladesh
Ministry of Information

of farmers were also engaged for at least 100 days per year in off-farm work in small businesses or industrial occupations, with 70 percent of them earning between US$75 and US$295 and 23 percent receiving more than that. Virtually all of this employment was for males. As of 1980, it was rare for village females to be employed outside the household. The work they did in raising poultry, cultivating kitchen gardens, husking paddy, collecting fuel, and assisting neighboring families was not figured into calculations of income.

The ownership of agricultural land remained one of the most difficult problems in the Bangladesh countryside. During British rule, elite large landowners (zamindars—see Glossary), many of them absentee landowners, owned most of the land in East Bengal. After 1947 new laws abolished large estates and set limits on the amount of land one person could own. Many big Hindu landlords moved to India, but the wealthy Muslims who bought up their holdings became a new landlord elite. Legal ceilings on landownership resulted in little extra land for distribution to the poor because landlords arranged ways to vest ownership in the names of relatives. As a result, in most villages a few families controlled enough land to live comfortably and market a surplus for cash, while a large percentage of families had either no land or not enough to support themselves. Studies have suggested that in the mid-1980s the richest 10 percent of the village population controlled between 25 and 50 percent of the land, while the bottom 60 percent of the population controlled less than 25 percent. The disparities between the richest and poorest villagers appeared to be widening over time. The large number of landless or nearly landless peasants reduced the average landholding to only less than one hectare, down more than a third since 1971. Because Islamic inheritance law as practiced in Bangladesh calls for equal division of assets among all the sons, the large population increases led to increased fragmentation of landholdings and further impoverishment. Inheritance, purchase, and sale left the land of many families subdivided into a number of separate plots located in different areas of the village.

The ready availability of large numbers of poor laborers and the fragmented character of many landholdings has perpetuated a labor-intensive style of agriculture and unequal tenancy relations. At least a third of the households in most villages rent land. The renting households range from those without any land of their own to those middle-level peasants who try to supplement the produce grown on their own land with income from produce grown on additional land. Sharecropping is the most common form of tenancy agreement. Traditional sharecropping arrangements heavily favored the landlord over the sharecropper, with a fifty-fifty split of the produce

and the tenant providing all inputs of labor and fertilizer. After decades of rural agitation, the 1984 Land Reforms Ordinance finally established the rule of three shares—one-third of the produce for the owner, one-third for the sharecropper, and one-third split according to the costs of cultivation. Poor peasants who could not obtain land as tenants had to work as agricultural laborers or find nonagricultural jobs. The 1984 Agricultural Labour Ordinance set the minimum daily wage for agricultural labor at 3.28 kilograms of rice or its cash equivalent. Employers who broke this rule could be brought to village courts and forced to pay compensation twice the amount of back wages. However, because village courts were dominated by landowners, there was still little official redress for the grievances of agricultural laborers. In fact, the structure of rural land control kept a great deal of power in the hands of relatively small groups of landlords (see Local Elites, ch. 4).

The Comilla Model, which began in 1959, has been the most successful and influential example of cooperative agricultural development in Bangladesh. Projects in Comilla District provided more modern technologies to farmers: low-lift water pumps; low-cost hand-dug six-inch tube wells; pilot research on adapting thirty-five-horsepower tractors for rice cultivation; new crop and animal varieties; testing and introduction of such inputs as chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and high-yield varieties of seeds; and new storage and processing technology. These innovations attracted resources to local rural institutions, against the prevailing urban orientation of the leadership elite. They provided some counterweight to the trend of ambitious village people seeking to leave the countryside in favor of the cities or foreign countries. Comilla, which received substantial assistance from Michigan State University and the Ford Foundation, remains a widely admired accomplishment, and the Bangladesh Academy of Rural Development, which gave broad dissemination to published reports on Comilla's progress, is world-renowned because of it.

Food Crops

Rice

The dominant food crop of Bangladesh is rice, accounting for about 75 percent of agricultural land use (and 28 percent of GDP). Rice production increased every year in the 1980s (through 1987) except FY 1981, but the annual increases have generally been modest, barely keeping pace with the population. Rice production exceeded 15 million tons for the first time in FY 1986 (see table 11, Appendix). In the mid-1980s, Bangladesh was the fourth largest

rice producer in the world, but its productivity was low compared with other Asian countries, such as Malaysia and Indonesia. High-yield varieties of seed, application of fertilizer, and irrigation have increased yields, although these inputs also raise the cost of production and chiefly benefit the richer cultivators.

The cultivation of rice in Bangladesh varies according to seasonal changes in the water supply. The largest harvest is *aman,* occurring in November and December and accounting for more than half of annual production. Some rice for the *aman* harvest is sown in the spring through the broadcast method, matures during the summer rains, and is harvested in the fall. The higher yielding method involves starting the seeds in special beds and transplanting during the summer monsoon. The second harvest is *aus,* involving traditional strains but more often including high-yielding, dwarf varieties. Rice for the *aus* harvest is sown in March or April, benefits from April and May rains, matures during in the summer rain, and is harvested during the summer. With the increasing use of irrigation, there has been a growing focus on another rice-growing season extending during the dry season from October to March. The production of this *boro* rice, including high-yield varieties, expanded rapidly until the mid-1980s, when production leveled off at just below 4 million tons. Where irrigation is feasible, it is normal for fields throughout Bangladesh to produce rice for two harvests annually. Between rice-growing seasons, farmers will do everything possible to prevent the land from lying fallow and will grow vegetables, peanuts, pulses, or oilseeds if water and fertilizer are available (see fig. 8).

Wheat

Wheat is not a traditional crop in Bangladesh, and in the late 1980s little was consumed in rural areas. During the 1960s and early 1970s, however, it was the only commodity for which local consumption increased because external food aid was most often provided in the form of wheat. In the first half of the 1980s, domestic wheat production rose to more than 1 million tons per year but was still only 7 to 9 percent of total food grain production. Record production of nearly 1.5 million tons was achieved in FY 1985, but the following year saw a decrease to just over 1 million tons. About half the wheat is grown on irrigated land. The proportion of land devoted to wheat remained essentially unchanged between 1980 and 1986, at a little less than 6 percent of total planted area.

Wheat also accounts for the great bulk of imported food grains, exceeding 1 million tons annually and going higher than 1.8 million tons in FY 1984, FY 1985, and FY 1987. The great bulk of

the imported wheat is financed under aid programs of the United States, the European Economic Community, and the World Food Programme.

Other Food Crops

Food grains are cultivated primarily for subsistence. Only a small percentage of total production makes its way into commercial channels. Other Bangladeshi food crops, however, are grown chiefly for the domestic market. They include potatoes and sweet potatoes, with a combined record production of 1.9 million tons in FY 1984; oilseeds, with an annual average production of 250,000 tons; and fruits such as bananas, jackfruit, mangoes, and pineapples. Estimates of sugarcane production put annual production at more than 7 million tons per year, most of it processed into a coarse, unrefined sugar known as *gur,* and sold domestically.

Industrial Crops

Jute

The importance of one cash crop overshadows all else as the source of Bangladesh's export earnings. Bangladesh is the world's largest producer of jute, a fibrous substance used in making burlap, sacks, mats, rope and twine, and carpet backing. Jute is sold on the international market either raw or in the form of manufactured goods. This so-called "golden fiber" is cultivated on the same land as rice; thus each season farmers must decide which crop to plant.

During the colonial period, when East Bengal was used by the British to produce primary goods for processing elsewhere, raw jute was the main product. Calcutta became the manufacturing center where jute was transformed into twine and rope, sacking material, and carpet backing. The partition of British India in 1947 put an international boundary between the source of the basic commodity and the manufacturing center and imposed a great burden on Pakistan to compensate for the disruption of the industry that was its greatest source of foreign earnings. Between 1947 and 1971 jute mills were constructed in East Pakistan, but industrialization proceeded slowly.

In the 1960s, petroleum-based synthetics entered the market, competing with jute for practically all of its uses. The upheavals culminating in the emergence of independent Bangladesh drove many traditional buyers of jute to shift to synthetics. World trade in jute and jute goods declined absolutely from 1.8 million tons in 1970 to 1.5 million tons in 1982. Despite some major year-to-year swings, prices fell precipitously through the mid-1980s. Prices

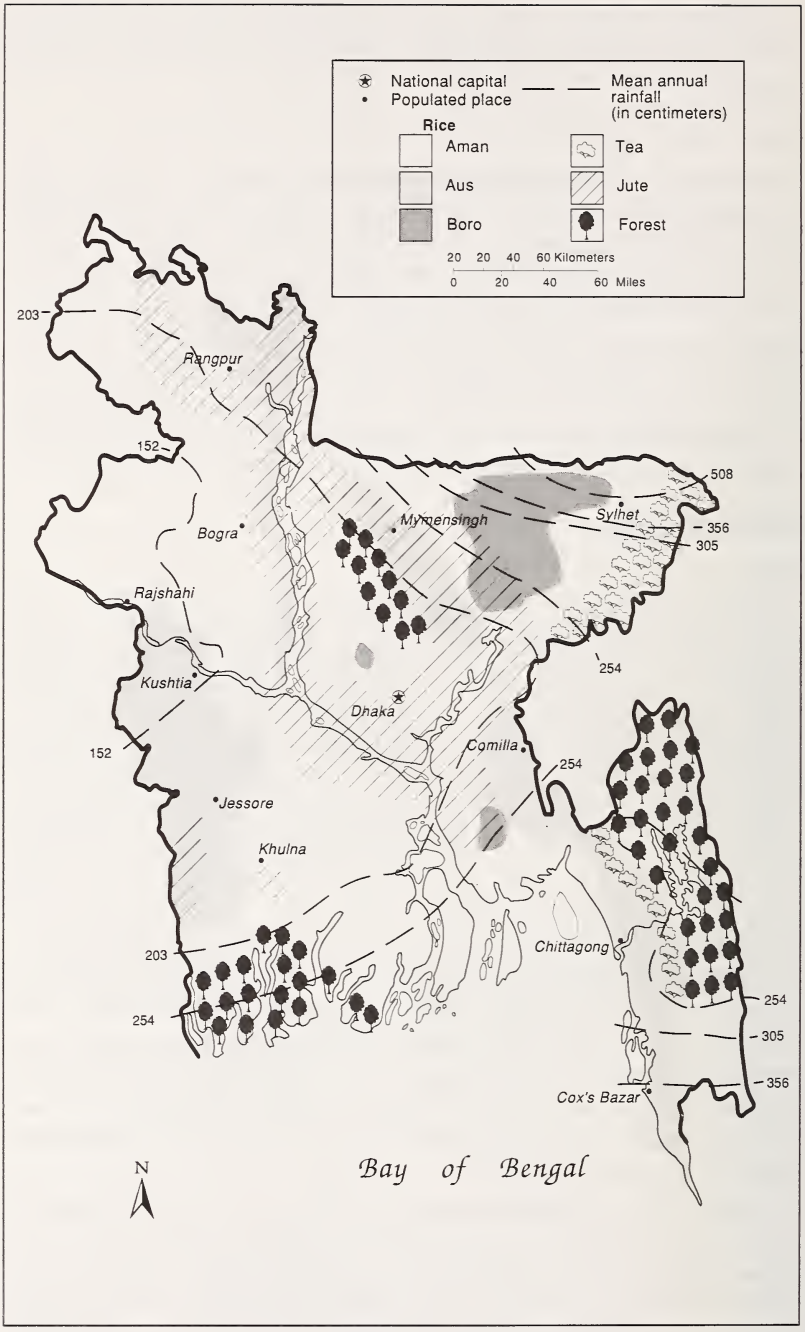


Figure 8. Agriculture and Land Use, 1988

were too low to cover the costs of production, but the government nonetheless deemed it essential to subsidize growers and industry and ensure the continued existence of as large a foreign market as possible. Ironically, Bangladesh's indispendable foreigh exchange earner was thus itself a drain on the economy (see Foreign Trade, this ch.).

There have been enormous year-to-year fluctuations both of producer prices and of production. An extreme example occurred between FY 1984 and FY 1986. Carry-over stocks had been run down since the previous production surge in FY 1980, and serious floods in 1984 resulted in unanticipated production losses. The price doubled to US$600 per ton at the export level, which triggered the traditional response of farmers; they planted much more of their land in jute, and between one year and the next production rose more than 50 percent, from 5.1 million bales in FY 1985 to 8.6 million bales the following year. History proved true to itself yet again when export prices then fell by 50 percent at the export level and by more than 30 percent at the farm-gate level. The drop would have been even greater had the government not intervened. It bought 30 percent of the crop through the Bangladesh Jute Corporation and persuaded private mills to buy more raw jute than justified by their own projections of demand.

Jute is a highly labor-intensive crop, much more so than rice, but the yield per hectare is also higher than is generally achieved for rice. When the farm-gate price for jute is 50 percent higher than the price for rice, farmers respond by planting more land in jute at the expense of rice. With the expansion of irrigation facilities in the 1980s, the economic incentives to stick with rice have increased, but there may be scope for increasing jute production by substituting it for the low-yield broadcast *aus* rice grown on unirrigated land during the same season as jute.

The fact that jute production is so labor intensive has played to Bangladesh's strength, given the country's large rural underemployment. Because wage rates in Bangladesh have been lower than in other jute-producing countries and because Bangladesh has the ideal growing conditions for jute, the country has benefited from encouraging its production even when world price and demand projections have offered bleak prospects. High as Bangladesh's share of world trade has been—in 1985 it amounted to 77 percent of all raw jute trade and 45 percent of jute goods—there are realistic possibilities for expanding the share still further. The World Bank has estimated that Bangladesh's share could rise to 84 percent for raw jute and 55 percent for manufactures. Jute production appeared in the late 1980s to be an essential part of the long-term development

plan because, for all the troubles and struggles associated with its planting and marketing, no alternative activity offered any promise of being more profitable.

Many economists believe the key to preservation of the viability of jute as an international commodity lies in maintaining price and supply stability. That has proved a difficult task. Of thirty major primary commodities traded internationally, only about six have as much price and supply instability as jute. Demand is highly sensitive to price increases, but not nearly as sensitive to decreases; once a portion of the market is lost to synthetics, it is very difficult to win it back through price competition. For example, in FY 1986 export sales remained low despite a 35-percent decline in export prices; the fall in world oil prices had also resulted in declines in the prices of polypropylene substitutes for jute as well, and most buyers that had switched to synthetics chose not to return to jute. In the late 1980s, there was nothing in the offing to arrest the trend of several decades of decreasing global demand for jute and declines in the value of jute relative to the goods Bangladesh must import to meet the basic needs of a desperately poor economy.

The government has an ongoing responsibility to monitor the jute situation, to intervene when necessary, and to preserve the economic viability of the commodity responsible for one-third of the nation's foreign trade earnings. It sets floor prices and becomes the buyer of last resort. In 1986 buffer-stock operations were extended through the Bangladesh Jute Corporation and resulted in the government's buying 30 percent of the entire crop. These stocks then become available for use by the government-owned Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation or for sale to private mills or overseas customers. But in this case, the limitations of this government tool were demonstrated the next year, when the jute crop was of normal volume but the price of raw jute fell a further 35 percent, to the lowest levels in a decade. The government could not arrest the decline because its financial resources and storage capacity were already stretched to the breaking point.

Some hope for a better future has been placed in cooperation among jute-producing countries through the International Jute Organization, based in Dhaka. Member countries in 1988 were the producing countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, and Thailand and more than twenty consuming countries, including the United States. The goals of the fledgling International Jute Organization were appropriately modest to begin with, centering on better dissemination of basic information, coordination of agricultural and industrial research and of economic studies, and steps toward coordination of marketing. It remained to be seen in





Bullock cart hauling produce to market
Courtesy Siria Lopez
An outdoor market near Chittagong
Courtesy Siria Lopez

mid-1988 whether this poorly financed new organization, representing the first feeble effort at a coordinated approach to the problems of jute, would be effective in arresting its long decline as an important international commodity.

Forestry Products

Wood is the main fuel for cooking and other domestic requirements. It is not surprising that population pressure has had an adverse effect on the indigenous forests. By 1980 only about 16 percent of the land was forested, and forests had all but disappeared from the densely populated and intensively cultivated deltaic plain. Aid organizations in the mid-1980s began looking into the possibility of stimulating small-scale forestry to restore a resource for which there was no affordable substitute.

The largest areas of forest are in the Chittagong Hills and the Sundarbans (see The Land, ch. 2). The evergreen and deciduous forests of the Chittagong Hills cover more than 4,600 square kilometers and are the source of teak for heavy construction and boat building, as well as other forest products. Domesticated elephants are still used to haul logs. The Sundarbans, a tidal mangrove forest covering nearly 6,000 square kilometers along the Bay of Bengal, is the source of timber used for a variety of purposes, including pulp for the domestic paper industry, poles for electric power distribution, and leaves for thatching for dwellings. There is also a profitable semiwild honey industry based in the Sundarbans for those intrepid or desperate enough to risk it. Not only are the bees sometimes uncooperative, but the Sundarbans is also the home of the Royal Bengal Tiger, and several instances are reported each year of honey collectors or lumbermen being killed by these man-eaters.

Fisheries

More than 80 percent of the animal protein in the Bangladeshi diet comes from fish. Fish accounted for 6 percent of GDP in FY 1970, nearly 50 percent more than modern industrial manufacturing at that time. Most commercial fishermen are low-caste Hindus who eke out the barest subsistence working under primitive and dangerous conditions. They bring a high degree of skill and ingenuity to their occupation; a few of the most enterprising ones are aided by domesticated otters, which behave like shepherds, swimming underwater, driving fish toward the fisherman's net (and being rewarded themselves with a share of the catch). Fish for local consumption generally are freshwater varieties.



Employees of Chittagong garment factory returning from lunch
Courtesy Siria Lopez

As of the end of 1987, prevailing methods for culturing shrimp in Bangladesh were still relatively unsophisticated, and average yields per hectare were low. In the late 1980s, almost all inland shrimping was done by capture rather than by intensive aquaculture. Farmers relied primarily on wild postlarval and juvenile shrimp as their sources of stock, acquired either by trapping in ponds during tidal water exchange or by gathering from local estuaries and stocking directly in the ponds. Despite the seemingly low level of technology applied to shrimp aquaculture, it became an increasingly important part of the frozen seafood industry in the mid-1980s (see Export Sectors, this ch.).

The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank financed projects to develop shrimp aquaculture in the 1980s. Much of the emphasis was on construction of modern hatcheries. Private investors were also initiating similar projects to increase capacity and to introduce modern technology that would increase average yields.

Industry

Traditional Sectors

The industrial sector produces around 10 percent of GDP, and long-term national strategies in the late 1980s did not anticipate a

major increase in that percentage. The greatest need and the greatest opportunities remained predominantly in the agricultural sector.

Eastern Bengal was known for its fine muslin and silk fabric before the British period. The dyes, yarn, and cloth were the envy of much of the premodern world. Bengali muslin, silk, and brocade were worn by the aristocracy of Asia and Europe. The introduction of machine-made textiles from England in the late eighteenth century spelled doom for the costly and time-consuming handloom process. Cotton growing died out in East Bengal, and the textile industry became dependent on imported yarn. Those who had earned their living in the textile industry were forced to rely more completely on farming. Only the smallest vestiges of a once-thriving cottage industry survived.

At independence Bangladesh was one of the least industrially developed of the populous nations. Annual per capita consumption of steel and cement was only about one-third that of India, for example, and electric power consumption per capita was less than one-fifth.

Ready-made Garments

The ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh is not the outgrowth of traditional economic activities but emerged from economic opportunities perceived by the private sector in the late 1970s. Frustrated by quotas imposed by importing nations, such as the United States, entrepreneurs and managers from other Asian countries set up factories in Bangladesh, benefiting from even lower labor costs than in their home countries, which offset the additional costs of importing all materials to Bangladesh. Bangladesh-origin products met quality standards of customers in North America and Western Europe, and prices were satisfactory. Business flourished right from the start; many owners made back their entire capital investment within a year or two and thereafter continued to realize great profits. Some 85 percent of Bangladeshi production was sold to North American customers, and virtually overnight Bangladesh became the sixth largest supplier to the North American market (see Foreign Trade, this ch.).

After foreign businesses began building a ready-made garment industry, Bangladeshi capitalists appeared, and a veritable rush of them began to organize companies in Dhaka, Chittagong, and smaller towns, where basic garments—men's and boys' cotton shirts, women's and girls' blouses, shorts, and baby clothes—were cut and assembled, packed, and shipped to customers overseas (mostly in the United States). With virtually no government regulation, the number of firms proliferated; no definitive count

was available, but there were probably more than 400 firms by 1985, when the boom was peaking.

After just a few years, the ready-made garment industry employed more than 200,000 people. According to some estimates, about 80 percent were women, never previously in the industrial work force. Many of them were woefully underpaid and worked under harsh conditions. The net benefit to the Bangladeshi economy was only a fraction of export receipts, since virtually all materials used in garment manufacture were imported; practically all the value added in Bangladesh was from labor.

Other Industries

Not all industrial growth in Bangladesh was stimulated by anticipation of foreign sales. The national economy stood to benefit equally from domestic production that could eliminate the need for imports of one kind or another. A good example of import-substitution manufacturing was the pharmaceutical industry, a field that attracted both foreign and domestic investment in the first decade of independence, based on the large potential domestic market. The Drug Ordinance of 1982 introduced controversy and claims by foreign firms that they were victims of discrimination vis-à-vis local pharmaceutical firms. The foreign firms found that the ordinance restricted the kinds of drugs they could manufacture, import, and sell; specifically, foreign pharmaceutical firms could no longer manufacture drugs that Bangladeshi-owned companies were capable of producing. The difficulties foreign investors have encountered seem to have been limited essentially to this one industry, and even there the foreign firms already established have managed to cope more or less successfully. In 1988 one United States firm announced a decision to expand its Bangladeshi manufacturing operations by moving into production of highly specialized medicines with greater profit margins (see Medicinal Drugs and Drug Policy, ch. 2).

Public sector corporations produced a substantial part of the country's paper and newsprint requirements, as well as carrying on sugar-refining operations at modest-sized mills in several parts of the country. They also produced about 100,000 tons of steel per year, 1 million tons of petroleum products, and gasoline pumps, radios, television sets, bicycles, paints and varnishes, cement, and industrial chemicals (see table 12, Appendix).

Mineral Development

Natural Gas

One of the country's few mineral resources is natural gas, which is the basis for nitrogenous fertilizer production sufficient to meet

the country's needs. Estimated national reserves range from 182 billion to 623 billion cubic meters. Deposits lie in more than a dozen different locations, six of which were producing in 1986. The country's gas production is concentrated in the northeastern part of the country (see fig. 9). Reserves also have been discovered offshore, but extraction is not yet cost effective.

Total gas production in FY 1986 was 2.9 billion cubic meters, with production rising at least 10 percent per year. All production was consumed domestically. About 40 percent of production was used for generating power, nearly 40 percent for producing fertilizer, and the rest divided among industrial, commercial, and household uses. Even by conservative estimates of reserves and consumption trends, the supply was expected to be adequate for Bangladesh's requirements through the year 2030.

Coal

In western Bangladesh there are substantial proven reserves of coal, but they remained unexploited in the late 1980s, largely because of the absence of major prospective users in the area. The options of constructing a large coal-fired power station or exporting coal to India were being considered in the late 1980s.

Petroleum

Bangladesh holds unknown quantities of commercially exploitable reserves of petroleum, both on land and offshore. In December 1986, oil was discovered in the Haripur gas field, south of the city of Sylhet, in northeastern Bangladesh. Lucky Well Number Seven promptly went into production at the rate of several hundred barrels per day, the first commercial oil production in Bangladesh. The crude was shipped by rail to the Eastern Refinery in Chittagong, where it was combined with other lighter imported crude oil for refining. The Eastern Refinery had been operating at just 66 percent of capacity and processing 34,000 barrels of crude per day. The domestic addition did not in itself have much of an impact on energy use in Bangladesh, but it was a beginning that fed hopes for further development.

In the late 1980s, the Bangladesh Oil, Gas, and Minerals Corporation was carrying on further test drilling in western Bangladesh as well as in the vicinity of the successful Haripur strike. The government formed a high-level committee under the minister of energy and mineral resources to formulate recommendations for stimulating oil exploration and extraction in Bangladesh. In 1987 the Soviet Union reportedly agreed to provide assistance for oil exploration,

a broadening of its traditional cooperation in the field of power generation, transmission, and distribution.

Electric Power

Electric power is generated by a hydroelectric complex in the Chittagong Hills and thermal plants in Chittagong and several locations in central and western Bangladesh. In 1987 the government announced its intention to proceed with construction of its first nuclear power facility, having concluded that the country's long-term needs could not be met by continued reliance on natural gas reserves. They did not announce how the project would be financed, but West Germany was considered the most likely source. The country's total generating capacity was 1,141 megawatts as of 1986, and the proposed nuclear plant would add between 300 and 400 megawatts.

Electric power outages and restrictions on peak-period consumption were a serious problem in the mid-1980s, resulting in substantial productivity losses for jute, textile, and other industrial concerns. Government and power board authorities worked out a strategy of planned brownouts and shutdowns, which were distributed geographically as equitably as possible to minimize economic disruption. Some industrial concerns adopted off-peak work schedules, operating their factories in the middle of the night instead of in the daytime.

There were also substantial losses in the transmission and distribution of electric power, including many unauthorized hookups to the system. The urban distribution system found it difficult to persuade subscribers, including state-owned industries, to pay their bills. In contrast, the system of rural electrification cooperatives, established in the late-1970s with assistance from the United States and other donors, and gradually expanding since then, has demonstrated that it is possible to deliver electric power effectively to nonurban consumers. Rural electrification immediately transforms economic life: within weeks a profusion of consumer goods appears, night markets open (complete with tiny cinemas for audiences of fifteen or twenty people), and demand for electric irrigation pumps soars.

Biofuels

At the household level, Bangladesh is the prime example of a country in which biofuel supplies (chiefly for cooking) come from the agricultural sector. According to data gathered for FY 1986, 61 percent of biomass energy for fuel use comes from crop residues (jute sticks, rice straw, rice hulls, sugarcane refuse, and other waste

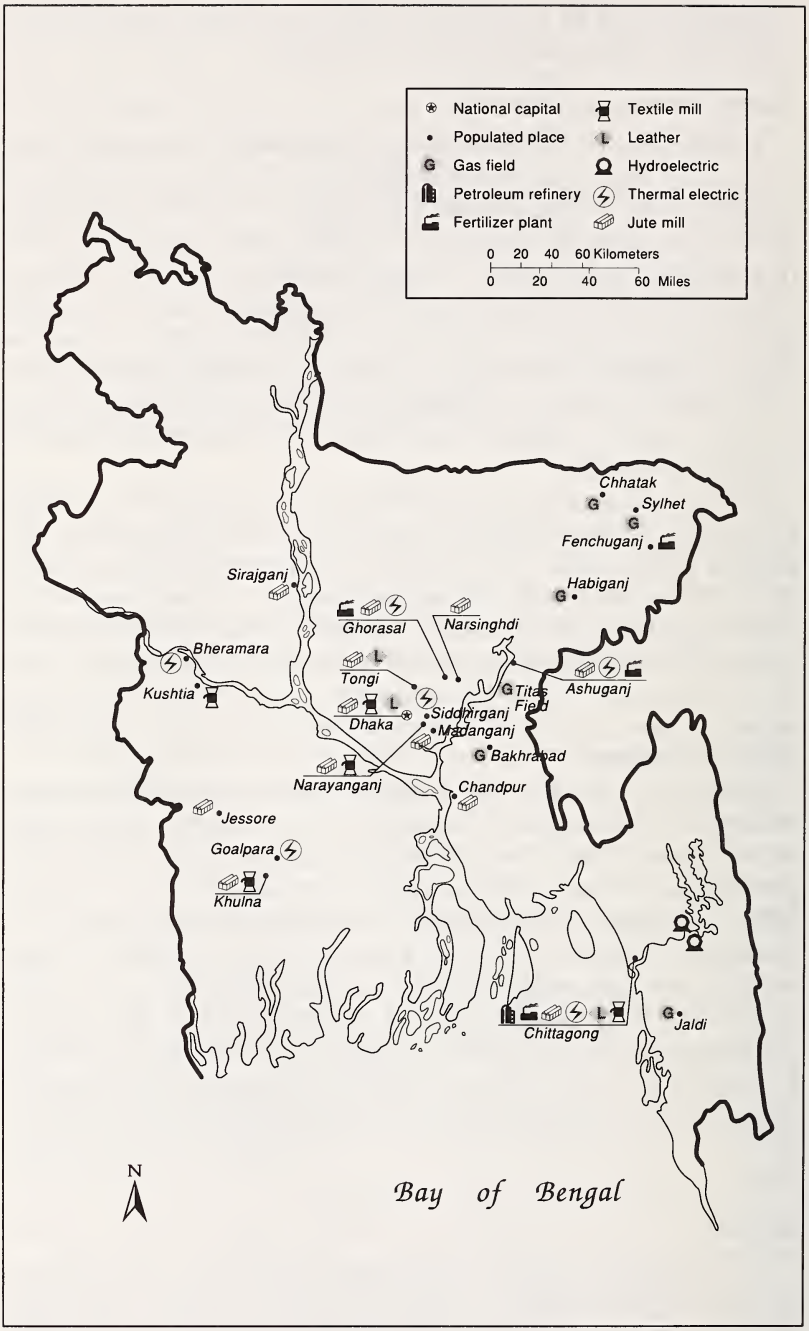


Figure 9. Economic Activity, 1988

products), 24 percent from animal dung, and the remainder from firewood, twigs, and leaves. The firewood typically comes from village trees. The importance of cereal straws means that household energy supply is highly sensitive to changes in agricultural practices and economics and that agricultural policies need to take this into account. The future availability of these fuels was becoming a critical issue in the mid- and late 1980s. Inevitably, new energy resources would have to come from commercial sources. The government and aid donors were struggling with the dilemma of how to provide these needed resources in a manner consistent with the rest of Bangladesh's strategy for long-term economic development and growth.

Technological Advances

The Bangladesh Space Research and Remote Sensing Organisation operates remote sensing facilities using both French and American satellites and applying meteorological and geographic data to such basic problems as water management, soil fertility, forecasting, and agricultural census work. In 1986 it became the first non-American organization ever to receive an award for excellence from the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration, which provided training for Bangladeshi scientists and grants of equipment and technical assistance. The Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission operates an experimental nuclear reactor and also conducts important agricultural research on seeds, parasites, storage of harvested crops, and irradiation.

Foreign Trade

Export Sectors

Jute

Jute has long been Bangladesh's major foreign exchange earner, and although other products have become important, in 1987 jute still accounted for more than 50 percent of export revenue, with manufactures accounting for an increasing portion of the total (as compared with raw jute) (see table 13, Appendix; Industrial Crops, this ch.).

Since independence, Bangladesh's largest customer for jute products has been the United States; the bulk of sales has been divided fairly evenly between burlap and carpet backing. But, consistent with the global pattern, the United States market has eroded fairly steadily over the years. Sales to the United States reached a low of US$81.8 million in 1986 but increased again to US$104.5 million in 1987, when both prices and volume rose. The market

for jute sacking was assisted by the fact that some recipient countries of American food aid specified burlap for their United States imports because they had a secondary market for the bags.

Seafood

In the 1980s, Bangladesh emerged suddenly and dramatically as a major producer of shrimp, frog legs, and fish for export. The seafood industry's sudden success resulted primarily from private entrepreneurial initiatives, in response to a hospitable international market. The natural resources to support a growing fisheries sector are abundant, including enormous potential to develop inland water bodies, as well as even greater productive areas of coastal and offshore waters. Coastal brackish-water shrimp farming was more developed and was likely to grow further as investment increased, higher technology was brought to the activity, and the world market continued buoyant.

The pace of fishery development was impressive in the 1980s. At the beginning of the 1970s, frozen seafood was responsible for less than 1 percent of exports or US$3.4 million per year. The figure rose to US$40 million in FY 1981, US$113 million in FY 1986, and US$86 million in the first 6 months of FY 1987. At that point, it was suddenly second only to jute as Bangladesh's most valuable export.

Fresh and frozen shrimp accounted for two-thirds of Bangladesh's seafood exports in the mid-1980s; Japan purchased more than half. The United States, Belgium, and Britain were the other major buyers; the United States was the prime customer for frog legs, the largest category after shrimp.

Garments

The first ready-made garment factories in Bangladesh aimed at the export market were opened in the late 1970s by investors from other Asian countries whose exports had been restrained by quotas imposed by importing nations. By the mid-1980s, the ready-made garment industry had become a strong export earner. Garment exports brought receipts of only US$3 million in FY 1981, but by 1984 exports had risen to US$32 million, and the following year revenue soared to US$116 million. For FY 1985 and FY 1986, ready-made garments were the second biggest foreign exchange earner for Bangladesh after jute.

The surge in Bangladeshi exports eventually caused a reaction among some industrial nations. Canada, the European Economic Community, and the United States expressed concern that inexpensive Bangladeshi garments were flooding their markets. In 1985,

after a series of notices as called for by multilateral agreements, the United States—which was the destination of about 25 percent of Bangladesh's garment exports—began imposing quotas on Bangladeshi garments, one category at a time.

Bangladeshi manufacturers, working with the government, organized with remarkable speed and efficiency to adapt to changing conditions. They policed themselves to stay within quotas, allocating production quotas according to equitable criteria, and began diversifying their production into categories where there were not yet quotas: for example, cotton trousers, knitwear, dresses, and gloves. After a period of adjustment, during which some of the least well-established firms closed and workers were laid off, the industry began stabilizing, and growth continued at a more moderate pace. Exports in FY 1986 rose another 14 percent, to US$131 million, and prospects were good for continued growth at about that rate.

Other Export Industries

The quality of Bangladesh's tea, grown in the Sylhet hills area, is not competitive with tea grown elsewhere in Asia, and during the Pakistan period sales were increasingly restricted to West Pakistan. The war of independence raised a question about whether alternative markets could be found for Bangladesh's tea. Production in FY 1973 was 24 million kilograms, down from 31 million kilograms in FY 1970. Pakistan remained interested in Bangladeshi tea and again became the chief customer, followed by several Arab countries. In the 1980s, production returned to the pre-1971 level and was relatively stable from year to year, but prices were not. Bangladesh received less than half the value in FY 1986 for virtually the same amount sold in FY 1984 (US$33 million versus US$69 million). As with jute, Bangladesh could hope for little more than to preserve—but not expand—its small niche in the world's tea trade.

Bangladesh also holds a small place in the international leather trade. World prices were somewhat less volatile than for tea, and in the 1980s Bangladesh could count on annual earnings of between US$56 million and US$90 million, primarily because of the high quality and premium prices of skins from Bangladesh. There was little scope for increasing production because competition over land and feed kept down the population of cattle and goats.

In the mid-1980s, fruits, vegetables, and spices also began to become important export items. Previously negligible in export accounts, in FY 1986 this category brought in nearly US$15 million, chiefly from Middle Eastern and British customers. Prospects were bright for continued growth of this diversification of Bangladeshi agriculture, as external demand was expected to remain lively.

Balance and Terms of Trade

Bangladesh has had a negative trade balance since independence in 1971. In the mid-1980s, the annual pattern was for exports to cover only around 30 percent of the cost of imports (see table 14, Appendix). Merchandise exports reached the value of US$1 billion in FY 1987 for the first time, and in that year import payments were US$2.6 billion, leaving a trade deficit of over US$1.5 billion, about average throughout the 1980s. The annual deficit was limited by government controls to between US$600 and US$700 million on capital goods and US$500 million on nonagricultural industrial commodities. The largest component in the latter category was crude oil and petroleum products. In addition, Bangladesh incurred a debt each year for grain and other food needs, always higher than US$200 million, and sometimes going to double or even more (at least US$607 million in FY 1985). The country had a positive balance on nonfood agricultural production, because jute and ready-made garment exports eliminated the deficit in fibers, textiles, and garments.

One way the society has been able to turn its economic problems and overpopulation to some advantage is by exporting workers to wealthy, Islamic countries, chiefly in the Persian Gulf. The remittances from these workers have come to constitute one of Bangladesh's greatest sources of foreign exchange. In FY 1986 remittances were nearly US$575 million, covering 23.5 percent of import financing requirements and substantially exceeding the total receipts from jute, the chief export. The government maintained records only of new recruits working abroad each year—a peak of 77,694 in 1985—but knowledgeable observers believed that possibly as many as 450,000 were overseas at any one time. Throughout the 1980s, more than a third went annually to Saudi Arabia with a peak of 39,350 new recruits in 1987 (see table 6, Appendix). Other countries receiving large number of Bangladeshi workers in 1987 included the United Arab Emirates (9,953), Kuwait (9,559), Qatar (5,831), and Iraq (3,847). Such workers normally contracted to remain abroad three years and often stayed several years longer. They worked as laborers, under terms negotiated government to government, and generally lived under segregated conditions that effectively prevented Bangladeshi men (who cannot bring their families with them) from assimilating with the local population or experiencing non-Bangladeshi ways of life. When they have returned to Bangladesh with savings and material acquisitions, they generally have had no difficulty fitting back into their society.



A load of earthen pots on a country boat headed downriver
Courtesy Bangladesh Ministry of Information

Other remittances have come from the more highly educated elite who are able to take advantage of educational resources at home or overseas and who advance to high positions in business, the professions, the civil service, or even the military. Some have gone abroad—mostly to Britain, the United States, and Canada—and many remit savings to relatives in Bangladesh. The government extends incentives to all expatriate Bangladeshis to send back some

of their savings. They are granted a preferential exchange rate, and a portion of their remittances can be turned back into foreign currency for purchases from abroad.

Including remittances as a form of export revenue still left Bangladesh with a deficit ranging between US$1.5 billion and US$1.8 billion each year during the 1980s. Foreign aid was the essential element allowing Bangladesh to steer clear of a critical shortage of foreign exchange.

In FY 1986, the United States was the leading buyer of Bangladeshi exports, taking some 25 percent of the total. The American portion had increased from 16 percent the year before and 12 percent the year before that. The dynamic new element was ready-made garments; the United States purchased over 80 percent of this new industry's production, adding to Bangladesh's traditional base of jute manufactures (mostly carpet backing) and seafood. The next biggest customer for Bangladesh (but with only 28 percent of the American volume) was Japan, which chiefly purchased frozen seafood. Other important customers in FY 1986 were Britain, Italy, Pakistan, Singapore, and Belgium. Trade with communist countries was also significant. Almost 10 percent of exports were under barter terms with the Soviet Union, China, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.

The list of suppliers to Bangladesh is eclectic. In FY 1986, Singapore was the leading supplier, with 14 percent of the total (up from 12 percent the previous year). Major supplies were petroleum and petroleum products and also vegetable oils and fats. Next was Japan, with 13 percent of the total, selling iron and steel, transportation equipment, and machinery. In third place was the United States with 8 percent (food grains and machinery), followed by South Korea (textiles), the United Arab Emirates (petroleum), India (textiles and machinery), West Germany (machinery and transportation equipment), China (assorted products), and Britain (machinery, equipment, and sugar products). Other major suppliers were Canada, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, the Netherlands, and Iran (see table 15, Appendix).

Transportation and Communications

Inland Waterways and Ports

The primary transportation system of Bangladesh is its extensive inland waterways. Some 18.9 million tons of cargo (about 21 percent of the total) were moved by water transportation in FY 1986. As of early 1988, the country had 8,430 kilometers of navigable waterways, of which up to 3,058 were main cargo routes.

There are seasonal difficulties in the navigability of rivers and canals for the traditional country boats that constitute the great bulk of the merchant fleet, but geography and history have made these craft the preferred means of moving goods between the ports on the Bay of Bengal and the interior and between surplus and shortage regions of the country. As of 1987, the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation operated a fleet of more than 480 vessels; about half were inland and river barges, and the rest were used for coastal trade. The size of the corporation's fleet had been steadily declining over the years, but they still represented a substantial portion of the registered watercraft.

The total number of passenger- and cargo-carrying country boats plying the vast river system was nearly 300,000 and was increasing in the mid-1980s. Some of the larger boats use a single sail to supplement manpower. The larger boats carry loads up to thirty-five tons and operate with crews of three or more. Generally, they are built with a raised platform at the stern of the vessel, on which a man patiently walks back and forth with a large-paddled oar, while others may pole in the shallow water or row from the sides. At times, the boats are pulled with ropes from along the shore. These boats have a shallow draft, necessary for navigating in the extensive but very shallow river system. When loaded, the boats sit low in the water. Cargoes of raw jute or logs from the mangrove forest of the Sundarbans may fill all the interior space and project beyond the gunwales of the boat itself. Other cargoes may be bagged or covered with cloth or bamboo meshwork. Country boats are estimated to move more than 17 million tons of cargo yearly, on a system of at least 1,400 launch landings and the major river ports of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Chandpur, Barisal, and Khulna. Country boats are unsuited for the Bay of Bengal or the broad Padma-Meghna estuary. Thus coastal traffic of bulk agricultural goods is much smaller than inland waterway traffic.

Traditional and modern means of water transportation meet at the seaports of Chittagong and Chalna, where most of Bangladesh's imports and exports are transferred between dramatically different kinds of vessels (see River Systems, ch. 2; fig. 10). The government-owned Bangladesh Shipping Corporation reportedly had twenty-one oceangoing ships in its inventory in 1986, and the ships of many other nations called at the major ports. Chittagong, the principal port, has an excellent natural harbor and anchorage on the Karnaphuli River, about five kilometers from the Bay of Bengal. The port facilities were developed after 1947, and by 1970 Chittagong could berth 20 ships at a time and handle 4 million tons of cargo annually. In FY 1985, the port at Chittagong handled



Figure 10. Transportation System, 1988

some 1,086 vessels and 6.2 million tons of cargo. Chalna is on the Pusur River about sixty-four kilometers south of the river port city of Khulna. Chalna was still being developed in the late 1980s, but it was rapidly gaining on Chittagong in capacity and in traffic, particularly as land and inland waterway connections also were being improved to reorient the distribution system of the west and northwest areas of the country to the newer port. The port at Chalna handled 545 vessels and 2.3 million tons of cargo in FY 1985.

Road Transportation

As of 1986, there were about 10,890 kilometers of publicly maintained motorable roads in Bangladesh. Despite tremendous flood-related maintenance problems, road transportation was an increasingly important mode of moving goods and people in the 1980s. In FY 1986, some 69.7 million tons of goods (77 percent of the total moved) were carried on Bangladesh's roads. More than half of the roads—about 6,690 kilometers—were paved with cement, concrete, or bituminous materials. Secondary and tertiary byways were paved primarily with mud-baked bricks, stones, or gravel or were made of packed earth. Asphalt and even stone (except for small amounts quarried in Sylhet) must be imported, and the expense can be justified only for urban streets and main roads carrying heavy traffic. Unpaved roads require constant maintenance because of their instability and the cycle of flood and drought. The food-for-work program supported by the United States and other food aid donors makes it possible to support highway development by creating jobs to upgrade the primary highway system, by generating cash for minor bridges and culverts, and by converting seasonal tracks into year-round farm-to-market roads.

Highway transportation is complicated by the deltaic geography, requiring frequent crossings of streams and rivers, especially in east-west travel. There are few major bridges, partly because of shifting river courses, and the absence of significant topographical features makes bridge building costly. The solution is a proliferation of ferryboats of varying size and description. The ferry system operates with remarkable reliability, although capsizings sometimes occur, with heavy loss of life.

Because roads are often in poor condition or travel is difficult, motor vehicles are not the preferred mode for interurban commerce. As of 1986, the government estimated that there were 136,000 motor vehicles in the country, and half of those were motorcycles or auto-rickshaws.

Rickshaw taxis—three-wheeled, two-passenger bicycle-like vehicles—play an important role in urban transportation in

Bangladesh. In 1986 there were 29,400 registered rickshaws operating in Dhaka alone. Nationally, according to official statistics, there were 182,000 rickshaws in 1986, a 20,000 increase in just 4 years. Rickshaws were introduced in Dhaka in the late 1930s, gradually replacing horse-drawn carriages. The rickshaw operator is generally a young, illiterate migrant from a rural area seeking upward social and economic mobility. The work is physically demanding, and the profits are often less than US$1 per day. Government authorities have indicated that they hope to eliminate bicycle rickshaws in Dhaka and gradually to allow only auto-rickshaws, which use motorcycles instead of bicycles. Auto-rickshaws, commanding higher fares, would represent a social and economic transformation, for the crude, inexpensive, and inelegant bicycle rickshaws respond remarkably well to the conditions of life in urban areas and fill an important economic function.

Railroads

The railroads carry about 2 percent of the nation's cargo. In 1986 Bangladesh had about 2,818 kilometers of railroad track, all of it owned and operated by the government's Bangladesh Railways. Two-thirds of the track (1,838 kilometers) was meter gauge, and the remainder (980 kilometers) was broad gauge. Much of the rail system was rehabilitated in the early 1980s with the assistance of an Asian Development Bank loan.

There were 288 locomotives—mostly diesel powered—serving the rail system in 1986. This was a significant decline from the more than 500 locomotives operating in the early 1970s. The volume of freight carried in more than 19,600 cars steadily decreased in the 1980s, however, going from more than 3 million tons in FY 1982 to 2.3 million tons in FY 1986. Most of the bulk cargo was wheat, fertilizer, sugarcane, raw jute, rice, and cement. With more than 1,660 coaches in use, passenger service was available and popular between large towns; there were some 82 million passengers in FY 1986. In the late 1980s, the government was attempting to improve the quality of that service by adding special fast trains, particularly between Dhaka and Chittagong.

Most rail lines in Bangladesh run from north to south, following the north-south river system, and many freight and passenger journeys include a combination of rail and water movement. East-west lines exist but are a minor part of the total system. Because of the nation's numerous waterways, an average of six bridges or culverts are required per kilometer of rail line. As a result, Bangladesh has some 3,630 rail bridges. Railroad beds, built on the only high ground in some parts of the country, provide a refuge



Biman Bangladesh Airlines DC-10-30
Courtesy Biman Bangladesh Airlines

in times of flooding. During periods of high water, trains often are the major form of mass transportation.

Civil Aviation

The government-owned airline—Biman Bangladesh Airlines—was established in January 1972, using some 2,500 former officers, crew members, and other employees of Pakistan International Airlines. Initially, only domestic service was provided, but within its first year service was expanded to include regional and intercontinental routes. The national prestige of providing premium intercontinental service was underscored in the late 1980s when President Ershad himself served as president of Biman. In the late 1980s, 24 cities in 20 countries were served by Biman, and service was provided to 101 cities in 48 countries with the combined service of Biman and other international carriers. Distant cities, such as London, Paris, Amsterdam, Rome, Athens, various Middle Eastern cities, Bangkok, and Singapore, were served by Biman's three McDonnell-Douglas DC-10-30s. Domestic airports and nearby regional centers, such as Calcutta, Kathmandu, and Rangoon, were served with four smaller jets (1960s-vintage Boeing 707-351Cs) and five propeller-driven airplanes (Fokker-27s and Fokker-28s).

An important part of Biman's business in the 1980s came from charter passengers making pilgrimages to Saudi Arabia (22,165 *hajj* visits were made in FY 1986) and from Bangladeshi workers traveling to and from Middle Eastern countries (see Islam, ch. 2). Biman was thus an important earner of hard currency. During

FY 1986, Biman carried some 879,000 passengers, slightly more than half of whom traveled on its international routes. Nevertheless, it expended a substantial amount of foreign exchange in its operations, and the airline's management was criticized for employing a large number of people—some 4,500 in mid-1988—in proportion to the number of aircraft it operated.

In 1986 there were eighteen airports in Bangladesh: fourteen had permanent-surface runways, but only four could accommodate large jet aircraft. Zia International Airport, twenty kilometers from Dhaka, serves as the national air transportation hub; the Patenga Airport at Chittagong, Sylhet Osmany Airport, and the airports at Jessore, Rajshahi, and Rangpur also are important flight centers.

Telecommunications

Nationwide telecommunications services in 1988 were deficient in both quality and quantity. Resources available to the Ministry of Communications were inadequate. Bangladesh had a ratio of less than 1 telephone per 1,000 people, one of the lowest telephone densities in the world. Telephone facilities were heavily overburdened, with a waiting list for telephone service approaching 50,000. International service improved in the mid-1980s with the introduction of satellite connections through facilities at Bethbunia and Talibabad. International and direct-dial facilities existed on a limited basis. Most district towns had access to an alternative system for urgent communications, in the form of a UHF or VHF radio system or radio relay network (see The Media, ch. 4). Bangladesh planned to improve its telecommunications during the Third Five-Year Plan (1985–90) by the installation of a digital radio relay network, automation of telephone exchanges, and the installation of a mobile telephone network in Dhaka.

Tourism

Despite its poor-country status, increasing numbers of tourists have visited Bangladesh, a new but minor source of foreign exchange earning. Tourism in the early 1980s amounted to some 49,000 visitors per year, but by 1986 more than 129,000 tourists—mostly from India, the United States, Britain, and Japan—visited Bangladesh. According to the Bangladesh Parjaton Corporation (Bangladesh Tourism Corporation), some Tk44.6 million in foreign exchange was earned in 1986 from the tourism industry.

Problems and Prospects

The Bangladesh government and the Bangladesh Aid Group have taken seriously the idea that Bangladesh is the test case for

development. In the late 1980s, it was possible to say, in the somewhat patronizing tone sometimes adopted by representatives of donor organizations, that Bangladesh had generally been a "good performer." Even in straitened times for the industrialized countries, Bangladesh remained a favored country for substantial commitments of new aid resources from a strikingly broad range of donors. The total estimated disbursement for FY 1988 was estimated at US$1.7 billion, an impressive total but just US$16 per capita. Half of that total was for food aid and other commodities of limited significance for economic growth. Even with the greatest imaginable efficiency in planning and administration, resource-poor and overpopulated Bangladesh cannot achieve significant economic improvements on the basis of that level of assistance.

In examining the economy of Bangladesh, wherever one turns the problems crowd in and threaten to overwhelm the analysis. Underlying problems that have threatened the young nation remain unsolved. These problems include overpopulation and inadequate nutrition, health, and education resources; a low standard of living, land scarcity, and vulnerability to natural disaster; virtual absence of valuable metals; and inadequate government and bureaucratic structures. Yet the brief history of independent Bangladesh offers much that is encouraging and satisfying. The World Bank, leader of the Bangladesh Aid Group, described the country in 1987 as a success story for economic development and expressed optimism that the goals of the Third Five-Year Plan, and longer term development goals as well, could be attained. Government policies had been effective in stimulating the economy. The private sector had benefited from an environment of greater economic freedom and had improved performance in banking and production of jute, fertilizer, ready-made garments, and frozen seafood. The average growth rate of economy had been a steady, if unspectacular, 4 percent since the beginning of the 1980s, close to the world average for developing countries.

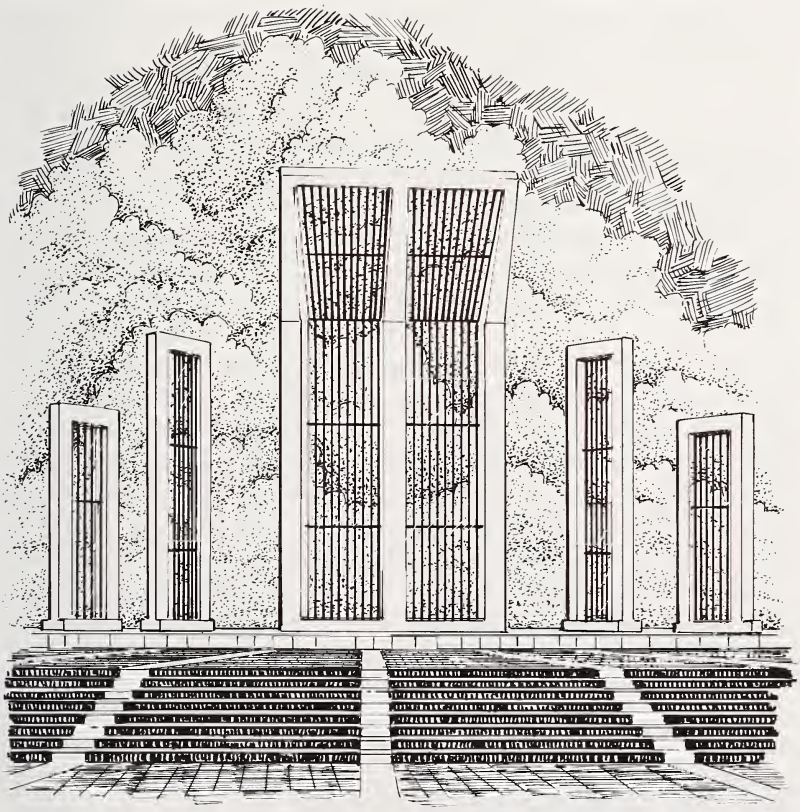
The picture of day-to-day and even year-to-year performance of the economy of Bangladesh is a mixture of accomplishment and failure, not significantly different from that of the majority of poor Third World countries. The government and people of Bangladesh are entitled to take some pride in the degree of success they have achieved since independence, especially when one contrasts their success with the gloomy forecasts of economists and international experts. The international donor community, led by the World Bank, similarly can be proud of the role it has played in assisting

this "largest poorest" nation to become a respected member of the family of nations.

* * *

Works that are useful for gaining a basic understanding of the Bangladesh economy include *Bangladesh: Emergence of a Nation* by A.M.A. Muhith and *The Political Economy of Development* by Just Faaland and J.R. Parkinson. Rehman Sobhan's *The Crisis of External Dependence* provides an insightful critique of the foreign aid sector. Kirsten Westergaard's *State and Rural Society in Bangladesh* provides information on agricultural development in the context of the relationship between the state and rural society. Articles by Abu Muhammad Shajaat Ali and Akhter Hameed Khan provide agricultural case studies on the village of Shyampur and the Comilla Model, respectively. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* and *Economist* both carry timely reports on the state of the economy. Among the most important sources of information on the economy, however, is the documentation provided by various agencies of the governments of Bangladesh and the United States and the World Bank. Important among these is the annual *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh* published by the Ministry of Planning. The *Bibliography of Asian Studies* each year carries numerous reports on the macroeconomy of Bangladesh and should be consulted for details. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 4. Government and Politics



The Shaheed Minar—monument for martyrs of the 1952 language movement, Dhaka

THE QUEST FOR REPRESENTATIVE government has been an important feature of the history of Bangladesh. The independence struggle of the eastern Bengali peoples against the British, partition from India in 1947, and secession from Pakistan in 1971 set the stage for the people of Bangladesh to create a democratic political system. The Constitution, as it was initially promulgated in 1972, embodied the democratic yearnings of the long struggle for independence and guaranteed human rights and political freedoms within a system of checks and balances similar to those existing in the British and United States governments. But later events ended these hopes. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib), hero of the 1971 war of independence, amended the Constitution and assumed dictatorial powers. His successors, most of whom were military men who seized power during various times of trouble, also ruled through autocratic means. As a result, successive regimes established single-party systems representing military interests, with the leader wielding almost absolute power.

Yet the struggle for democracy was still alive in Bangladesh as of the late 1980s. The single-party system of the 1970s and 1980s was unable to satisfy the varied political movements and interest groups of the nation. Opposition parties—although they represented conflicting views and were as unwilling as the ruling regime to share power—remained a vital force that commanded the loyalties of a large proportion of the population.

Socialist and communist parties, centrist parties representing the policies of defunct regimes, and conservative Islamic parties—each with a completely different vision of the path that Bangladesh should follow but united in their opposition to the rule of President Hussain Muhammad Ershad—all vied for power in the late 1980s. Their refusal to participate in parliamentary politics under Ershad, who had seized power in 1982, relegated the opposition to illegal activities and demonstrations on campuses and in the streets that periodically brought economic life to a standstill in urban areas. The ineffectiveness and confrontational position of the opposition only strengthened the regime's hold over Parliament and the civil service and allowed the military to continue its strong autocratic rule.

Remarkably, the policies of Bangladesh's autocratic military rulers have been characterized by a commitment to democratic ideals and an adherence to the Constitution. Ershad seized power in the name of the Constitution, and he sought to legitimize his

position by claiming that he brought stability to the country in order to guarantee democratic freedom. One of Ershad's most significant moves toward democracy was the establishment of a system of local elections that allowed voters to choose members of local representative councils. In the short term, this democratic reform allowed local elites to control government patronage, and it also made them docile supporters of the regime. Nevertheless, by the late 1980s the local councils had become training grounds for new political leaders and forums for democratic competition throughout the nation.

Bangladesh has pursued a neutralist policy in international relations in a continuing effort to secure economic aid from every possible foreign source. Bangladesh in 1988 was one of the few countries in the world on good terms with both the United States and the Soviet Union and their allies and with China, the Islamic world, and most Third World nations. Bangladesh has played an active role in the United Nations (UN), the Nonaligned Movement, and other international groupings, and it was the driving force behind the establishment of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, which offered promise for economic cooperation. Bangladesh was neutral, but it was forceful on a number of international issues. The Cambodian, Palestinian, and South African issues have elicited strong stands from Dhaka, and complicated bilateral problems with India have invoked intense displays of hostility and national pride among Bangladeshis in the years since independence.

Structure of Government

Constitution

The Constitution of Bangladesh has formed the basis for the nation's political organization since it was adopted on November 4, 1972. Many abrupt political changes have caused suspension of the Constitution and have led to amendments in almost every section, including the total revision of some major provisions. It is notable, however, that every regime that came to power since 1972 has couched major administrative changes in terms of the Constitution and has attempted to legitimize changes by legally amending this basic document.

According to the Constitution, the state has a positive role to play in reorganizing society in order to create a free and equal citizenry and provide for the welfare of all. The government is required to ensure food, shelter, clothing, medical care, education, work, and social security for the people. The government must also build socialism by implementing programs to "remove social and

economic inequality'' and ''ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among citizens.'' These far-reaching goals represented the viewpoints of many members of the 1972 Constituent Assembly and the early Awami League (People's League) government, who were deeply influenced by socialist ideology (see Fall of the Bangabandhu, 1972–75, ch. 1). Another sector of public opinion, however, has always viewed private property and private enterprise as the heart of social and economic development. This viewpoint is also part of the constitutional principles of state policy, which equally recognize state, cooperative, and private forms of ownership. The Constitution thus mandates a high degree of state involvement in the establishment of socialism, although it explicitly preserves a private property system. In practice, the Constitution has supported a wide range of government policies, ranging from those of the nationalized, interventionist state of Mujib's time to the increasing deregulation and reliance on market forces under presidents Ziaur Rahman (Zia) and Ershad.

The framers of the Constitution, after emerging from a period of intense repression under Pakistan, took great pains to outline the fundamental rights of citizens even before describing the government's structure. According to the section on fundamental rights, all men and women are equal before the law, without discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. The Constitution also guarantees the right to assemble, hold public meetings, and form unions. Freedom of speech and of the press are ensured. Persons who have been arrested must be informed of the charges made against them, and they must be brought before a magistrate within twenty-four hours. The Constitution, however, adds that these guarantees are subject to ''any reasonable restrictions imposed by law,'' leaving open the possibility of an administrative decision to revoke fundamental rights. Furthermore, there is a provision for ''preventive detention'' of up to six months. Those being held under preventive detention do not have the right to know the charges made against them, nor to appear before a magistrate, and a legal advisory board may extend this form of detention after seeing the detainee. The Constitution does not define the circumstances or the level of authority necessary for the revocation of constitutional guarantees or for the enforcement of preventive detention. During the many occasions of civil disorder or public protest that have marked Bangladeshi political life, the incumbent administration has often found it useful to suspend rights or jail opponents without trial in accordance with the Constitution.

The Islamic religion was the driving force behind the creation of Pakistan, and it has remained an important component of

Bangladeshi ideology. The Constitution as originally framed in 1972 explicitly described the government of Bangladesh as "secular," but in 1977 an executive proclamation made three changes in wording that did away with this legacy. The proclamation deleted "secular" and inserted a phrase stating that a fundamental state principle is "absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah." The phrase *bismillah ar rahman ar rahim* (in the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful) was inserted before the preamble of the Constitution. Another clause states that the government should "preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity." These changes in terminology reflected an overt state policy aimed at strengthening Islamic culture and religious institutions as central symbols of nationalism and at reinforcing international ties with other Islamic nations, including wealthy Arab oil-producing countries. Domestically, state support for Islam, including recognition of Islam as the state religion in the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution in June 1988, has not led to official persecution of other religions. Despite agitation by Jamaat e Islami (Congregation of Islam) and other conservative parties, there was no official implementation of sharia (Islamic law) as of mid-1988 (see Islam, ch. 2).

The Constitution is patterned closely on the British and United States models inasmuch as it includes provisions for independent legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. When it first came into effect, the Constitution established a British-style executive, with a prime minister appointed from a parliamentary majority as the effective authority under a titular president. In 1975 the Fourth Amendment implemented "Mujibism" (named for Mujib), mandating a single national party and giving the president effective authority, subject to the advice of a prime minister. The later governments of Zia and Ershad preserved the powers of the presidency and strengthened the office of the chief executive through amendments and their personal control of the highest office in the land. Because of this concentration of power in individual leaders, the Bangladeshi Constitution gives much greater authority to the executive branch than does the United States Constitution. In fact, the legislature and the courts have few constitutional avenues for checking presidential power, while the executive has many tools for dominating the other branches of the government.

Legislature

The legislative branch of the government is a unicameral Parliament, or Jatiyo Sangsad (House of the People), which makes the laws for the nation (see fig. 11). Members of Parliament, who must

be at least twenty-five years old, are directly elected from territorial constituencies. Parliament sits for a maximum of five years, must meet at least twice a year, and must meet less than thirty days after election results are declared. The president calls Parliament into session. The assembly elects a speaker and a deputy speaker, who chair parliamentary activities. Parliament also appoints a standing committee, a special committee, a secretariat, and an ombudsman.

Parliament debates and votes on legislative bills. Decisions are decided by a majority vote of the 300 members, with the presiding officer abstaining from voting except to break a tie. A quorum is sixty members. If Parliament passes a nonmoney bill, it goes to the president; if he disapproves of the bill, he may return it to Parliament within fifteen days for renewed debate. If Parliament again passes the bill, it becomes law. If the president does not return a bill to Parliament within fifteen days, it automatically becomes law. All money bills require a presidential recommendation before they can be introduced for debate in Parliament. Parliament has the ability to reject the national budget or to delay implementation. It is therefore in the best interests of the executive as well as the entire nation that budgets submitted to Parliament should be designed to please the majority of its members. The legislature is thus a potentially powerful force for enacting laws over the objections of the president or for blocking presidential financial initiatives. In practice, however, because most members of Parliament have been affiliated with the president's party, the legislature has typically served the interests of the president (see The Ershad Period, this ch.).

The Bangladeshi and British parliaments have accommodated political parties in a similar manner. After elections, a single political party or a coalition of parties must form a government—that is, they must form a block of votes within Parliament that guarantees the passage of bills they may introduce. Once a parliamentary majority is formed, the president chooses the majority leader as prime minister and appoints other members of the majority as cabinet ministers. Parliament can function for a full five-year term if a single party or coalition can continue to guarantee a majority. If, however, opposition members attract enough votes to block a bill, the president can dissolve Parliament and call for new elections. In order to prevent widespread bribing of members, or the constant defection of members from one party to another, the Constitution declares that party members who abstain, vote against their party, or absent themselves lose their seats immediately. In practice, whenever Parliament has been in session, a

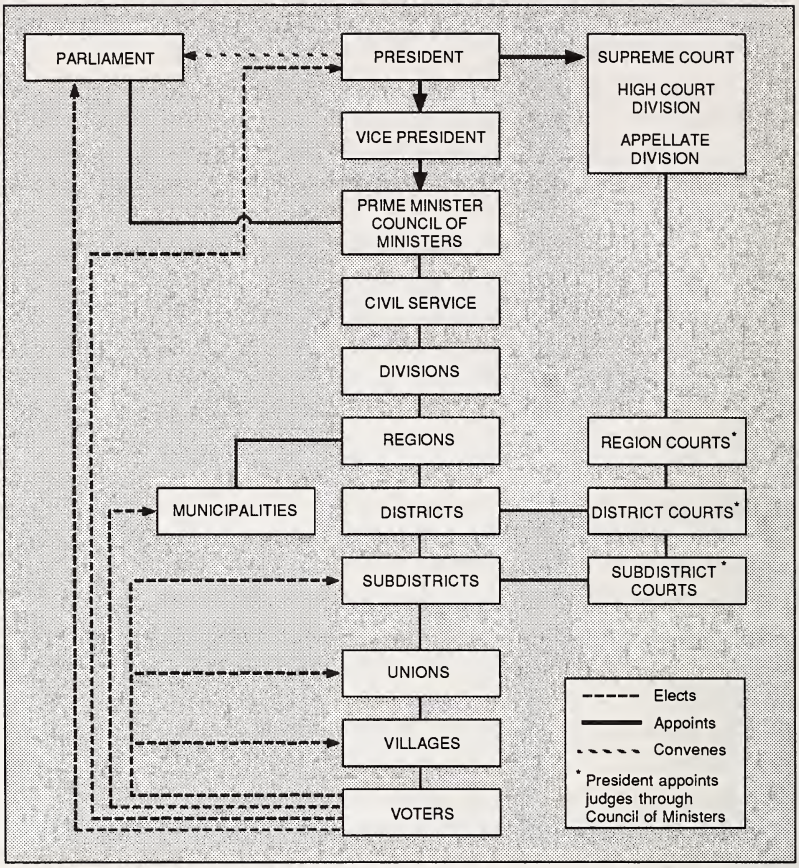


Figure 11. Structure of the Government, 1988

single party affiliated with the president has been able to command a solid majority.

Executive

Presidency

The president, who must be at least thirty-five years old, is directly elected by all voters for a five-year term, and according to the provisions of the Sixth Amendment (1981) he may be reelected. He is commander in chief of the armed forces, oversees the conduct of all foreign affairs, appoints the vice president for a five-year term, and has the power to convene and dissolve Parliament. The president also chooses cabinet ministers, who run

the government bureaucracy; heads a secretariat that devises money bills for introduction into Parliament; and appoints the members of the Elections Commission, who supervise all aspects of elections. In addition, the president appoints, without the need for parliamentary approval, Supreme Court justices and lower court judges. Parliament, in turn, can only impeach the president with a two-thirds vote and can only remove the president from office because of malfeasance or illness with a vote of three-fourths of its members.

The president has a number of extraordinary constitutional means of wielding power and influence. In the case of a constitutionally defined "grave emergency" threatening "the security or economic life of Bangladesh," the president may issue a proclamation of emergency, which eliminates all restrictions on state power and the protection of fundamental rights. A state of emergency may last 120 days, or longer with Parliament's approval. If the president determines that "immediate action" is necessary, he may promulgate any ordinance he wants, as long as it is laid before Parliament for approval at its next session—that is, if it has not already been repealed. Added to the considerable power of being able to place persons in preventive detention, these are a potent array of powers controlled directly, and without means for external control, by the president. The Fifth Amendment (1979) allows the president to amend the Constitution, without action by Parliament, by conducting a general referendum allowing a majority of citizens to approve an amendment. Constitutional amendments approved by Parliament must be passed by a two-thirds majority.

The increase in executive power has been the most important trend in the development of the Bangladeshi Constitution. This increase has developed because, in practice, even the very large scope of presidential authority has proved insufficient to protect civilian governments from military coups or to provide military leaders with sufficient legitimacy to preserve their power. Thus Mujib established a constitutional dictatorship, and both Zia and Ershad ruled for extended periods as chief martial law administrators in order to consolidate their hold over the country and to safeguard their influence by increasing their executive powers. Through the extended periods when Parliament was suspended, proclamations of the president or the chief martial law administrator amended the Constitution, not only to strengthen the office of the president but also to legitimize presidential acts.

Council of Ministers

The president administers the country through the Council of Ministers—the cabinet—which is headed by the prime minister,

a presidential appointee. Up to one-fifth of the members of the cabinet may be persons from outside Parliament, allowing experts to participate in the administration of the country, and the president may attract influential politicians to his party by offering them prestigious ministerial posts. The number of ministers in the cabinet has therefore varied over time, according to presidential political strategies. There were nineteen ministers in the 1982, but by mid-1988 Ershad had increased the number to twenty-eight. Variations in the number of ministries do not signify the creation or cancelation of government programs but simply the reclassification of government services. For example, in 1982 finance and planning programs were administered by a single ministry with two divisions, but in 1988 a separate ministry was created for each (see table 16, Appendix). In addition to changes in the status of various governmental divisions, discontinuities have occurred when the president has periodically dismissed ministers or moved them to different ministries. In the midst of this flux, administrative continuity is provided by the secretariats of the various ministries and regions, staffed by senior members of the Bangladesh Civil Service (see Civil Service, this ch.). Ministerial secretaries have often wielded a great deal of power because they are experienced and have numerous personal contacts in their fields, whereas ministers are typically professional politicians who hold office only for a short time.

Judiciary

The government operates courts in the regions, districts, and subdistricts that make up the local administrative system (see Local Administration, this ch.). The judges in these courts are appointed by the president through the Ministry of Law and Justice or the Ministry of Home Affairs. Most cases heard by the court system originate at the district level, although the newer subdistrict courts experienced an increased caseload in the late 1980s. Upon appeal, cases may go up to the Supreme Court, but litigation may be very slow; in 1987 there were 29 Supreme Court judges dealing with 21,600 pending cases. The Supreme Court, as of June 1988, had permanent benches—called the High Court Division—in Dhaka, Comilla, Rangpur, Barisal, Sylhet, Chittagong, and Jessore. It hears appeals from district courts and may also judge original cases. The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in Dhaka reviews appeals of judgment by the High Court Division. The judges of both divisions are appointed by the president.

At the grass-roots level, the judicial system begins with village courts. An aggrieved party may make an official petition, which requires a fee, to the chairman of the union council (the



Hussain Muhammad Ershad, president of Bangladesh
Courtesy Bangladesh Ministry of Information

administrative division above the village), who may call a session of the village court with himself as chairman and two other judges nominated by each of the parties to the dispute. The parties may question the impartiality of the chairman and have him replaced. The majority of cases end at the village court level, which is inexpensive and which hands down judgments that reflect local opinion and power alignments. There are occasions, however, when the union council chairman may reject an official petition to constitute a village court or when one party desires a higher opinion. In these cases, the dispute goes to a government court at the subdistrict level. Cases may wind their way up from district courts to permanent benches of the High Court Division. Once cases leave the village courts, they become expensive affairs that may last for years, and few citizens have the financial resources to fund a lengthy court battle.

Rapid political changes in independent Bangladesh have compromised the court system. The Constitution originally stated that the president could remove members of the Supreme Court only if two-thirds of Parliament approved, but the Proclamation (Amendment) Order of 1977 included a clause that eliminated the need for parliamentary involvement. The clause set up the Supreme Judicial Council, consisting of the chief justice and the next two senior judges. The council may determine that a judge is not "capable of properly performing the functions of his office" or is "guilty of gross misconduct." On their advice, the president may remove any judge. In addition, executive action has completely eliminated judicial authority for long periods. For example, under martial law regulations enacted in 1982, the Supreme Court lost jurisdiction over the protection of fundamental rights, and all courts operated under provisions of law promulgated by the chief martial law administrator; special and summary martial law courts handed down judgments that were not subject to review by the Supreme Court or any other court. Furthermore, the Fifth Amendment and the Seventh Amendment placed martial law proclamations and judgments outside the review of the court system. In these ways, the courts have been forced to serve the interests of the ruling regime, rather than standing as an independent branch of government (see Criminal Justice, ch. 5).

Civil Service

The implementation of government policies and projects is the duty of the Bangladesh Civil Service, a corps of trained administrators who form the nation's most influential group of civilians. The importance of the bureaucracy dates back to the colonial period,

when the Indian Civil Service provided an elite, educated, and dedicated body of professional administrators. After the partition of India in 1947, when almost all administrative organs had to be created afresh, both East Pakistan and West Pakistan heavily relied on the managerial expertise of professional managers from the old Indian Civil Service. When Bangladesh became independent in 1971, the members of the civil service who joined the new nation brought with them the heritage of the colonial system. This heritage included administrative competence, which proved invaluable in running a young Bangladesh, and an expectation by the elite of benefits and power.

In mid-1988 the civil service was composed of twenty-eight separate services. There were twenty grades, with promotion to higher grades based on merit and seniority, dependent on annual confidential reports filed by the individuals' supervisors. Recruitment to the civil service occurred through open competition within a quota system. Forty percent of all new positions were allotted on the basis of merit; 30 percent were reserved for former freedom fighters (Mukti Bahini—see Glossary), and 20 percent were allotted to women. The quotas were distributed among districts on the basis of population. Eligibility depended on an entrance examination, which included English, Bangla, and mathematics sections, plus a personal interview. The Public Services Commission, as mandated by the Constitution, conducted the examinations for the civil service. The recruitment system attempted to eliminate the entrenched power of the old elites and to decrease the bias that favored candidates from wealthy, urban families. Although in the late 1980s it appeared that the new rules for recruitment and promotion might widen the backgrounds of civil service personnel and their supervisors, the older, senior members of the service continued to dominate the administration.

Since independence, membership in the civil service has been one of the most desirable careers in the country. For senior civil servants, benefits included government housing at a standard rate of 7.5 percent of base salary, transportation, medical care, and a pension. Equally important were the prestige and influence that accompanied an administrative career. For example, there was great power in directing a division of a ministerial secretariat in Dhaka, or one of its attached departments, subordinate offices, or autonomous bodies. Positions in the countryside were less popular, but the long tradition of bureaucratic elitism and subservience to government officials made the local administrator of the civil service an influential person in the community. In the late 1980s, the centralization of power and influence within the civil service remained

one of the prime targets of administrative changes designed to decentralize politics and economic development throughout Bangladesh.

Local Administration

During the early British period, when modified versions of Mughal (1526–1858) and earlier administrations were adopted, the closest the government came to the rural society was the zamindar (see Glossary), an administrator with concurrent judicial functions, who ensured revenue flows from the localities to the central government and handled a wide variety of official business. Government from the top down was the general rule for the Indian Civil Service and later the Pakistani and early Bangladeshi civil services. After 1971 the government of Bangladesh saw the benefits of involving more people in democratic decision-making and development programs, but the progress of reform was slow. In 1959 General Mohammad Ayub Khan's government inaugurated a "basic democracies" program designed to involve villagers in development programs, with direct elections to union councils and indirect elections to bodies serving larger administrative units. Mujib's government held elections for union councils, but the coup of 1975 prevented their effective functioning. In 1980 Zia's government announced the Self-Sufficient Village Government Plan, but this project ended when Zia was assassinated in 1981. In 1982 Ershad appointed the Committee for Administrative Reorganization/Reforms, which led to the establishment of the National Implementation Committee for Administrative Reorganization. These bodies built a comprehensive plan for administrative decentralization based on the subdistrict.

Bangladesh is divided into four main territorial divisions (see fig. 1). In the late 1980s, the four divisions were divided into twenty-one regions, and the regions were subdivided into sixty-four districts (*zilas*—see Glossary). Below the district level, there were further urban and rural subdivisions. Urban areas include four municipal corporations (Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, and Khulna, each of which included several municipalities), eighty-seven municipalities (*pourashavas*) and thirty townships (*thanas*). The countryside had 460 subdistricts (*upazilas*—see Glossary), which were further divided into 4,401 unions (the rough equivalent of an urban ward); these, in turn, contained 60,315 *mouzas* (groups of two or more villages—about 20 percent of the total) and single villages (about 80 percent of the total). A further subdivision, equivalent to the rural *mouza,* was the *mahalla,* which was found in urban areas. Each *mouza* or *mahalla,* the size of which was determined by census

data-gathering techniques, contained about 250 households. An average village in the late 1980s contained 1,300 to 1,400 people. An average union contained about 15 villages and a population of about 20,000, and an average subdistrict had 8 to 10 unions with about 200,000 people.

Throughout its history, one of the main challenges to the Bangladeshi government has been finding ways to involve people in democratic politics at every administrative level.

According to the decentralization plan in effect in mid-1988, each rural *mouza* had its own council (*parishad*) of elected representatives chosen by local voters (persons aged eighteen and over). At the next administrative level, the chairmen of the union councils were directly elected by voters within their jurisdictions. The remaining members of the union council were chosen by the *mouza* councils, with each member of the union council representing three or four villages. The chairmen of the union councils formed the voting membership of the council at the subdistrict level, along with three appointed women and another appointed member, usually a former freedom fighter. The chairman of the subdistrict council was directly elected by subdistrict voters. Thus the people had a direct electoral role at the village level, and they had a voice in choosing influential chairmen at the union and subdistrict levels. In the late 1980s, plans called for the expansion of representation at the district level, and the controversial District Council (Zila Parishad) Bill of 1987 was the first step in this direction (see Relaxation of Martial Law, 1986–87, this ch.). By mid-1988, however, these plans had not been implemented; the region and division levels remained administrative units of the civil service and had no political significance.

Local participatory politics met the civil service in the subdistrict council. In the late 1980s, the chief government official in charge of local projects and development efforts was the subdistrict project management (*upazila nirbahi*) officer, who directed a staff of about 250 technical and administrative officers. *Nirbahi* officers were part of the staff appointed by central authorities in Dhaka, and they received their pay, benefits, and promotion from the civil service. Their direct supervisors, however, were the subdistrict council chairmen. The subdistrict councils, through their chairmen, were expected to make plans for public works and development projects within their own territories, spend allocated government funds, and direct the development activities of *nirbahi* officers and their staff. *Nirbahi* officers and other subdistrict technical personnel were allowed to participate in subdistrict council meetings, but only as nonvoting members. Civil service members,

heirs of a long tradition of elite government, took orders from subdistrict council chairmen because the latter wrote the annual evaluations of *nirbahi* officers which served as the basis for promotion within the civil service. In this way, elected representatives of the people at the local level exercised direct control over civil servants and government projects in their own area.

In the late 1980s, the administrative apparatus at the urban level was comprised of a governing council with an elected chairman, elected commissioners (no more than 10 percent of whom were women), and several ex-officio members. A mayor and deputy mayors were elected from among the council members.

The decentralization scheme implemented under Ershad's government was the most ambitious attempt in the history of Bangladesh to bring responsible government to the local level. The system officially began with elections in 1983 for four-year terms to union councils and with elections in 1984 for three-year terms to subdistrict councils. However, there were major problems with this scheme of decentralized administration. First, the electoral system tended to represent only the wealthiest and most influential members of society. These persons made decisions that strengthened their own patronage networks and influence at the local level; the poorest strata in society had little direct voice in elected committees (see Local Elites, this ch.). Second, the subdistrict councils were designed to create and implement development activities in their areas, but they were typically slow to draft five-year plans or carry through broad-based development efforts. Most of their projects emphasized construction or public works, (e.g., school buildings or irrigation canals, and they sometimes neglected the personnel and training components necessary for social involvement (see Economic Policy and Planning, ch. 3). Third, civil service members have long lacked respect for local politicians, looking to their own advancement from their supervisors in Dhaka. They have often been slow to cooperate with elected members of local committees. For example, although the subdistrict council chairman was responsible for writing the *nirbahi* officer's annual evaluation, the officer was expected to submit the evaluation form to the subdistrict council chairman, and in many cases these forms did not appear, thus preventing the chairmen from exercising control. Finally, the entire system of decentralized politics was viewed by opposition politicians as a patronage network designed to attract local elites to the party of the regime in power. Observers tended to conclude that instead of furthering decentralized democracy, the system only strengthened the national party controlled from Dhaka.



The Jatiyo Sangsad, Bangladesh's Parliament
Courtesy Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ershad Period

Achieving Stability, 1982–83

On March 24, 1982, the army chief of staff, Lieutenant General Hussain Muhammad Ershad, seized control of the government in a military coup. He proclaimed martial law, made himself chief martial law administrator, and dismantled the structures of democratic government that the administration of the late president Zia had carefully built during the previous five years (see The Zia Regime and Its Aftermath, 1977–82, ch. 1). Ershad suspended the Constitution, disbanded Parliament, prohibited all political activities, and deprived the president, vice president, and cabinet ministers of their offices. Three days after the coup, Supreme Court justice Abdul Fazal Muhammad Ahsanuddin Chowdhury became interim president. Ershad became chief minister of a new cabinet, and by December 1983 he had officially taken over the presidency. He declared that he expected a return to democratic rule in about two years. In fact, martial law lasted until November 1986.

Ershad cited as reasons for his coup the growing corruption and inefficiency of the civilian government dominated by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. After the assassination of President Zia as part of a local military rebellion in Chittagong in May 1981, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party fell into conflicting factions that could

not be controlled by Zia's successor, President Abdus Sattar. Without Zia at the helm, the powerful leaders of the military distrusted Sattar's civilian government. Thus, because the major political forces in the country could not cooperate with each other, there was no resistance to Ershad's takeover. After establishing control of the country, he had three main priorities for bringing political chaos to an end and for governing Bangladesh. His goals were to act against corruption and reorganize the administrative apparatus in order to implement overdue reforms, stand as a strong centralizing force while keeping his civilian opponents at bay, and placate the military so as to prevent further coup attempts. Through mid-1988 Ershad proved remarkably capable at accomplishing these goals, and he had become the longest ruling political leader in the history of independent Bangladesh.

During his tenure as chief martial law administrator, Ershad divided the country into five martial law zones, each headed by a handpicked senior army officer. Twenty-four special and summary martial law courts directly involved the military in local administration. Although the civilian court system continued to function, violations of martial law ordinances were handled by these extraconstitutional martial law tribunals, where active-duty military officers met in secret sessions to try cases ranging from violations of press censorship to vaguely defined "antisocial activities." Those convicted of political crimes had no right of appeal, and defendants were tried in absentia. Martial law deprived the Supreme Court of its jurisdiction over the protection of fundamental rights, and criticism of martial law was punishable by up to seven years' imprisonment.

Ershad moved forcibly to end corruption and reorganize the government. Several hundred politicians, including six former cabinet ministers, were jailed on charges of corruption. Ershad announced that one of his highest priorities was a reorganization of the government in order to decentralize decision making and development projects. In order to outline procedures for this decentralization project, he appointed the Committee for Administrative Reorganization/Reforms, which instituted sweeping changes in local administration (see Local Administration, this ch.). The Land Reforms Ordinance of 1984 granted important rights to tenants for the first time in the history of Bangladesh, and a new plan for the divestment of government industries promised to move the country away from socialism (see Joint Ventures and Foreign Investment, ch. 3). Ershad built on Zia's earlier platform of advocating an increased role for Islam in the culture and politics of Bangladesh.

Emerging Opposition, 1983–86

Ershad had a clear political stage for about a year after the coup because of his severe repression of opposition parties and because of intense factional fighting within all major political groupings (see Political Dynamics, this ch.). By early 1983, however, a pattern of confrontation politics had emerged. This pattern dominated the public life of Bangladesh until the late 1980s. Paradoxically, the government's Islamic policies provided a common cause for the first large anti-Ershad demonstrations. A proposed education program was designed to introduce English and Arabic as compulsory subjects in primary and secondary schools. This touched sensitive nationalist nerves, especially among university students, who saw it as a threat to the Bangla language (see Emerging Discontent, 1966–70, ch. 1). Several of Ershad's speeches favoring a stronger Islamic movement provoked riots on university campuses, which escalated into battles between students and police on February 14 and 15, 1983. Although the government imposed a curfew and closed the universities, the student movement stirred the opposition into more unified coalitions.

Dozens of political parties existed in Bangladesh during the 1980s, but the two major opposition parties to Ershad's rule were the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (see Party Politics, this ch.). The Awami League, which originated in 1949 and emerged preeminent at the beginning of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's era, gradually united around the leadership of Sheikh Hasina Wajed, Mujib's eldest daughter (see The War for Bangladeshi Independence, 1971, ch. 1). A fifteen-party alliance led by the Awami League began to act in unison during 1983. The leadership of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party fell to Begum Khaleda Zia, the widow of President Zia, and the party became the center of a seven-party alliance distinct from the one led by the Awami League. The two major alliances distrusted each other intensely, but they formed the heart of a larger thirty-two-party front, comprising socialist, communist, and Islamic groups, called the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy. This movement adopted a five-point program demanding an end to martial law, restoration of fundamental rights, parliamentary elections, release of political prisoners, and the trial of persons responsible for police brutality in the February student protests. The opposition alliances successfully engineered two general strikes in November 1983, the second resulting in widespread violence and hundreds of casualties among demonstrators and security personnel.

Political events for the next several years revolved around attempts by the Ershad government to move from a military

dictatorship to a civilian government with the cooperation of the political opposition. Ershad's program called for local elections at the union and subdistrict levels, followed by presidential and parliamentary elections, while a national party supporting the government would integrate all political groups in the same way the Bangladesh Nationalist Party had functioned during Zia's regime. Ershad relaxed the ban on political activities in January 1984 and repeatedly called for dialogue with opposition parties, but the major opposition alliances adamantly refused to cooperate while martial law remained in effect. The government held elections for union and municipal councils between December 1983 and February 1984, but repeated public demonstrations by opposition parties forced the cancellation of subdistrict and parliamentary elections. A rising crescendo of violence and civil disobedience led Ershad to reimpose harsh martial law restrictions in March 1985 and to put under house arrest Hasina, Khaleda Zia, and other opposition leaders. The government-sponsored party, Jana Dal (People's Party), had been formed in November 1983, but it had little chance to become organized before the new ban on political activity went into effect.

In 1985 the government went ahead with a "civilianization" program without the participation of the opposition parties. With martial law being fully enforced, a referendum was held on March 21, asking voters: "Do you support the policies of President Ershad, and do you want him to continue to run this administration until a civilian government is formed through elections?" The official count of "yes" votes amounted to 32,539,264, while "no" votes totaled 1,290,217. The opposition had organized a general strike on referendum day and subsequently claimed that the results were fraudulent. In May the government conducted subdistrict council elections. Run on a nonparty, nationwide basis, the elections featured 2,300 candidates competing for 458 seats as council chairmen. Keen local contests occurred amid widespread violence and claims of fraud by the opposition. After these elections, the government released Hasina, Khaleda Zia, and the other opposition leaders from house arrest, and on October 1 it canceled the ban on indoor meetings and rallies of political parties. Meanwhile, the pro-government Jana Dal became the leading component of the new Jatiyo Party (National Party), which featured members who had played prominent roles in Ershad's cabinet. By late 1985, the stage had been set for parliamentary elections. Despite constant opposition party pressure, Ershad's regime had used its control over the government and the military to maneuver the country toward civilian rule.

Relaxation of Martial Law, 1986–87

In March 1986, Ershad removed military commanders from key civil posts and abolished martial law offices and more than 150 military courts in an attempt to ease martial law restrictions. Because these moves satisfied some of the demands of the opposition, an eight-party alliance comprising the Awami League and some smaller parties agreed to participate in parliamentary elections. However, the seven-party alliance led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party boycotted the May 1986 elections, and according to the opposition parties the elections were marred by extensive fraud, including overt support for Jatiyo Party candidates by Ershad and other government officials, theft of ballot boxes, and beatings of opposition party workers. Official figures claimed the turnout at the polls was between 45 and 50 percent of the electorate, but other observers estimated that only 10 to 30 percent participated. The elections gave the Jatiyo Party an absolute majority of 153 seats in Parliament; its close ally, the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (National Socialist Party), took 7 seats. The Awami League gained seventy-six seats, the Jamaat e Islami took ten seats, and a number of smaller parties and independents won a total of fifty-four seats. All thirty seats reserved for women went to supporters of the Jatiyo Party, giving Ershad's supporters a comfortable majority (see table 17, Appendix).

With Parliament under his control, Ershad proceeded with plans for a presidential election. He resigned as army chief of staff in August 1986 but remained chief martial law administrator and commander in chief of the armed forces. He officially joined the Jatiyo Party in September, was elected its chairman, and became the party's candidate for president. The opposition parties did everything in their power to block these moves, claiming that the trappings of a democratic process were a sham while martial law was in effect. Awami League members of Parliament refused to attend its opening session, and in July Parliament adjourned for an indefinite period. Leftist parties and the alliances led by the Awami League, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, and Jamaat e Islami boycotted the elections and organized widespread demonstrations, leading to the jailing of many opposition leaders and the house arrest of Hasina and Khaleda Zia. Yet the opposition's tactics did not prevent the successful completion of the presidential election in October. Ershad easily defeated 11 other candidates, officially obtaining 22 million votes (84 percent) of the electorate. Opposition parties again claimed that the election results were fraudulent, and they asserted that only 3 percent of the electorate had cast ballots.

Firmly in control of a civilian government as well as the military establishment, Ershad took steps to legitimize his rule of the previous four years. He summoned Parliament into session on November 10, 1986, to consider a seventh amendment to the Constitution, which would ratify his assumption of power in 1982 and all subsequent actions of his martial law administration. The opposition again took to the streets in protest. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Jamaat e Islami, and a leftist five-party alliance led a general strike on November 10. The Awami League, demanding the lifting of martial law, boycotted Parliament and instead held a ''parallel parliament'' on the stairs of Parliament House. Inside, the 223 representatives present for the session voted unanimously in favor of the Seventh Amendment, and hours later Ershad announced in a national address the withdrawal of martial law and the full restoration of the Constitution. Prime Minister Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury proclaimed these events a ''glorious chapter,'' but Hasina described them as a ''black chapter'' in Bangladesh's history.

In early 1987, it appeared that Ershad had outmaneuvered his opponents and made the transition to a civilian leadership. The opposition was in disarray. By the time Awami League had decided to participate in Parliament in 1986, its coalition had shrunk from fifteen to eight parties. As a result, it had lost any opportunities it might have had for immediate cooperation with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and other parties, and it forfeited its claims to moral leadership in the fight against Ershad's regime. The rift between the Awami League and other opposition parties widened during the first half of 1987. For example, the newspapers were full of reports of the insults exchanged between Hasina and other opposition leaders. Ershad took advantage of the situation by convening Parliament in June to consider measures to consolidate his regime further. The most controversial measure was the District Council (Zila Parishad) Bill. This act expanded representative government by allowing elected representatives (members of Parliament and chairmen of subdistrict and municipality councils) to sit on district councils, but it also made provision for members of the military to participate as nonvoting members. The opposition viewed this move as an attempt to install the armed forces in the administration of the country on a permanent basis, thus favoring Ershad and his military supporters. The furor raised by the District Council (Zila Parishad) Bill grew into a storm that reunited the opposition and seriously destabilized Ershad's government from mid-1987 to mid-1988.

More Opposition Pressure

Opposition alliances began public protests against the District Council Amendment Bill in June 1987. The five-party alliance implemented a half-day general strike in Dhaka on June 23. A week later, another half-day general strike supported by the parliamentary opposition paralyzed most cities and towns. Nevertheless, on July 12, 1987, the Jatiyo Party majority in Parliament passed the bill. Two days of strikes and public demonstrations followed. Ershad, responding to opposition pressure, sent the bill back to Parliament for "reconsideration." The opposition, realizing that its disunity would allow Ershad to strengthen his hold over the country, intensified its street demonstrations, and its leaders made moves toward greater cooperation against the government. The opposition parties called for Ershad's immediate resignation and new elections under a caretaker government. On July 24, the longest general strike in Bangladesh's history, a 54-hour campaign led by the Workers-Employees United Council (Sramik Karmachari Oikkiya Parishad), ended after 11 people were killed and 700 injured in street violence between demonstrators and security forces. In October the Workers-Employees United Council led another lengthy strike. The strike lasted for forty-eight hours and ended on October 21.

By the fall of 1987, political events had come to a head. Extensive flooding from heavy monsoon season rains led to widespread misery in the countryside and intense criticism of the government's relief efforts (see Climate, ch. 2). Hasina and Khaleda Zia met on October 28, signaling a new phase of cooperation between the two leading opposition coalitions. A liaison committee of the eight-, seven-, and five-party alliances was formed to coordinate the moves of the opposition. The "final showdown," known as the Siege of Dhaka, occurred between November 10 and 12, when the opposition parties brought thousands of supporters into the streets. The government was well prepared for the confrontation, arresting Hasina, Khaleda Zia, and other leaders and sending thousands of security personnel into urban areas to control demonstrations.

Extensive security measures prevented a complete breakdown of public order, and after a week Dhaka was again under control. However, continuing agitation prevented a return to normal life throughout the country, leading Ershad to declare a state of emergency, with familiar restrictions on civil rights, on November 27. The opposition's tactics had shaken the government, but street violence and civil disobedience proved unable to dislodge Ershad's regime.

On December 6, 1987, Ershad dissolved Parliament, which had not met since July. According to the Constitution, he was required to arrange for new elections within ninety days. Also scheduled for early 1988 were elections for union councils and for municipal officials in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, and Rajshahi. These elections were occasions for further public agitation by the political opposition. In early January, five smaller parties joined the opposition coalition, which then implemented a two-day general strike on January 20 and 21. Another general strike occurred on February 6, coinciding with the last date for filing nominations for the municipal elections. On February 13 and 14, following the union council elections, the opposition held another general strike. None of these actions prevented the government from implementing its election plans, but they kept the nation in a state of constant protest; the opposition may have hoped that Ershad's supporters in the military would eventually view him as a political liability and force him to resign.

The elections for union councils on February 10, 1988, were particularly hard fought, and they became a major security problem for the government. There were 115,000 candidates vying for 44,000 positions at 20,000 polling stations throughout the country. Widespread violence marred the elections. The official count listed 85 dead and about 500 injured, although opposition figures claimed 150 had been killed and up to 8,000 had been wounded in street battles between demonstrators and security forces. Election violence forced re-voting at 5,500 polling centers in early April, bringing another round of violence that left 4 dead and 100 more injured.

After the union council elections, the government deployed numerous police and paramilitary personnel and army troops for the parliamentary elections held on March 3, 1988. Schools were closed March 1–5, and a public holiday was declared during the two days before the elections. The Awami League's eight-party coalition, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party's seven-party coalition, the leftist five-party coalition, and Jamaat e Islami led a general opposition boycott. There were 1,168 candidates competing for the 300 seats. The Jatiyo Party won 251 seats, and the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal, a close ally of the Jatiyo Party in the preceding Parliament, won 21 seats. Other small parties and independents took only 27 seats. The opposition again claimed a very small voter turnout in these elections—about 1 percent—while the government claimed a 50 percent turnout.

Ershad's style of democracy—which did not include the participation of the opposition—had weathered a long political storm. On April 12, 1988, he lifted the state of emergency, and Parliament



Ballot box at a polling place for the February 1988 union council elections
Courtesy Siria Lopez

duly convened on April 25 amid another general strike. Ershad took the occasion of his opening speech to Parliament to advocate Islam as the state religion. This call grew from Ershad's long-term commitment to Islam as an integral part of state ideology, but it also brought his party's position closer to that of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Jamaat e Islami, and smaller fundamentalist parties. Again Ershad appeared to be making overtures for a reconciliation with part of the opposition. On June 7, 1988, Parliament, dominated by the Jatiyo Party, passed the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution, making Islam the state religion and setting up six permanent high court benches outside Dhaka. The parliamentary opposition voted against the measure, and a general strike paralyzed Dhaka.

After six years in power, Ershad could look back on a series of major personal achievements. He had reconciled differences in the armed forces and prevented further military coups, efficiently managed international diplomacy and aid programs, and guided the country through a period of modest economic growth. He served as chief executive of Bangladesh for a longer period than any leader since independence and, in doing so, brought a sense of stability to the nation. However, Ershad had also kept opposition politicians from sharing power, and although he engineered the change

from direct military rule to a civilian government, he made no progress in reconciling the political opposition to his regime. Despite the trappings of a democratic system, the government remained a structure for one-man rule, with a packed Parliament, a hand-picked judicial system, and questionable election practices. The opposition conducted its politics in the streets and refused to grant any legitimacy to Ershad. Stability depended on Ershad's personal survival and his ability to keep street politics under control.

Political Dynamics

Local Elites

For the vast majority of Bangladeshis, politics revolves around the institutions of the village or the union of neighboring villages. Traditionally, the main base for political influence in rural areas has been landownership. During the British colonial period, zamindars controlled huge estates as if they were their personal kingdoms (see The British Raj, ch. 1). With the abolition of zamindar tenure in 1950, a new local elite of rich Muslim peasants developed. The members of the new elite owned far less land than the zamindars had once possessed, but they were able to feed their families well, sell surplus produce, send their children to school, and form new links with the bureaucracy of East Pakistan and later Bangladesh. Amid the large majority of poor and generally illiterate peasants, well-to-do farmers formed a new rural leadership that dominated local affairs.

Village society is often divided into a number of factions that follow the lines of kinship (see Rural Society, ch. 2). At the center of each faction is a family that owns more land than most of the other villagers. In the colonial and Pakistani periods, local leaders were old men, but the trend since independence is for younger men to head factions as well. The heart of the local elder's authority is his control over land and the ability to provide land or employment to poorer villagers, who are often his kin. Land control may be an ancient prerogative, stretching back to the zamindars, or it may be the result of gradual purchases since independence. A village may have only one faction, but typically there will be several factions within the village, each competing for influence over villagers and struggling for resources from local administrative and development offices.

The leaders of local factions exercise their influence in village courts and as managers of village affairs with other administrative units. The traditional means for resolving local disputes is through the village court, which comprises leaders of village factions and

other members of union councils. Throughout Bangladesh, village courts address the vast majority of disputes, but it is rare for the courts to decide in favor of a poor peasant over a rich peasant, or for the weaker faction over the stronger (see Judiciary, this ch.). The relative security of village leaders makes it possible for some of their children to attend secondary schools, or even colleges or universities; some factions also base much of their authority on their knowledge of sharia. Education is much esteemed in Bangladesh, and degrees are tickets to highly prized government positions or to urban jobs that give the involved families a cosmopolitan outlook. These contacts outside the village include necessary links with bureaucratic institutions that ultimately bring economic aid and patronage jobs to the village. In these ways, the factional leadership of the village provides vital links to the development process, while retaining its traditional position at the top of village society.

Local leaders who control land, people, and education also tend to control the disbursement of rural credit and development funds through their positions in union and subdistrict government. Studies of the leadership of union council members have demonstrated this dominance of local elites over rural political and economic life. Among the chairmen of union councils in 1984, over 60 percent owned more than 3 hectares of land, with an average of almost 8 hectares. Sixty percent were primarily engaged in agriculture, 30 percent were businessmen, and 75 percent had a marketable surplus each year. Eighty percent had incomes greater than TK40,000 (for value of the taka—see Glossary) per year, and 50 percent had incomes greater than Tk100,000. Almost all union council leaders took part in village courts as judges, and most were heavily involved in the support of local mosques and *madrasa* (religious school attached to a mosque) committees (see Religious Education, ch. 2). For victorious campaigns for union council chairmanships, winners spent an average of more than Tk1 million in 1978; most of them mobilized at least 25 people for their campaigns, and 20 percent mobilized between 200 and 2,000 supporters. In 1978 only 7 percent of the chairmen of union councils had college degrees, but the percentage of graduates had increased to 50 percent by 1984.

Political elites were more varied in urban environments. The metropolitan areas of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, and Rajshahi had large numbers of conflicting constituencies and political machines linked to national parties. In smaller cities and towns serving as district and subdistrict administrative centers, some leaders emerged directly from the local social system, whereas others became politically established as a result of their professional

activities. Members of the government bureaucracy and the military, for example, form an important part of a district town's leadership, but they typically have roots, and connections to land, in other parts of the country. Members of the permanent local elite, such as businessmen, union leaders, lawyers, or religious figures, are more concerned with strictly local issues and have strong support from family networks stretching into the nearby countryside. One of the outstanding characteristics of the urban leadership is its relatively short history. In the late 1980s, it was clear that many had emerged from middle-class or rich peasant backgrounds since 1947 or, in many cases, since 1971. Most retained close links with their rural relatives, either locally or elsewhere. Urban elites included professional politicians of national parties, and the entire social group that made up the urban leadership—military, professional, administrative, religious, and business personnel—interacted in a hotbed of national politics.

The National Party

One of the most salient characteristics of Bangladeshi politics has been the drive toward the concentration of power in a single party headed by a strong executive. This process began in 1975 when the Awami League, even with a huge mandate from the people, proved incapable of governing the country, prompting Mujib to form a monolithic national party, the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (Bangladesh Peasants, Workers, and People's League). After Zia consolidated his military dictatorship, he formed his own Bangladesh Nationalist Party, which took control of Parliament and attracted opportunistic politicians from the opposition to a strong, centrist platform. Ershad's regime followed Zia's model, with martial law succeeded by the formation of a centrist party—the Jatiyo Party—and the orchestration of a civilian government supporting a strong executive (see The Zia Regime and Its Aftermath, 1977–82, ch. 1). Each time a new national party came to power, it banished the opposition into illegal status or manipulated the administrative machinery for its own advantage, driving the opposition into the streets. Parliamentary elections mirrored this process. The Awami League, which was dominant in the early 1970s, progressively moved to the periphery of the electoral process in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, despite continuing support for its programs from large segments of the population. The same fate was in store for the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, which thrived while Zia lived but was reduced to boycotting the electoral process after 1981. The Jatiyo Party, created by Ershad and his colleagues, became stronger over time as it

attracted increasing numbers of politicians. This process continued into the late 1980s because the strong executive, who controlled the country's administration, media, and security forces, was able to keep opposition parties off balance with a "carrot and stick" strategy.

The party in power periodically offered attractive government posts to opposition leaders in return for political loyalty or neutrality. During the presidencies of Zia and Ershad, the number of cabinet positions steadily expanded, as potentially influential politicians received rewards for cooperating with the party in power. Before elections, or at about the time of major parliamentary votes, newspapers have carried stories about entire labor unions or blocs of opposition workers who joined the president's party. Reverse currents were observed in the mid-1980s, as individual leaders fell from favor and lost their cabinet posts or else left the national party to form their own political factions, but the overall trend was toward a steady increase in the membership and influence of the dominant party.

Ershad, following the example of Zia's Self-Sufficient Village Government Plan, used administrative decentralization to allocate resources to the grass-roots level, bypassing the local opposition party apparatus and providing a strong incentive for leaders at the village level to support his party. This strategy isolated the opposition parties in urban areas, while the national party disbursed patronage in rural areas. The local elites were opportunistic, changing their affiliations in order to obtain the largest amount of aid for their constituencies. A study of union council chairmen after the 1984 elections revealed that 38 percent had changed party affiliations within the previous 10 years; 53 percent supported the Jana Dal, which had been in existence for 12 months, while only 19 percent supported the Awami League and 8 percent backed the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. In the 1985 subdistrict elections, after the Jana Dal had existed for 2 years, 207 of 460 chairmen supported Ershad's party, and the Jana Dal exercised political control over 44 percent of the nation's districts. This was notable progress for a party with a program essentially the same as that of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (the party in total control only five years earlier), which controlled only 34 (7.4 percent) of the subdistrict chairmanships. The Awami League, which had dominated the nation 10 years earlier, controlled only 53 (11.5 percent) of the chairmanships.

Military support has been a crucial component of the success of the national party. In the 1970s, observers were unwilling to predict the actions of the military because it was torn by internal

divisions between freedom fighters and returnees from West Pakistan, political groups of the far left and the right, and factional infighting among leftist factions. Zia moved to stabilize the military through a purge of unreliable personnel, more than 1,100 of whom were executed, and through steady progress in professionalizing the services, incorporating elements from both freedom fighters and returnees (see Recruitment, ch. 5). The strong trend under Zia and Ershad away from the Awami League and the Soviet Union decreased communist and Maoist influences, which had been very strong during the 1970s. By the 1980s, it appeared that military officers were the most interested in adequate financial support for the armed forces and limitation of civilian political turmoil. The slow expansion of the military and the opportunity for military leaders to gain administrative positions under Ershad convinced potential military rivals that he represented their interests. Ershad at first followed up on his promises to include the military in civil administration through legislative means, but when he later backed away from the District Council Bill, there were no major stirrings within the military. A more difficult challenge was the Siege of Dhaka in late 1987, with massive street violence, but again the military did not act. Apparently, Ershad and his Jatiyo Party were able to keep political disorder within bounds acceptable to the military leadership.

Party Politics

The government estimated in 1988 that there were 102 different political parties in Bangladesh. The majority of these parties were based solely in urban areas and had tiny constituencies. Many of them were formed by small cliques of like-minded intellectuals or by political leaders who, with their small followings, had broken away from larger political groups. There was a steady turnover in the composition of the smaller fringe groups, which nevertheless continued to organize periodic demonstrations and issue press releases. Amid the welter of conflicting groups, there were five main political forces in the country that had long histories or some claim to support from wide constituencies. At the center in 1988 was the pro-government Jatiyo Party. Opposing it were two centrist parties, the Awami League, led by Mujib's daughter, Hasina, and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, led by Khaleda Zia. To the left were the pro-Soviet Bangladesh Communist Party, factions of the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal, and other socialist groups advocating revolutionary change. To the right was a group of parties, including Jamaat e Islami and the Muslim League, that called for an increased role for Islam in public life. All of the minor political parties in

Bangladesh clustered around the policies and the activities of these five main political forces.

Awami League

The Awami League, which was consistently split during the Zia regime, underwent further turmoil in the aftermath of Ershad's March 1982 coup before achieving a new level of unity. In the 1982–83 period, there were two main groups within the Awami League, one headed by Hasina as president and another headed by Abdur Razzak as secretary general. In October 1983, Abdur Razzak left the party to form the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League. This group was modeled on the national party of the same name that briefly held power before Mujib's death in 1975. Hasina proved to be a formidable politician and retained absolute control over the Awami League through the 1980s, becoming the major leader of the political opposition in Bangladesh. For several years, the Awami League headed a fifteen-party alliance, but its decision to participate in the 1986 parliamentary elections alienated some leftist parties. This development left the Awami League at the head of an eight-party alliance whose membership was in a state of flux but at one point included the Bangladesh Communist Party, the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League, the Gana Azadi League (two factions), the National Awami Party, the Samajbadi Dal (Socialist Party), and the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (Sultan Raja faction).

The Awami League traces its descent from the party of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and in the late 1980s it continued to advocate many of the socialist policies of the early 1970s. The Awami League condemned the denationalization and militarization of Bangladesh that occurred after 1976, and it leaned toward a pro-Soviet stance. These policies often made it the target of opponents, even those within the alliance, who, in linking its policies to a pro-Indian program, easily attacked it with nationalist rhetoric. The Awami League has been the most outspoken of the opposition parties against the role of the military in government, and in the late 1980s it was doubtful whether military leaders would allow it to achieve a large degree of political influence without a direct military response. Nevertheless, despite the opposition of the Ershad regime and the military, the Awami League has remained one of the few parties with a substantial following throughout the country and with action wings in rural areas. In 1988 its student wing was the Bangladesh Chhatro League (Bangladesh Students League), and its workers' front was the Jatiyo Sramik League (National Workers' League).

Bangladesh Nationalist Party

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party received a heavy blow as a result of Ershad's March 1982 coup. From a position of control under Zia, it was thrown into the political wilderness, with many of its leaders prosecuted for corruption. During the 1982–83 period, the party was divided into two groups, one headed by Abdus Sattar, the deposed president, with Khaleda Zia as senior vice chairman, and the other headed by former Minister of Information Shamsul Huda Chowdhury. The latter group quickly disappeared, and the dominant faction found a popular leader in Khaleda Zia. She became party chairman and was reelected unopposed in 1986. Throughout the 1980s, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party led a seven-party alliance that consistently refused to recognize the Ershad regime. The price it paid for this stance was an inability to participate in the government. In fact, the policies advocated by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party differed little from those of the Jatiyo Party once it was in power, for both groups were descended from the military rule of Zia's time. Although the Bangladesh Nationalist Party generally ranked behind the Awami League in terms of public support, it had a presence in the countryside through its peasants' wing, the Jatiyobadi Krishak Dal (Nationalist Peasants Party), formed in October 1987. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party also backed a student wing called the Jatiyobadi Chhatro Dal (Nationalist Students Party) and a workers' front called the Jatiyobadi Sramik Dal (Nationalist Workers Party).

Leftist Parties

The political left in Bangladesh, represented by a number of socialist and communist parties, has remained numerically small and divided by internal dissension. Yet the left has always been a potent force. The economic difficulties facing workers and peasants and the persistent alienation of the intellectual community have provided fertile ground for the growth of radical politics, and such problems always hold out the potential of massive civil unrest. The socialist policies of the Awami League during the early 1970s brought the small Bangladesh Communist Party, with its pro-Soviet tendencies, very close to attaining political power. More radical groups advocating total revolution based on the Maoist model were major elements behind the growing chaos that brought Mujib down. Under martial law regimes, revolutionary organizational activities became very difficult, and the decline of Maoist ideology in China left Bangladeshi revolutionaries without major ideological support from abroad. During the 1980s, leftist parties were forced

into supporting roles within alliances with the major opposition parties, although some created their own coalitions centered primarily on urban bases.

The Bangladesh Communist Party continued a generally pro-Soviet policy in the late 1980s, and it was part of the eight-party alliance headed by the Awami League. The Bangladesh Communist Party operated a student wing called the Chhatro Union (Students Union) and a workers' front called the Trade Union Centre.

A more significant socialist party in the late 1980s was the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (National Socialist Party). This party began operating in 1972 after the defection of radical elements from the Awami League. It organized an armed opposition to Mujib's regime in the mid-1970s and became very influential among the military during the late 1970s (see Postindependence Period, ch. 5). The party also had some success in parliamentary elections and became important in labor unions through its action wing, the Jatiyo Sramik Jote (National Workers Alliance). By the 1980s, however, it had split into a number of factions with different strategies. The policies of one wing, headed by A.S.M. Abdur Rab, were almost indistinguishable from those of the Jatiyo Party. It cooperated with Ershad's government, praised his martial law rule, supported the move to include the armed forces in district councils and the denationalization bill of June 1987, and participated in the parliaments elected in 1986 and 1988. Another faction, led by Shajahar Siraj, was the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (Siraj), which participated in the 1986 Parliament but consistently voted against the government, calling for ''unity of left democratic forces.'' Still another faction, the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (Inu), headed by Hasan Huq Inu, refused to cooperate with the government and became part of a highly visible five-party alliance along with the Sramik Krishak Samajbadi Dal, (Workers and Peasants Socialist Party); the Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (Bangladesh Socialist Party), which comprised two factions; and the Workers Party. The Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (Inu) operated a radical student front called the Jatiyo Chhatro Samaj (National Students Society). In short, this inability of the various leftist factions and parties to form a consensus ensured that they would be kept out of power.

Islamic Parties

At the other end of the political spectrum were a number of political organizations that based their platforms on Islamic issues. The group with the oldest tradition was the Muslim League (established in 1906 as the All-India Muslim League), which had been the main force behind the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Because

it favored continued union with Pakistan, the Muslim League was almost eliminated from the political stage during and after the independence struggle. It began to stage a comeback during the 1980s and gathered four seats in the 1986 Parliament. The Muslim League supported complete denationalization and opposed the retention of a 51-percent share of public industries by the government. Its policies closely resembled those that led to the formation of Pakistan. Among other things, the party accused the government of a subservient foreign policy toward India, especially in the matter of water disputes, and it repeatedly called for Islamic rule in Bangladesh (see Foreign Policy, this ch.).

A more important Islamic party during the 1980s was Jamaat e Islami. This party was temporarily banned in the 1970s because of its opposition to independence, but it returned in the 1980s as the premier Islamic party among the opposition. Jamaat e Islami called for a theocracy, not Western-style democracy, but it simultaneously advocated the resignation of Ershad and the restoration of democracy. The party drew much of its strength from dedicated bands of *madrasa* students and graduates. As of 1988, its unofficial but militant student front was the Islami Chhatro Shibir (Islamic Students Camp). It also had a workers' front called the Sramik Kalyan Federation (Workers Welfare Federation).

Besides the Muslim League and Jamaat e Islami, there were a number of small parties, possessing little influence, that were oriented toward a poorly defined Islamic state and an anti-Indian foreign policy. For example, the Bangladesh Khalifat Andolan (Bangldesh Caliphate Movement) wanted to launch a "holy war" (jihad) to establish Islamic rule in Bangladesh and called for a government based on the Quran and Sunna (see Islam, ch. 2). In 1986 another one of these parties, the Islamic United Front, demanded scrapping the 1972 Indo-Bangladeshi Treaty of Cooperation, Friendship, and Peace.

Alliances

The disruptive nature of the Bangladeshi political process was the result of a lack of consensus as to national direction even among the major political forces. In the late 1980s, for example, the Awami League viewed the Bangladesh Nationalist Party as a military-based faction that climbed to power over the bodies of Mujib and his family. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party saw Ershad's regime as the usurper of Zia's legacy, and both the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Jatiyo Party feared a return to socialism and the anti-military stance of the Awami League. Meanwhile, the radical left and the Islamic-oriented right held diametrically opposed views of

social organization. Observers believed that any one of these groups, if it were established in power, would do everything it could to eliminate its rivals.

Control of the political process and its resources is a life-and-death proposition for vast numbers of poor people in the urban slums and villages of Bangladesh, and in many cases crucial political decisions, such as local elections or major parliamentary votes, precipitate massive violence. In the midst of this struggle for existence, politicians of all persuasions publicly advocate democratic freedoms but exhibit authoritarian viewpoints and high levels of distrust for their colleagues. Within their own parties, leaders such as Hasina and Khaleda Zia have often behaved in a manner as dictatorial as that for which they have criticized Ershad. In addition, factional divisions have been a constant feature of party life, as political opponents excluded from decision making have "headed to the streets" with their followers. The call for a restoration of democracy, echoed by all groups out of power, therefore has seemed to be a call for a political opening through which one of the opposition parties could seize power. Unhappiness with this state of near-anarchy has kept the military in power and attracted many middle-of-the-road politicians to a strong executive that could control political competition.

Workers and Students

The most important political organ among Bangladeshi workers in the late 1980s was the Workers-Employees United Council (Sramik Karmachari Oikkiya Parishad), an organization of sixteen workers' federations composed of two factions that represented almost the entire labor front. When the Workers-Employees United Council decided to act, it could paralyze urban areas throughout the country. In May 1984, the government avoided a major confrontation by agreeing to several points set forth by the council, including a call for no further privatization of industry or banks, freedom of labor union activities, and a 30-percent raise in the minimum wage. When the government later reneged on some of these points, a council-led general strike occurred in November 1984, which led to government repression. Further strikes in 1987 were coordinated with anti-Ershad opposition parties. The council developed a platform calling for restrictions on the import of luxury goods, land reform, and government support for handicraft industries.

The universities have also been a major proving ground for political parties since the student protests that led to the war of independence (see Emerging Discontent, 1966–70, ch. 1).

Beginning with major riots in 1983, universities during the Ershad regime were the site of repeated antigovernment demonstrations and government repression. The Central Students Action Committee, a coalition of student political groups, coordinated a number of political actions in support of the opposition's demands, which culminated in a series of general strikes in 1987. During the Siege of Dhaka, from November 10 to 12, the government closed the University of Dhaka, and it shut down all education institutions in the country later in the month during continuing unrest. Because the major parties—including the Jatiyo Party and its Jatiyo Chhatro Samaj—had student wings, there were often violent confrontations on college and university campuses between rival party members. Gun battles broke out in June 1987 between the supporters of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party's Chhatro Dal (Students Party) and the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (Inu)'s Students League over control of dormitories. Periodic closings of universities after demonstrations or political riots often kept institutions shut down for a good part of the year during the late 1980s.

Women in Politics

Women participated extensively in anti-British agitations during the 1930s and 1940s and were an active force during the independence struggle. Since 1972 the Constitution and the legal system have guaranteed equal rights for women to participate in all aspects of public life. The prominence of the well-known opposition party leaders Hasina and Khaleda Zia at first sight indicated a national openness to women's political power. Both, however, were exceptional in Bangladeshi politics. They originally owed their positions to family connections and only later skillfully built their own followings and platforms. Women candidates for political office were a rarity in the 1970s and 1980s, and female participation was labeled anti-Islamic by conservative men throughout the country. Secular provisions in Bangladeshi laws safeguarded the equality of women while "protecting" them and assuming their dependence.

Women running for office have had little success. In the 1979 parliamentary elections, for example, only 17 women were among 2,125 candidates for 300 seats; none of the women won, and only 3 polled over 15 percent of the vote. At the union council level, the 1973 elections returned only one woman chairman, and the 1977 and 1984 elections each returned only four female chairmen. The leaders running the country, recognizing that women suffer disabilities when competing for office against men, reserved thirty seats for women in Parliament. The profiles of the women occupying these seats exemplied the subordinate positions of women in



The National Martyrs' Monument at Savar, near Dhaka
Courtesy Embassy of Bangladesh, Washington

Bangladesh, even those occupying public offices. In the 1979 Parliament, fifteen women members were formerly housewives, and twenty-seven had no prior legislative experience. A study of women nominated to union councils revealed that 60 percent were less than 30 years of age, only 8 percent were over 40 years of age, and only 4 percent had college degrees.

Prior to the 1988 parliamentary elections, the provision for reserved seats for women had been allowed to lapse. The result was that women were left practically without representation at the national level, although there were other forums for political involvement at the local level. In mid-1988 three women sat on union and subdistrict councils. Municipal councils also included women, but the law precluded women from exceeding 10 percent of council membership. Some women's groups, such as the Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha (National Organization for Women), have held major conferences to discuss women's problems and mobilization strategies. Although these women's organizations were the province of middle-class women, they served as training grounds, as did local councils, for a new generation of politically active women.

The Media

One of the most effective means for the ruling political party to control the nation was through manipulation of the news media.

In the 1980s, the government's National Broadcasting Authority monopolized telecommunications within the country. Thus the party that controlled the government effectively decided the content of the country's broadcasts. Until the early 1980s, the government also ran a number of daily and weekly newspapers. Such newspapers printed the ruling party's version of the news. As part of Ershad's policy of divesting government-owned properties, however, these official sources of propaganda were removed from government control, thus ending a legacy left over from the Mujib period. Each major political party in the late 1980s had one or more newspapers that supported it, and each used its own newspapers to publish its official views.

Bengali society has the longest tradition of freedom of the press in South Asia, and its dozens of weekly and daily newspapers, press associations, and publishers guarantee that almost any opinion finds expression. Ruling regimes have countered this independence by exercising press censorship. Repression of the media has varied from banning certain publications for extended periods of time to officially pressuring publishers to regulate the content of news articles. For example, the English-language *Bangladesh Observer* was banned for three months in 1987, and the weekly *Banglar Bani* (Bengal's Message) was banned through much of 1987 and 1988. The weekly *Joyjatra* (Victory March) was banned in February 1988 for publishing "objectionable comments" referring to the possibility of Ershad's resignation. In 1988 the government closed the *Dainik Khabor* (Daily News) for ten weeks under the Special Powers Act of 1974 because the newspaper had released an article with a map making Bangladesh look like part of India, thus inflicting "injury to the independence and sovereignty of the country." In addition, the operations of the British Broadcasting Corporation were banned under the Special Powers Act from December 14, 1987, to May 2, 1988, and one of its correspondents was jailed for allegedly having manufactured "continuing hostile and tendentious propaganda."

Bangladeshi journalists are unionized, and they sometimes strike back at government censorship. During the 1988 parliamentary elections, journalists staged a walkout to protest attempts by the government's Press Information Department to restrict news and photographic coverage of election violence and opposition demonstrations. The continuing struggle between the press and the government regularly kept at least six newspapers on the list of banned publications in the late 1980s.

With a 29-percent literacy rate, newspapers and journals are not widely read in Bangladesh. For example, despite the publication

of 62 daily newspapers, only 22 percent of all urban households in 1982 reported regularly reading them; a dismal 2.5 percent was reported for rural areas.

Both Radio Bangladesh and Bangladesh Television were established in 1971, and both came under state control in 1972. In 1984 they merged to form the National Broadcasting Authority. In 1988 the twelve home service stations and twelve FM stations of Radio Bangladesh offered a total of eighty-five hours of daily programming. Radio Bangladesh also transmitted to Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Western Europe via its shortwave station at Dhaka. Seven and one-half hours of daily programming were broadcast in six languages: Bangla, English, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, and Nepali. The television service operated two channels, with eight and one-half hours of daily programming, relayed by twelve stations for reception throughout the country. However, outside Dhaka the number of television sets was very small, and television was not yet a significant medium when compared with radio, press, and word-of-mouth communications. Statistics from the early 1980s indicated that about 29 percent of the country's urban households had radios, and only 6.7 percent had television sets. In the countryside, broadcast communications were even less available: 13 percent of all rural households had radios, and only 0.2 percent had televisions (see Telecommunications, ch. 3).

Foreign Policy

The foreign policy of Bangladesh is tied closely to the realities of its economic condition. Since independence the country has required a great deal of foreign assistance in the effort to keep its people fed and to build, for the first time, a modern society. Under these circumstances, it has been important for successive regimes to seek good relations with all nations and to attract economic aid from every possible source (see Foreign Assistance, ch. 3). Bangladesh has therefore cultivated good relations with both the United States and the Soviet Union, and their respective allies, but it has remained unaligned with either superpower. In an attempt to stimulate regional development plans, Bangladesh has been instrumental in organizing regional economic cooperation in South Asia. It has also been active in international organizations, especially in those dedicated to solving the economic problems of the poorer countries of the world.

Despite its poverty and small military capability, Bangladesh has not hesitated to defend its sovereignty and to take strong stands on many international issues. Any hint that India might try to intimidate Bangladesh or encroach on its territorial rights has

quickly elicited a powerful, nationalistic response from all levels of society. Furthermore, Bangladesh has annoyed both superpowers by standing against them on various major issues, and relations with both the United States and the Soviet Union have gone through difficult periods. A major component of Bangladesh's self-assertiveness has been evident in its efforts to focus on its Islamic heritage and its quest for fraternity with the worldwide Muslim congregation. The friendly relations it has enjoyed with Islamic nations have led to the receipt of economic aid from wealthy Arab countries.

South and Southeast Asia

India

Relations between Bangladesh and India have often been difficult. There was considerable hostility on both sides of the border when East Pakistan was established in 1947 in the midst of intense communal struggles among various ethnic groups. As part of Pakistan, East Pakistan was at war with India in 1947 and 1948 and again in 1965. During the 1971 war of independence, Bangladeshi freedom fighters were aided by India, but the country's distrust of its giant neighbor reemerged as soon as the fighting ended. In general, a considerable body of Bangladeshi public opinion has viewed India as a bully, throwing its weight around and threatening the sovereignty of its smaller neighbors. The fact that the two nations are so closely intertwined—with 2,400 kilometers of border, common river systems, and numerous transborder cultural or economic contacts—has provided numerous opportunities for bilateral disputes that often reinforce Bangladeshi fears. Conversely, the fact that the two countries are so closely interconnected has sometimes forced them to come to terms with each other, and as of mid-1988 bilateral problems had not escalated into a major armed conflict. Indeed, relations between Bangladesh and India have been diplomatically proper, with a trend toward increasing cordiality and cooperation over time.

Mujib's government, which lasted from 1971 to 1975, owed a large debt to India for aid to Bangladesh during its independence struggle, and relations were initially positive. In March 1972, the Indo-Bangladeshi Treaty of Cooperation, Friendship, and Peace pledged each nation to consultations if either were attacked. This was an important safeguard for the new nation, but critics have pointed out that the treaty does not specify the external threats to either nation, suggesting the possibility that India could use the treaty as an excuse for intervention in Bangladesh. The series of

coups that replaced Mujib's government brought bilateral relations to their lowest level and led many Bangladeshis to fear Indian intervention. The Indian government, then controlled by Indira Gandhi's Indian National Congress, looked with misgivings on the anti-Indian and anti-Soviet stance of the new military regimes. For several years, pro-Mujib guerrilla forces operating along the Indian border reportedly received covert support from Indian sources. In 1977, however, Gandhi's government fell, the new Janata Party leadership took a more accommodating stance toward Bangladesh, and Zia's government stabilized. Indian forces cooperated with the Bangladesh military in disarming Bangladeshi rebels in the summer of 1977, and a number of bilateral agreements were signed shortly thereafter. When Gandhi again became prime minister in 1979, she continued a policy of accommodation with Zia's regime. Subsequently, she recognized Ershad's government, and she met with Ershad in October 1982. After Gandhi's assassination in 1984, her son and successor as prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, encouraged cooperative agreements with Bangladesh and enjoyed a good relationship with Ershad.

Events during the 1980s suggested the prospect of a new era in Indo-Bangladeshi relations. In 1981 both countries drew up the Memorandum of Understanding on Technical Cooperation. In 1982 the first meeting of the Joint Economic Commission was held, and in 1987 the bilateral Cultural and Exchange Programme was renewed for two years. A bilateral trade pact was extended from 1986 until October 1989. In addition, an inland trade and transit protocol, allowing Indian vessels to pass through Bangladesh, exemplified a maturing cooperative relationship, necessitated by Bangladesh's geographical position. The original protocol was signed in November 1972, renewed in 1984, and extended in 1986 on a quarterly basis. The agreement was later renegotiated and, according to its provisions, stayed effective until October 1989. India agreed to pay transit charges and port fees, while Bangladesh agreed to maintain its own waterways. The ability of both governments to compromise on economic issues boded well for the possibility of future bilateral agreements.

Despite considerable progress in expanding contacts between the two countries, a number of serious issues concerning river waters and borders continued to stir up anti-Indian emotions in Bangladesh during the late 1980s. These issues involved national honor and sovereignty—strongly charged topics in both nations—and progress toward resolving them was extremely slow. Every delay in resolving bilateral problems provided fuel for a steady stream of anti-Indian editorials in the Bangladeshi press and for statements by

political parties of all persuasions condemning Indian foreign policy. The most difficult long-term bilateral problems revolved around water disputes. These problems surfaced during the 1950s and 1960s, when the major Indian port of Calcutta on the Hooghli River experienced siltation problems. The Indian government decided that the solution was to divert the Ganges River water into the Hooghli River during the dry season, from January to June, in order to flush out the accumulating silt. By 1974 the Indians had built a major barrage, or dam, across the Ganges at Farakka, near the Bangladeshi border. Before the Farakka Barrage went into operation, the Bangladeshi government repeatedly expressed concern that the diversion would adversely affect water resources along the course of the Ganges through Bangladesh. After the Farakka Barrage began operating in 1975, dry-season water levels dropped precipitously in western Bangladesh, and studies showed that salinized water from the Indian Ocean was creeping inland. In 1976, despite Indian opposition, Bangladesh managed to place the dispute on the agenda of the UN General Assembly; this strategy resulted in a consensus statement in which both parties agreed to resolve the issue according to international law.

A bilateral agreement signed in 1977 set up a schedule for sharing the dry-season flow of water controlled by the Farakka Barrage, and it arranged for continuing consultations by the Joint Rivers Commission. The mandate of the commission was to monitor the water availability and needs of the two countries and to study proposals for a more comprehensive plan for water control in Bangladesh and northeast India. A Bangladeshi proposal concentrated on the enormous potential of untapped rivers in Nepal; dams there, it was argued, could provide adequate hydroelectric power well into the twenty-first century and regulate water levels throughout northeastern India and Bangladesh. The Indian proposal concentrated on controlling the wild Brahmaputra River and called for a major canal to divert water from the Brahmaputra to the Ganges, west of the Farakka Barrage; this, the Indians claimed, would help to regulate water levels throughout Bangladesh. India was slow to involve Nepal in what it viewed as a bilateral issue, while Bangladesh refused to agree to the construction of a large canal that would obliterate valuable land and dislocate hundreds of thousands of people. In the absence of an agreement on a comprehensive plan, the two nations were forced to renew previous agreements on the flow of the Ganges at Farakka for periods of six months or two years at a time. In 1986, however, Indian negotiators invited Nepali officials to tripartite planning conferences, opening up the possibility of a future agreement.

Water-sharing disputes have arisen with regard to other rivers as well. India has constructed and operated on the Tista River a barrage similar to the one on the Ganges. India and Bangladesh drew up interim agreements on the sharing of Tista River waters beginning in July 1983. These agreements were renewed in 1985 and 1987, without a final allocation of waters to either party.

In 1974 the borders between India and Bangladesh were settled in a treaty that became the Third Amendment to the Bangladesh Constitution. Since that time, questions over small pieces of territory not covered by the 1974 treaty—such as silt-formed islands (*chars*) that have emerged in frontier waters and Bangladeshi enclaves accessible only from India—have grown into minor military confrontations (see Security Environment, ch. 5).

In the late 1980s, the unauthorized movement of people across Indo-Bangladeshi borders continued to cause tensions. In 1979 two days of communal rioting in the Indian state of West Bengal forced 20,000 Indian Muslims to flee into Kushtia District in Bangladesh. Although they were later repatriated, the incident rekindled transborder communal hatreds. During the 1980s, attempts by Bangladesh military and paramilitary forces to pacify tribal groups in the Chittagong Hills forced thousands of Chakmas to flee into Indian territory (see Ethnicity and Linguistic Diversity, ch. 2). Bangladesh accused India of sheltering tribal guerrilla forces and preventing the voluntary return of the Chakmas. India, in turn, accused Bangladesh of harboring guerrilla bands of the Tripura National Volunteers, a secessionist organization fighting for independence from India. A more significant long-term movement of people across the Indo-Bangladeshi border has involved thousands of Bangladeshis who have illegally moved to neighboring Indian states in search of land and employment. By 1982 the steady influx of Bangla speakers sparked a major ethnic backlash in the Indian state of Assam, leading to the slaughter of thousands of non-Assamese. In order to placate Assamese public opinion, the governments of Indira and Rajiv Gandhi promised to stem illegal immigration, and in order to do so India constructed barbed-wire fencing along the Indo-Bangladeshi border in the area. The fence was seen as an outrage among the Bangladeshi public, and the government of Bangladesh has made repeated protests to the Indian government over the matter (see Insurgency in the Chittagong Hills, ch. 5).

Pakistan

Pakistan was hostile to Bangladesh in the early 1970s, but by 1974 it was apparent that the new nation would stand on its own,

and in February Pakistan recognized Bangladesh. Diplomatic relations were established in January 1976, followed by the reestablishment of communications and transportation links later in the year. As Bangladesh subsequently adopted a cooler stance toward India, began to move closer to China and the West, and stressed its Islamic cultural heritage, its interests became increasingly similar to those of Pakistan.

Throughout the 1980s, Bangladesh consistently supported Pakistan's policy of opposing Soviet actions in Afghanistan. In 1983 Pakistan's foreign minister signaled the end of an era of animosity when he visited Bangladesh's National Martyrs' Monument at Savar, near Dhaka, which commemorates those killed by Pakistan's armed forces during the war of independence. Pakistan's President Mohammad Zia ul Haq later presented Ershad with the country's highest civil award during the Bangladeshi president's visit to Islamabad in 1986.

After the establishment of diplomatic ties, Bangladesh and Pakistan entered into a wide variety of bilateral agreements. A 1979 cultural agreement arranged for the exchange of teachers, scholars, musicians, folklore troupes, art works, films, and books. Joint economic, commercial, and technical pacts signed after 1978 provided for the exchange of major exports of both countries: jute and tea from Bangladesh, and cotton and cloth from Pakistan.

Two major areas of disagreement remained between Bangladesh and Pakistan as of mid-1988, and both stemmed from the dislocations resulting from the independence struggle. The first issue concerned the finances of united Pakistan. After the war, Bangladesh claimed that it deserved a share of the US$4 billion worth of preindependence exchange, bank credit, and movable assets protected in West Pakistan during the war. In a 1975 agreement, Bangladesh accepted half of Pakistan's pre-1971 external debt, but asset-sharing issues remained unresolved. The second issue concerned the emigration of large numbers of people, mostly Biharis (non-Bengali Muslims), to Pakistan. After the war, the International Red Cross registered nearly 540,000 people who wanted to emigrate to Pakistan. By 1982 about 127,000 had been repatriated, leaving about 250,000 people still demanding repatriation. Thousands of people who desired to emigrate lived in poor conditions in so-called "Pakistani Relief Camps," where they received monthly food allotments. In 1985 there was some progress in this area when Zia ul Haq agreed to accept the "stranded Pakistanis." In 1986 Pakistan arranged for their immigration as soon as Ribatat al Alam al Islami (Union of the Islamic World), a voluntary organization based in Saudi Arabia, could mobilize sufficient funds.

Other Nations

Bangladesh has enjoyed good relations with the other small nations of South Asia—Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Maldives—and those of Southeast Asia, except for Vietnam. Bangladesh has made strenuous efforts to extend cooperation with these nations through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC—see Glossary) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see International Organizations, this ch.).

Burma is the only nation besides India that shares a border with Bangladesh. Relations between the two countries have generally been cordial, but relations deteriorated in 1978 and 1979 when 150,000 Bengali-descent Muslims flooded into Bangladesh from Burma. This exodus was the result of Burmese attempts to combat Muslim guerrillas fighting for an independent homeland, and it brought to light anti-Bengali feelings in western Burma. Intervention by the UN and the Saudi Arabian ambassador to Dhaka led to a negotiated repatriation of the refugees and the reestablishment of good relations. Later talks led to the demarcation of the land boundary between the two countries. Bangladesh and Burma settled their maritime boundary during a 1986 visit by the Burmese president.

China and Other Asian Nations

China firmly supported Pakistan during Bangladesh's war of independence, and for several years thereafter it remained, along with Pakistan, hostile to the new state. In the years immediately following independence, Bangladesh was close to India and the Soviet Union—two foes of China—and as a result it was grouped with them by Beijing as an enemy state. In 1972, for example, a Chinese veto blocked Bangladesh's entry into the UN, but by the mid-1970s China and Bangladesh had developed proper relations. When Pakistan formally recognized Bangladesh in 1974, the Chinese were able to move closer to Bangladesh without antagonizing their ally. After Mujib's death in 1975, when Bangladesh distanced itself from India and the Soviets, it left the camp of China's adversaries. A preliminary agreement to establish relations in late 1975 led to an exchange of diplomatic missions in 1976. The trend in China toward a more open foreign policy during the 1970s also paralleled the Bangladeshi move toward neutralism under Zia, who visited Beijing in 1977.

By the 1980s, the domestic and foreign policies of China and Bangladesh had become somewhat similar. The governing parties of both countries opposed ultra-left and ultra-right political systems,

while at the same time opposing "bourgeois" economics. Each country called for an international dialogue on debt problems between the developed and developing nations, and each expressed concern over Soviet policies in Afghanistan and Cambodia. By the mid-1980s, China had become the staunchest international friend of Bangladesh, cementing the relationship with numerous trade and cultural agreements, construction projects, and military transfers (see Foreign Acquisitions and Ties, ch. 5). In addition, Ershad was warmly received during his visit to Beijing in July 1987.

Friendly political relations with Japan and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) accompanied steadily increasing economic ties with both nations. Bilateral trade and joint economic projects with South Korea increased during the late 1980s (see Foreign Assistance, ch. 3). Japan was a prominent source of economic aid as early as 1973, when Mujib traveled to Tokyo to conclude arrangements for a substantial loan and to discuss trade issues. By 1980 Japan had become the largest aid donor to Bangladesh. After the devastating floods of 1988, Japan was a major relief contributor, providing an emergency contribution for food assistance of US$13 million.

The Islamic World

In the immediate aftermath of the war of independence, the Muslim nations of the world mourned the blow to the sundered Pakistan, an avowedly Islamic state. For several years thereafter, Pakistan threatened to cut off diplomatic relations with nations that recognized Bangladesh, thus discouraging other Muslim states from helping the new nation. Mujib's socialist policies were not in tune with the viewpoints of most Muslim states, especially the conservative Arab states of the Middle East. Malaysia and Indonesia recognized Bangladesh in 1972, and after Pakistan did so in 1974, other Muslim countries eventually granted recognition and provided aid. The growing role of Islam in Bangladesh, symbolized by the adoption in 1988 of a constitutional amendment recognizing it as the state religion, indicated a major effort to widen ties with the Islamic world.

Bilateral ties between Bangladesh and the oil-rich Arab states were becoming increasingly important in the mid- and late 1980s. These ties had both economic and political components. The Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia, had become a growing source of development funds (mostly loans) since 1975, with much of the aid channeled into Islamic education and culture. The Saudis donated money for the construction of an Islamic university, mosques, and other religious centers, and Bangladesh exported labor to several Middle Eastern countries (see Balance and Terms of Trade, ch. 3).

Politically, Bangladesh supported the international policies of the Islamic nations of the Middle East. For example, Bangladesh strongly condemned Israeli policies and favored the creation of a Palestinian state. It supported the Palestine Liberation Organization under the leadership of Yasir Arafat, whose visit to Bangladesh in 1987 elicited a warm welcome from Ershad and other major government figures, as well as favorable press coverage. In 1987 the government reported that 8,000 Bangladeshi youths had volunteered to fight for the Palestine Liberation Organization. The government of Bangladesh, however, had made no official moves to send arms or personnel to Palestine as of mid-1988.

Bangladesh has expanded its ties with the worldwide Islamic community through the Organization of the Islamic Conference, a group of forty-five Muslim countries and eleven other nations with Muslim minorities. Bangladesh became a member of the conference in February 1974 and thereafter played a prominent role in setting up economic programs. The sixth annual meeting of the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Finance Ministers' Conference were held in Dhaka in 1985. In addition, Ershad attended the 1987 meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Kuwait, where nineteen Bangladeshi economic initiatives were accepted as joint ventures. Bangladesh was also part of a three-member committee trying to mediate an end to the Iran-Iraq War, and Ershad made several trips to the Middle East in an attempt to achieve peace.

The Superpowers

Soviet Union

Relations with the Soviet Union were cordial in the years immediately following independence. The Soviet Union supported Indian actions in aiding the war of independence, and after the war the Soviet Navy sent a floating workshop to Bangladesh for clearing Pakistani mines from the Chittagong and Chalna harbors. Mujib visited Moscow in 1972, and high-level officials from both countries made numerous reciprocal visits until 1975. The Soviets supported the socialist programs of the Mujib government and its close ties with India. Early Soviet aid was limited, however. During the first four months of its existence, Bangladesh received economic aid worth US$142 million from India, but only US$6 million from the Soviet Union.

After the 1975 coup, relations with the Soviet Union rapidly cooled. The military regimes of Zia and Ershad deemphasized socialist policies and encouraged closer ties with the United States,

Arab states, Pakistan, and China—all of which were politically distant from the Soviet Union. Bangladesh condemned Soviet support for Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia and Soviet military actions in Afghanistan. A low point in Bangladeshi-Soviet relations came after the expulsion of nine Soviet diplomats from Dhaka in December 1983 and January 1984. Moscow, in turn, refused to accept the new Bangladeshi ambassador and canceled a Bangladeshi trade mission visit to Moscow.

Bangladeshi-Soviet relations rapidly improved in 1984 and regained a level of cordiality in the mid- and late 1980s. In 1985 the Soviet Cultural Centre reopened in Dhaka. In 1986 a Soviet special envoy visited Dhaka, and later the Bangladeshi foreign minister visited Moscow. Although Soviet aid to Bangladesh was still small compared with assistance from Japan, the United States, or even China, by 1987 Bangladesh had entered into sixteen different economic accords with the Soviet Union. Soviet assistance has concentrated on the energy sector, especially several power plants at Ghorasal, near Dhaka.

United States

The United States and Pakistan were allies when Bangladesh became independent in 1971. The Pakistan Army used United States-supplied military equipment, and the movement of the United States Seventh Fleet into the Bay of Bengal during the war signaled support for Pakistan (see The War for Bangladeshi Independence, 1971, ch. 1). Because Pakistan was closely tied to the economic policies of the United States and its allies, the Awami League saw a link between the economic collapse of East Pakistan and United States policies. Under these circumstances, the United States had a negative image in independent Bangladesh. After April 1972, when the United States formally recognized Bangladesh, relations remained cool, and there were frequent public anti-American demonstrations, including the burning of the United States Information Service library in Rajshahi in December 1972.

After Mujib's asassination, the government of Khondakar Mushtaque Ahmed was closely tied to the United States, and there was increased cordiality during the Zia and Ershad administrations, as denationalization widened the economic linkages between the two nations. Bangladesh's positions on some international issues, including the China-Vietnam border war of 1978, Cambodia, and Afghanistan, came to resemble those of the United States. In 1979 Bangladesh signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, clearing the way for United States help in setting up a nuclear research reactor near Dhaka. During the 1980s, a new

level of cooperation began, signaled by the visits to Washington of Zia in 1980 and Ershad in 1983.

By the late 1980s, the United States had become one of the closest international friends of Bangladesh, a major international donor, and a partner in 133 different accords. United States agencies operated a wide variety of development projects in Bangladesh, including programs to increase agricultural production, create new employment opportunities, and reduce population growth. Only disagreements on Bangladeshi garment exports to the United States clouded bilateral relations.

Western Europe, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand

Bangladesh has cultivated close ties with West European nations, which have been major sources of economic aid. Britain continued to be its most important friend in Western Europe. Britain has supported a number of transportation and communication projects, educational exchange programs, and the activities of several British voluntary aid organizations. Two examples of the close state of Bangladeshi-British relations were the 1983 visit to Bangladesh by Queen Elizabeth II and Britain's speedy pledge of US$750,000 in emergency assistance after the 1988 floods. After Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and Italy were Bangladesh's most important trading partners in Western Europe. Canada, Australia, and New Zealand also provided economic aid and engaged in educational exchange programs with Bangladesh.

International Organizations

After Pakistan and China entered into friendlier relations with Bangladesh in 1974, the way was open for its admission into the UN in September of that year. In 1978 Bangladesh was elected to a two-year term on the Security Council, and during this period it took strong stands, reiterated on many occasions, concerning Vietnam's involvement in Cambodia, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, Israeli policies in the Middle East, the Iran-Iraq War, and apartheid in South Africa. Bangladesh was elected as a member of the Security Council's Human Rights Commission in 1985 and as president of the forty-first session of the UN General Assembly (1986–87). In 1987 Ershad received the UN Population Award on behalf of his government.

Before its formal admission into the UN, Bangladesh had been admitted to all of its specialized agencies, and after formally joining the world body, it adopted a high profile in these agencies. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has operated projects in Bangladesh since 1975, in areas ranging from irrigation to rubber

production to mangrove afforestation. Bangladesh became a member of the forty-nine-member FAO Council in 1977, served on the FAO's Finance Committee from 1975 to 1979, and has participated in a number of FAO commissions. It was elected vice chairman of the FAO in November 1987. Representatives of Bangladesh also have participated in various specialized UN conferences. Bangladesh joined the Commonwealth of Nations in 1972—a move that prompted Pakistan to withdraw from the organization—and has remained prominent at its meetings ever since. Along with other South Asian members of the Commonwealth, Bangladesh has used its meetings to push for sanctions against apartheid and South African's occupation of Namibia, and it has even offered military training facilities to anti-South African guerrillas.

Keenly aware of his nation's economic problems and observing the benefits of regional economic cooperation in Western Europe, Zia began to seek opportunities for multilateral development among the nations of South Asia in 1977. In 1981 the foreign secretaries of the seven nations of South Asia met in Sri Lanka to set up the basic framework of a regional development organization that was formally founded in New Delhi in August 1983. With continuous effort by Bangladeshi diplomats, these preliminary steps culminated in December 1986 in the first summit conference of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which was convened in Dhaka. The choice of this site was in recognition of Bangladesh's crucial role in forming the SAARC. Subsequent summits in Bangalore, India, in 1986 and in Kathmandu, Nepal, in 1987 established the SAARC as a functioning international body.

The agenda of the SAARC specifically removes bilateral issues and political programs from the organization's debates, confining committee and summit discussions to areas where member nations may find common ground for achieving mutual economic benefit. However, no large-scale economic projects had emerged from SAARC discussions as of mid-1988. Because many of the most difficult economic problems in South Asia involve long-standing political differences at the bilateral level (for example, Bangladesh's Ganges water dispute with India), the SAARC has not been an effective mechanism for solving problems. Nevertheless, through the mid- and late 1980s, the SAARC's summits have provided its members with a forum in which to exchange ideas and positions and discuss bilateral issues.

Bangladesh's presence in the Nonaligned Movement has provided it with an international reputation as a voice of moderation and compromise. Bangladesh's prime minister, Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, was elected vice chairman of the Nonaligned

Movement summit held in Havana in 1986. This international reputation served Bangladesh well in courting the goodwill of potentially hostile neighbors and attracting economic aid from donor countries with diverse political systems. Although the Ershad regime was politically repugnant to many opposition leaders and was looked at critically by some foreign governments, the regime had brought a new sense of stability to Bangladesh as it made a tenuous transition to civilian rule in the late 1980s.

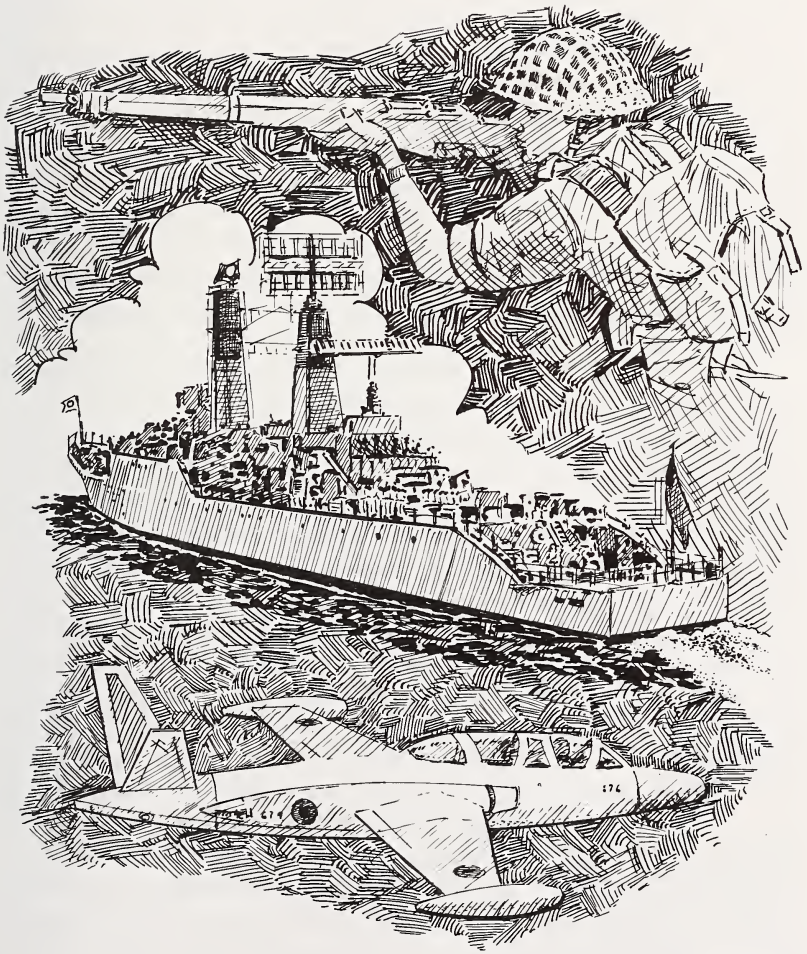
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A good overview of Bangladesh and its role in South Asian politics until the mid-1980s is *Government and Politics in South Asia* by Craig Baxter et al. The text of the Bangladesh Constitution can be found in Albert P. Blaustein and Gisbert H. Flanz's *Constitutions of the Countries of the World.* General introductions to the administrative organization of Bangladesh are Mohammad Mohabbat Khan and John P. Thorp's *Bangladesh: Society, Politics, and Bureaucracy* and A.M.M. Shawkat Ali's *Politics, Development and Upazila.* Harry W. Blair's article, "Participation, Public Policy, Political Economy, and Development in Rural Bangladesh, 1958–85," gives a good introduction to administrative decentralization. Among a number of studies on Bangladeshi politics are E.W. Timm's *Power Relations in Rural Development,* Betsy Hartmann and James K. Boyce's *A Quiet Violence,* Kirsten Westergaard's *State and Rural Society in Bangladesh,* and Atiur Rahman's *Peasants and Classes.*

General foreign policy issues are covered by Emajuddin Ahamed in *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh* and by M. Abdul Hafiz and Abdur Rab Khan in *Nation Building in Bangladesh.* Bilateral relations are summarized in Kuldeep Singh's *India and Bangladesh,* Ishtiaq Hossain's "Bangladesh-India Relations," Jayasree Biswas' *US-Bangladesh Relations,* and Waliur Rahman's *Bangladesh and the United Nations.*

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Chapter 5. National Security



Bangladesh's ground, navy, and air forces

BORN FROM THE CHAOS of civil war, steeped in a praetorian tradition of military supremacy over the civilian political process, and racked by internal dissension, the armed forces created by Bangladesh were not disciplined during the first years after independence. By the mid-1980s, however, the armed forces had evolved into a more cohesive and professional organization. The military—particularly the army—continued to play a critical role in guiding or controlling the political process in Bangladesh.

Since formally declaring independence from Pakistan in April 1971, Bangladesh has not experienced an orderly transfer of power. Every Bangladeshi ruler initially assumed power in the aftermath of extraordinary and often bloody events, such as civil war, a military coup, or the assassination of his predecessor. Without exception, every national election staged between 1973 and 1988 was intended to legitimize the rule of a nonelected leader already in power. During the same fifteen years, there were four successful military coups, in addition to a string of *jawan* (soldier) uprisings, assassination plots, and abortive rebellions. As of mid-1988, Bangladeshi military authorities had been in power, either directly or as guarantor of a nominally civilian regime, for over two-thirds of the country's independent existence.

Army involvement in politics during this time followed four distinct patterns. The first pattern—characterized by the military's subordination to an elected civilian government—is that which prevailed between 1971 and 1975 when the Awami League (People's League) was in power. During this formative stage, Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib), a civilian, kept a tight rein on his military commanders, some of whom were suspected of political disloyalty. After declaring a national emergency in December 1974, however, Mujib assumed dictatorial powers. Mujib's inability to address the military's grievances, limit corruption, and restore law and order in the country triggered Bangladesh's first military coup in August 1975. With Mujib's assassination and the eclipse of the Awami League, civilian control over the military was effectively ended.

A second pattern of army involvement in politics is the classic martial law dictatorship led by a junta or a military strongman. Regimes of this type included a short-lived "revolutionary" government headed by power-seeking army officers, November 3–7, 1975, and periods of authoritarian rule under Ziaur Rahman (Zia), from

April 1977 to June 1978 and under Hussain Muhammad Ershad from March 1982 to May 1986.

The third pattern is a transitional regime in which power is nominally held by a civilian figurehead who depends on army backing for political survival. Regimes of this type have been headed by Khondakar Mushtaque Ahmed from August 15 to November 3, 1975; Abu Sadat Muhammad Sayem from November 7, 1975, to April 1977; and the legally constituted civilian government of Abdus Sattar from May 1981 to March 1982.

A fourth type of political arrangement is a quasi-military regime headed by a military strongman who retired from the army while still in power, assembled a personal political party, and engineered his own election as a civilian president. There have been two such regimes in Bangladesh: Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party government between June 1978 and May 1981 and Ershad's Jatiyo Party (National Party) government, elected to a parliamentary majority in May 1986, confirmed with Ershad's election as president in October 1986, and reaffirmed in parliamentary election in March 1988. Although each of these governments won resounding electoral mandates against a weak and divided opposition, most observers of the Bangladeshi political scene agreed that the armed forces remained the real guarantors of the government's power.

Civilian control over the military has always been weak under elected civilian governments and nonexistent under martial law regimes. Since the early 1970s, the armed forces have distrusted civilian politicians and sought to prevent their ''meddling'' in the military's vital interests, such as resource allocations, pay and benefits, and promotions.

Armed Forces and Society

Colonial Origins

The military history of Bangladesh before independence is part of that of the Indian subcontinent, particularly of British India and then of Pakistan from 1947 through 1971. The period having the greatest influence on the military establishments of the subcontinent began with the arrival of the Europeans at the start of the sixteenth century and, more particularly, Queen Elizabeth I's granting of a charter to the British East India Company in 1600 (see European Colonization, 1757–1857, ch. 1). As European settlements were established, locals were employed as guards to protect company trading posts and participate in ceremonials. As the number of trading posts increased, these guards were more formally organized into companies led by British officers. Three independent

forces emerged and became known as presidency armies and the troops as sepoys (a corruption of the Hindi *sipahi,* or soldier). Regular British troops also were incorporated into the presidency armies. In 1748 the three armies were grouped under a single commander in chief and organized, armed, uniformed, and trained by British officers.

The rapid expansion of British control of the Indian subcontinent during the early nineteenth century was accompanied by mounting resistance. Political, social, religious, and ethnic tensions led to four eruptions in the army in the years between 1844 and 1857, although these incidents were considered minor by the British authorities. The long pent-up discontent of the sepoys then broke into open revolt at Meerut, near Delhi on May 10, 1857, starting the Sepoy Rebellion (see The Uprising of 1857, ch. 1).

The uprising, regarded by the British as a mutiny but by later South Asian nationalists as the "first war of independence," was largely confined to Bengalis in the British Indian Army, but it grew into a major conflict in northern and central India. The British used loyal Indian troops and reinforcements from Britain to crush the rebellion by 1858. A proclamation by Queen Victoria terminated the British East India Company government, India became a British colony, and the role of Indian military forces was reevaluated. Because the uprising was limited almost entirely to the Bengali troops and to the regions of north-central India and Bengal (see Glossary), the British not only disbanded the Bengali army but also became distrustful of Bengalis and concentrated military recruitment among the more favored Punjabis and Pathans of northwestern India. Additionally, a complete reorganization of the Indian forces followed. By 1895 the army was put under the central authority of the army headquarters at Delhi and was divided into four territorial commands at of Bengal, Madras, Bombay, and Punjab, each commanded by a lieutenant general.

After the 1857–58 uprising, the British developed a recruitment policy that was to shape the Pakistani military and later that of Bangladesh. Recruitment was based on the "martial races" myth, according to which the inhabitants of certain areas or members of certain castes or tribes were reputed to make more fearless and disciplined soldiers than others. Popularization of this concept is usually attributed to Lord Frederick Roberts, commander in chief of the British Indian Army from 1885 to 1893. Roberts believed that the best recruits were found in northwestern India, including Punjab and parts of what later became West Pakistan. Because recruitment was based on these theories, the period from 1890 to 1914 sometimes is referred to as "the Punjabization of the army."

Roberts also favored staffing certain units or subunits with members of the same caste, tribal, or religious group from within the so-called martial races, a practice that became fairly common. These methods produced an apolitical, professional force responsive to British command, but one that accentuated regional and communal distinctions. Nevertheless, the British never organized a combat unit of battalion size or larger that was entirely composed of Muslims. Consequently, when the Muslim majority state of Pakistan achieved independence in 1947, existing British Indian Army formations that were transferred to the new state were severely understrength.

Bengali participation in the military services was much lower than that of other groups, and a number of reasons have been advanced for this fact. In the 1920s, Punjab, with about 20 million people, contributed some 350,000 recruits to the British Indian Army, whereas Bengal, with a population base at least twice as large, contributed only 7,000 recruits during the same period.

Pakistan Era

The partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 to form India and Pakistan also entailed the division of the units and equipment of the British Indian Army. Under a partition formula announced on July 1, 1947, existing military forces were divided on the basis of religious identification; units with a Muslim majority were transferred to Pakistan with their records and unit designations more or less intact. Individual Muslim servicemen who were from the areas that were to become India were given the option of remaining with the Indian armed forces or going to Pakistan. Hindus in the Muslim majority units could stay with those units when they transferred to Pakistan or be reassigned to Indian units. In both countries the newly formed armed forces continued to be organized, trained, and employed along the familiar lines of British practice.

The armed forces that Pakistan inherited in 1947 from the division of the British Indian Army included Bengali Muslims, and there was always a small minority of them in the Pakistani armed services. These Bengalis served with their units as a matter of course in the 1947–48 and 1965 wars with India and in the numerous security operations in Pakistan up to 1971 (see Pakistan Period, 1947–71, ch. 1).

Despite the participation of these Bengalis, East Pakistani spokesmen vigorously denounced East Pakistan's lack of military representation and influence in military policy. All senior military headquarters were located in West Pakistan, and almost all regular Pakistani forces were stationed there. Defense expenditures from

indigenous revenue and foreign military aid in the 1950s and 1960s constituted the largest single item of the country's budget. But because of the force-stationing policy and associated allocation practices, the economic benefits from defense spending—in contracts, purchasing, and military support jobs—went almost entirely to West Pakistan. Pay and allowances to members of the armed forces also largely benefited only the West Pakistanis.

Pakistani recruiters claimed difficulty in securing volunteers in East Pakistan. West Pakistanis held that Bengalis were not "martially inclined"—especially in comparison with Punjabis and Pathans, among whom military orientation was deeply embedded. East Pakistanis asserted, however, that as active participants in the movement to create an Islamic homeland they had a right and obligation to participate more extensively in the armed forces and should be represented in about the same ratio as their numbers in the total population. They assailed the old, entrenched doctrine of the "martial races" as ridiculous and humiliating. Arguing from the standpoint of security, they pointed out that the force-stationing policy left East Pakistan virtually defenseless against rival India and that no planning was under way to remedy this situation.

All these arguments, although frequently and eloquently advanced, had little effect. Pakistan president Mohammad Ayub Khan (1958–69) held that East Pakistan was indefensible without the prior development of strong forces and bases in West Pakistan. On this principle he continued existing practices. In 1956 the Pakistan Army had a total of 894 officers in the grades of major through lieutenant general. Of this number only 14 (1.6 percent) were of East Pakistani origin. Of these, only one was of brigadier rank, the highest rank held until then by a Bengali. Naval officers of all ranks numbered 593, but only 7 (1.2 percent) of them were of Bengali origin. Bengalis fared slightly better in the air force, which had a total of 640 officers, 40 (6.3 percent) of whom were Bengalis.

By 1965 the participation ratio had improved slightly, although it was still far from East Pakistani desires and expectations. Among the total of 6,000 army officers, 5 percent were Bengalis. Only one of them had become a major general. In the navy and air force, with officer totals of 800 and 1,200, respectively, the overall percentages of Bengalis had increased more than in the army but were still at a distinct minority level. Most Bengali officers in the navy and air force were in technical or administrative rather than command positions.

In February 1966, Mujib, head of the East Pakistani Awami League, announced a six-point program calling for East Pakistani provincial autonomy with a federated Pakistan (see Emerging

Discontent, 1966–70, ch. 1). Significantly, the sixth point of this program held that the federating units should each "be empowered to maintain a militia or paramilitary force in order to contribute effectively toward national security." This point was, in time, expanded to encompass the attainment by East Pakistan of self-sufficiency in defense matters. Specific actions called for under the sixth point included establishment of an ordnance factory, a military academy, and the federal naval headquarters in East Pakistan.

Mujib's six-point package was unacceptable to the central government, but in July 1969 General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, who had succeeded Ayub as president earlier that year, announced a major policy change. The recruitment of Bengalis into the military services was to be doubled. Among steps taken to improve recruitment of East Pakistanis were establishing new recruiting centers in East Pakistan, giving greater publicity to the recruitment process, making promises (albeit vague ones) of promotions for Bengalis, and reducing the minimum height for enlistment by 5 centimeters to 162 centimeters. (Bengalis are, on the average, smaller than Punjabis and Pathans, and the old height requirement had excluded many Bengalis from military service.) East Pakistani participation in the armed forces increased, but Bengalis were still heavily underrepresented when the civil war that led to the partition of Pakistan erupted in March 1971 (see The War for Bangladeshi Independence, 1971, ch 1).

On the eve of the civil war, there were only two military units specifically identified with East Pakistan. One of these was the lightly armed paramilitary border security force called the East Pakistan Rifles; the other was the East Bengal Regiment of the Pakistan Army. The East Bengal Regiment had been established soon after the division of the British Indian Army in 1947. The First Battalion of the East Bengal Regiment was raised in February 1948 and the Second Battalion in December of the same year. Thereafter six more battalions were formed. The Ninth Battalion was being raised at the East Bengal Regiment center in Chittagong when the civil war broke out in March 1971.

The Liberation War

In the fall of 1970, a powerful opposition movement emerged in East Pakistan. During the 1971 civil war, a number of factional paramilitary bands, which included communist forces dedicated to a rural-based revolution along Maoist lines, fought against each other and engaged in terrorism. The strongest of the new paramilitary bands, and the one that would have the greatest impact on future events, was organized under the Awami League's military

committee headed by Colonel M.A.G. Osmany, a retired Pakistan Army officer. This band was raised as Mujib's action arm and security force. As the political struggle between East Pakistan and West Pakistan intensified, the Awami League's military arm assumed the character of a conventional, albeit illegal, armed force.

At first, Osmany recruited his force from three main sources: the East Pakistan Students League (the Awami League's youth branch); the security militia called Ansars (*ansar* is Arabic for helper) and Mujahids (*mujahid* is Arabic for holy warrior), who were trained, respectively, by the police and the army; and urban toughs known throughout the subcontinent as *goondas*. Osmany's group collected arms and ammunition and conspired with Bengali-origin officers and troops in the regular Pakistani forces and the East Pakistan Rifles. Initially, Osmany's band was called Sevak Bahini (Service Force); after its expansion, it became known as the Mukti Fauj (Liberation Force; more loosely, freedom fighters), a name that evolved into Mukti Bahini, a term of more common Bengali usage having the same meaning as Mukti Fauj. The very existence of an underground army responsive to Awami League directives convinced West Pakistani leaders that Mujib was intent on leading the secession of East Pakistan.

On March 25, 1971, the Pakistan armed forces launched a campaign to suppress the resistance movement. During the ensuing month, military operations spread throughout East Pakistan. The East Bengal Regiment, the East Pakistan Rifles, and most of the East Pakistani police and their auxiliaries joined the revolt. They seized West Pakistani officers serving with these units and killed some of them. The wholesale, planned defection of the Bengalis from the Pakistan Army in the early weeks of the war came as a surprise to the Pakistani command and was of supreme importance to the Bangladesh cause. The Bengali units, after fighting numerous actions against West Pakistani regulars, gradually withdrew and merged with the Mukti Bahini, providing the essential core of leadership and organizational basis for the rest of the war.

Gradually this amalgamation of forces grew into a unified military as it confronted the Pakistanis. Retired officers and troops helped train the revolutionary forces. On April 14, Osmany officially became the commander in chief of the Mukti Bahini. Although most of this force, estimated at over 100,000 strong at the height of the conflict, maintained unswerving allegiance to Mujib and the Awami League, many partisan bands operated independently. East Pakistani civilian members of the resistance operated out of Calcutta. The high command divided the country into eight military sectors, each commanded by a Pakistan Army major

who had defected. India granted sanctuary to the Mukti Bahini and provided bases and substantial matériel and training. The initial operations by the Pakistan Army failed to destroy the Mukti Bahini or to prevent its expansion and development, but by late May 1971 Pakistani authority had been widely reasserted. Rebel forces were largely confined to the areas near the Indian border states of West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura. Pakistani forces received reinforcements and the assistance of an internal security force called Razakars (Keepers of Public Order) and other collaborators that had been raised in East Pakistan by the Pakistani administration. Denounced by the resistance for collaborating with Pakistani authorities, most Razakars were Urdu-speaking Muslims who had emigrated from the Indian state of Bihar at the time of partition. The weary Pakistani regulars, however, were able to contain a July monsoon offensive by the Mukti Bahini.

Despite the setback, the Mukti Bahini had gained valuable experience and shown increased capability. Back in their border base area, they regrouped. Recruitment was never a serious problem, and numerical losses were easily replaced. Indian aid and participation materially increased, and the tempo of fighting again picked up by October, when Pakistan had raised its army troop strength to about 80,000. Border clashes between the Indian and Pakistani armies became frequent.

In response to Indian military incursions into East Pakistan in late November, Pakistan launched a series of preemptive air strikes against Indian airfields on December 3, 1971. Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi then ordered national mobilization, and Indian forces launched a full-scale invasion of East Pakistan the next day. The initial Pakistani air strikes had been ineffective, and the Indian Air Force attained air superiority within the next twenty-four hours and held it. The Pakistan Air Force detachment in East Pakistan was destroyed, and supply and escape routes were cut off; in West Pakistan the Indian Air Force systematically struck aircraft and airfields, base installations, communication centers, and troop concentrations. At sea an Indian Navy task force immobilized East Pakistani port facilities and landed an amphibious force to cut off escape routes to Burma. At the same time, an Indian task force contained Pakistan's fleet and bombarded port installations at Karachi, West Pakistan.

On the ground the Indian strategic plan was aimed at East Pakistan as first priority, while simultaneously containing West Pakistan. The Indian force that invaded East Pakistan consisted of nine infantry divisions with attached armor units and supporting arms. Separated into five invasion columns, Indian forces

advanced rapidly, bypassing intermediate cities and obstacles and pressing relentlessly toward the capital at Dhaka. At the same time, guerrilla attacks intensified, and at least three brigades of the Mukti Bahini fought in conventional formations with the Indian forces. Overwhelmed by the speed and power of the Indian advance, Pakistan's four divisions and smaller separate units fought a number of hard actions but soon had their escape routes cut off and were without air support. On December 16 Dhaka fell, and Pakistan's commander, Lieutenant General A.A.K. Niazi, with about 75,000 troops, surrendered to Lieutenant General J.S. Aurora, the Indian commander of the combined Indian and Mukti Bahini forces. On the western front, India's forces had effectively contained Pakistani attacks and had made limited advances into West Pakistan.

Postindependence Period

Indian military forces initially remained in newly independent Bangladesh to consolidate their victory and to assist in stabilizing the new government, but they completed their withdrawal on March 12, 1972. A flotilla of Soviet minesweepers arrived in Bangladesh shortly thereafter, ostensibly to clear Pakistani mines from Chittagong harbor. The prolonged Soviet presence, a source of suspicion among Awami League critics, ended in 1975 when Mujib's successors requested the Soviets to leave.

Regular Bangladeshi armed forces were quickly established but, because of budgetary constraints, on an extremely limited scale. The organization of these armed forces reflected not only that of the colonial British Indian Army, especially as it had continued under the Pakistan Army, but also the experience of the Mukti Bahini in the 1971 war of independence. Most of the guerrilla fighters reverted to civilian status, although some were absorbed into the regular armed forces. Countrywide, vast but undetermined numbers of small arms and automatic weapons remained at large in the population, presaging trouble in the years ahead.

A difficult residual issue was prisoner exchanges. India held about 90,000 Pakistani prisoners of war and civilian internees, while Bangladesh retained 195 Pakistanis (mostly military) with the intent—later put aside—of bringing them to trial for war crimes. Pakistan also held some 28,000 Bengali military personnel stranded in West Pakistan. Under agreements reached by the governments of Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan in August 1973 and April 1974, prisoner release and repatriation in all categories were completed by April 30, 1975.

The bitter rift between military personnel who returned to Bangladesh after liberation and freedom fighters who had fought

in the war was to have profound consequences for the new nation. The repatriates, who had languished in West Pakistani jails during the civil war, were absorbed into an army dominated by former guerrillas, some of whom were civilians inducted as a reward for their sacrifices. Repatriates, by and large, felt no personal loyalty to Mujib and viewed the freedom fighters as a undisciplined and politicized element. Repatriate officers bridled under Mujib's use of the army in disarming the civilian population and taming his political opponents. Moreover, repatriates were suspicious of the regime's pro-Indian sympathies, its rhetorical support for the Soviet Union, and its efforts to circumscribe the role of Islam in national affairs. The rift between repatriates and freedom fighters worsened considerably when Mujib formed the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini (National Defense Force), an elite parallel army intended to insulate the regime against military coups and other armed challenges to its authority. By 1975 the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini had swelled to an estimated 30,000 troops. Repatriates complained that Mujib destroyed the army's integrity by disbanding the East Bengal Regiment, which was composed primarily of repatriates; funneling all new recruits to the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini; favoring freedom fighters in matters of pay and promotions; and slashing the army's budget in order to sustain the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini.

Other armed elements that supported Mujib roamed the countryside searching out and punishing Pakistani collaborators, opponents of the regime, and, as was often the case, anyone who offered resistance to their warlord-style rule. For instance, freedom fighter leader Kader "Tiger" Siddiqi and his estimated 3,000 armed supporters virtually ruled Mymensingh District while Mujib was in office.

Other, more radical factions within the army viewed the liberation movement as unfinished until the "petit bourgeois" Awami League government was swept aside and replaced by a Maoist "people's government." The central figure among these factions was Abu Taher, a former Pakistan Army colonel who had been trained in commando operations in the United States and was later cashiered by Mujib because of his radical views. Taher and an inner circle of radical freedom fighters belonged to the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (National Socialist Party) and its armed wing, the Biplabi Sainik Sangstha (Revolutionary Soldiers Organization). The Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal developed deep roots in the military and among radical students connected with the Chhatro Union (Students Union) of the Bangladesh Communist Party. The Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal tailored its appeal to lower level officers and *jawans*. By 1975 Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal sympathizers within the military and police were estimated to number 20,000.

Tensions within the military exploded on August 15, 1975, when thirty middle-ranking army officers, many of whom were repatriates, staged a coup. With the support of troops from the First Bengal Lancers and the Second Field Artillery Regiment, the mutineers assassinated Mujib and members of his family and called on Ziaur Rahman (Zia) to become army chief of staff. Osmany, the former Mukti Bahini chief, lent respectability to the emerging military-political order by agreeing to serve as defense adviser to the new figurehead president, Khondakar Mushtaque Ahmed.

Freedom-fighter elements within the army countered this so-called "majors' plot" by staging a coup of their own on November 3, 1975. Following the murder of prominent Awami League officials detained in Dhaka Central Jail, troops commanded by Brigadier Khaled Musharraf dismissed the government, placed Zia under arrest, created a vaguely defined revolutionary council, and exiled the ringleaders of the original coup to Libya. A total breakdown in discipline within the military occurred shortly after this second coup, as junior army officers and *jawans* took to the streets to defend themselves against anticipated assaults from rival army factions. Simultaneously, the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal called on *jawans* to kill their commanding officers. On November 7, Zia secured his release from house arrest, reportedly with Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal backing, and staged a third coup. Musharraf was killed, Zia and other senior officers restored a semblance of army unity, and the *jawans* returned to barracks.

As Zia attempted to consolidate power under his new title of chief martial law administrator, additional challenges to his authority occurred. In April 1976, conservative officers led by Air Vice Marshal M.G. Tawab attempted to overthrow Zia after recalling four of the "killer majors" from exile. The conspirators called for the creation of an Islamic state and demanded a share of political power. After officers of the two armored regiments, the First Bengal Cavalry and the First Bengal Lancers, refused to turn over the rebels, troops loyal to Zia descended on Bogra cantonment to put down the mutiny. In the aftermath of the failed coup, Tawab was exiled, the Twenty-second East Bengal Regiment was disbanded, Taher was hanged, and over 200 servicemen were tried in military courts on disciplinary charges.

An even more serious breach of discipline occurred on September 29, 1977, when Japanese Red Army terrorists landed a hijacked aircraft at Dhaka International Airport (present-day Zia International Airport). While Zia and his senior staff officers were busy negotiating with the hijackers, an entire army battalion mutinied in Bogra. As the hostage drama continued, the revolt spread to Dhaka cantonment and to air force units at the airport itself.

The uprising was the handiwork of the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal, which again exhorted *jawans* to kill their commanding officers. Their slogan was "All soldiers are brothers; blood of officers wanted; no ranks above [low-ranking] *subedar.*" The mutineers' goal was to create a "classless army" that would act as a revolutionary vanguard in remaking Bangladeshi society in a Maoist mold. Alarmed by the spreading disorder within the ranks, senior army officers rallied behind Zia's leadership. After several days of heavy fighting that killed an estimated 200 soldiers, loyal troops succeeded in suppressing the rebellion. Zia then moved swiftly to purge mutinous elements from the military. Within a span of 2 months, more than 1,100 had been executed for involvement in the uprising. According to a well-informed observer, "it was the most devastating punishment exercise in the history of Bangladesh, carried out with the utmost speed and with total disregard for justice and the legal process." As additional precautions, Zia reorganized the three service branches, disbanded mutinous units, shuffled his senior commanders, and banned the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal.

During his six-year tenure in office, Zia implemented a number of strategies to instill discipline in the armed forces and broaden the political base of his regime. Zia recognized that officers and *jawans* alike nursed serious grievances against their military and civilian superiors, such as low pay, lack of promotions, corruption and political machinations. He set out to professionalize the military by promoting repatriates, increasing military pay and benefits, and building up the defense budget. Zia also co-opted the officer corps by expanding the armed forces, appointing both active-duty and retired military cronies to lucrative positions in the civil bureaucracy, and exiling potential challengers to diplomatic posts abroad. Simultaneously, Zia militarized the national police system by firing thousands of police on charges of corruption and appointing army officers to oversee the system.

Despite his efforts to curb the army's appetite for power, Zia fell victim to assassination. On the night of May 30, 1981, Major General Muhammed Manzur Ahmed, commander of the Twenty-fourth Infantry Division and a hero of the war of independence, led troops to the government rest house in Chittagong where Zia was staying. After murdering the president and his bodyguards, Manzur seized the local radio station and called on troops elsewhere in the country to support his coup.

Manzur announced the formation of a "revolutionary council," dismissed senior officers from their posts in Dhaka, dissolved Parliament, and abrogated the 1972 Treaty of Cooperation, Friendship, and Peace with India. Manzur apparently was convinced that



Late President Ziaur Rahman presenting the Bangladesh flag to an air force honor guard
Courtesy Bangladesh Ministry of Information

freedom fighters—estimated at 20 percent of the army—would rally behind him, despite the fact that the leader he murdered was a venerated freedom fighter himself. Fearing that a successful coup might trigger another intramilitary bloodletting, senior commanders in Dhaka lined up behind Zia's aging and infirm constitutional successor, Supreme Court justice Abdus Sattar. Loyal army units

converged on Chittagong, and the coup attempt was crushed within forty-eight hours. According to a government white paper published after the episode, Manzur was apprehended after fleeing to the Indian border, and he was shot "while attempting to escape." Thirty-one officers were subsequently tried for mutiny, twelve of the thirty-one were hanged, and fifty-four senior officers were dismissed.

Zia's most impressive achievement—the creation of a viable institutional framework for promoting political stability and economic growth—did not survive long after his death. "One of Zia's strongest points," according to commentator Ashish Kumar Roy, "was the stability he symbolized in a state that seemed to have become a victim of chronic violence, both civilian and military. By assassinating him, the military itself destroyed all that Zia had sought to prove: that the army could be contained, and that genuine power could be handed back to civilians through a democratic process." Sattar lacked Zia's charisma, and the country was soon subjected to mounting political and monetary crises. Although Sattar and his inherited Bangladesh Nationalist Party won an electoral mandate in November 1981, most political observers believed another army coup was only a matter of time (see The Zia Regime and Its Aftermath, 1977–82, ch. 1). To compound matters, Sattar was extremely vulnerable because of the political debt he owed the army for quashing the coup and guaranteeing constitutional order. The generals, nevertheless, were reluctant to seize power immediately because of the fear that public opinion might turn against the military.

Army Chief of Staff Hussain Muhammad Ershad pressured Sattar to grant the military a formal, constitutional role in governing the state. During a press interview in November 1981, Ershad offered "some straight talk about a very grave and deep-seated politico-military problem." According to him, the military was an "efficient, well-disciplined and most honest body of a truly dedicated and organized national force. The potentials of such an excellent force in a poor country like ours can effectively be utilized for productive and nation-building purposes in addition to its role of national defense." Ershad denied any personal political ambitions but lamented the shabby treatment civilian politicians accorded the military. "Our rank-and-file do not want military adventurism in politics, nor do they want political adventurism in the military," he declared to his political opponents, thus setting the stage for the coup he was to engineer later. To remedy the problems he saw, Ershad put forward a concept that "requires us to depart from conventional Western ideas of the role of the armed forces. It calls for

combining the roles of nation building and national defense into one concept of total national defense." Ershad denied that "total national defense" amounted to military interference in the democratic process, but his contention was hotly disputed by civilian politicians.

Sattar responded to Ershad's challenge by trying to establish a National Security Council in January 1982, comprising the three service chiefs and seven civilians. Ershad rejected the plan. Sattar, hoping to forestall an army takeover, reorganized his crumbling cabinet the following month and reconstituted the National Security Council with the three service chiefs and only three civilians. Despite this concession, which was opposed by opposition politicians and by some members of Sattar's own party, Ershad staged a coup on March 24, 1982. Unlike previous coups, there was no bloodshed, senior military commanders acted in unison, and the population accepted the military takeover, albeit sullenly. Ershad cited the political and social evils that necessitated drastic action on the part of the "patriotic armed forces" and again denied any personal political ambitions (see The Ershad Period, ch. 4).

Organization of the Armed Forces

Legal Basis

Under the Constitution, promulgated in 1972, the president is the commander in chief of the armed forces (see Constitution, ch. 4). The services are divided into the army, navy, and air force. In theory, the three service chiefs are coequals in the national command structure; in practice, the army dominates the defense establishment because of its imposing size and its historic role in monitoring or commandeering the political process. In mid-1988 the army constituted 88 percent of the nation's service personnel; the navy and air force accounted for only 7 and 5 percent, respectively.

In mid-1988, each service maintained separate headquarters and was solely responsible for its own training and recruitment programs. There was no joint-service command element to promote interservice cooperation and combined-arms operations. Historically, command-and-control arrangements at the national level have been dominated by the army chief of staff (a lieutenant general; see table 18, Appendix A). In the past, coup leaders such as Zia and Ershad consolidated control over the country by assuming the powers of the army chief of staff, the president, and the extraconstitutional position of chief martial law administrator. During periods of direct military rule, the navy and air force chiefs of staff (rear admiral or major general, respectively) served as deputy chief

martial law administrators, subordinate to the army chief of staff strongman. In the absence of a formal interservice command structure, the cohesion of the Bangladeshi military depends on informal, shifting alliances among senior commanders, most notably within the inner circle of army generals who command the country's six divisions. The military chain of command has broken down on numerous occasions and at every level of command since the country achieved independence in 1971 (see Postindependence Period, this ch.).

Following the British pattern, there is a Ministry of Defence, which is technically responsible for overseeing the military. Even though the Ministry of Defence bureaucracy is predominantly civilian, the military exerts substantial influence over its operations. After seizing power in March 1982, President Ershad followed the practice of his military predecessors by reserving the Ministry of Defence cabinet portfolio for himself. Through the appointment of military retirees and active-duty officers to the Ministry of Defence the military indirectly controls the ministry. Parliament is constitutionally responsible for working with the president and the service chiefs in ensuring the nation's defense. In practice, however, members of Parliament have never played a significant role in either national defense planning or defense budgeting.

The administration of military justice and the military court system is based on three separate but substantively similar service laws that were framed during the united Pakistan era. These laws, in turn, were modifications of British military justice codes, such as the Indian Army Act of 1911. The operative Bangladeshi laws include the Army Act of 1954, the Air Force Act of 1957, and the Navy Ordinance of 1961. These statutes, as amended since their enactment and modified in terminology by Bangladesh, are administered by the respective services. The nomenclature and composition of military courts vary slightly according to service, but court procedures, types of offenses, scales of punishment, jurisdictional authority, appeal and review procedures, and procedures for commutation and suspension of sentences are almost identical for all the services. The military justice system is used for the military in war and peace and is separate from the functions of military personnel acting as civil administrators during periods of martial law.

Recruitment

The three services are staffed by volunteers; there is no compulsory service system, and Bangladesh has a large pool of applicants from which to select. Moreover, the country's high rate of

unemployment has always made relatively secure positions in the military attractive career options. In the late 1980s, approximately 15.4 million of the 25.7 million Bangladeshi males between the ages of 15 and 49 were fit for military service. Drawing from a male population with a literacy rate of 39 percent, however, the armed forces suffered severe shortages of technically skilled manpower. The shortage was particularly acute for the navy and air force because of their need for skilled maintenance personnel. Low educational requirements for enlisted ranks imposed additional handicaps. Recruits often lacked basic skills such as reading, driving, and using a telephone—skills that had to be taught as part of basic training.

As in most aspects of professional life in Bangladesh, women played a marginal role in the armed forces. Women, however, had been instrumental in the nine-month liberation struggle against Pakistan. Although some female partisans were trained in weapons handling and participated in Mukti Bahini ambushes, their primary role was to support guerrilla operations by transporting food and weapons and acting as informers behind Pakistani lines. Following independence, Bangladeshi women receded into the background. Except for a small number of nurses and physicians in all three services and some army switchboard operators, woman were excluded from the regular armed forces. Bangladesh's paramilitary and police forces did recruit some women, primarily for the purpose of searching and processing female criminal suspects. Women in Bangladesh nonetheless have limited opportunities, as their roles are circumscribed by Islamic and South Asian customs, which tend to limit a woman's station in life to raising children, maintaining the home, and performing agricultural or handicraft labor (see Women's Role in Society, ch. 2).

Mission

National Defense

The primary mission of the regular armed forces is the classic one of defending the nation's territorial integrity against external attack. During wartime, the armed forces are responsible for mobilizing the nation's resources by assuming direct control over paramilitary and police forces, civilian transportation, and defense-related industries. Since achieving independence in 1971, Bangladesh has never ordered national mobilization because it has not faced an invasion. In addition, the armed forces have never conducted military operations beyond the country's land or sea boundaries. None of Bangladesh's three services has reserve components to call on during wartime, but the country could employ thousands of military veterans in a protracted guerrilla struggle.

Aid-to-Civil Roles

The armed forces back up local authorities in maintaining public order and ensuring internal security. An "aid-to-the-civil-power" function, based on the British colonial code, was used extensively during the united Pakistan era and has been employed by civilian and military governments since 1971.

Military deployments in aid-to-civil roles fall into three categories. The first and most pervasive use of the military is to assist local authorities and police in putting down riots and conducting counterinsurgency operations. Following the British pattern, the military is customarily used only as the "force of last resort" in domestic peacekeeping because it is not trained in routine police functions, such as crowd control. Ordering troops to use force against their own countrymen, moreover, invites public criticism of the armed forces, tarnishes their image as the "defenders of the nation," and undermines military morale. For these reasons, Bangladeshi authorities have traditionally preferred to rely on police and paramilitary forces to quell disturbances. Nevertheless, Bangladeshi regimes have occasionally resorted to using the military for domestic peacekeeping, sometimes for extended periods. Although the army ordinarily bears the heaviest burden in aid-to-civil operations, the air force and navy can also be called on to transport troops to the scene of a disturbance or to patrol areas near ports or air bases.

The military's second aid-to-civil mission entails running essential services or industries whenever public sector employees stage a strike. The military performed this function in the latter half of 1987 when opposition political parties staged a series of general strikes and work stoppages to pressure Ershad to resign. To keep the country running, the military took over a variety of civilian duties, such as managing port facilities, airports, and power plants (see More Opposition Pressure, ch 4).

A third aid-to-civil mission—the only one the military willingly performs—is disaster relief. Bangladesh has suffered repeated natural calamities which caused thousands of deaths and displaced millions of citizens (see Climate, ch. 2). The military is routinely called upon to transport food and medicine to refugees, as they did during the 1987 and 1988 monsoon floods that inundated more than 50 percent and 66 percent of the country, respectively. The military, however, does not usually perform so-called "civic action" duties, such as building roads, canals, and dams. Following the British pattern of civil-military relations, the Bangladesh armed forces prefer to engage in these activities only when they directly support the military's national defense mission or during extreme emergencies.



Jawan *on a civilian relief operation*
Courtesy Bangladesh Ministry of Information

Intelligence and Security

The military has been deeply involved in gathering domestic and foreign intelligence. All three services have their own intelligence directorates, which collect tactical intelligence to support military operations. The Directorate General of National Security Intelligence is a separate civilian organization but traditionally is headed by a senior military officer. It is responsible for collecting foreign intelligence and monitoring internal political affairs. The pivotal intelligence agency, however, is the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence. It monitors disaffection within the ranks and runs counterintelligence operations. The heads of the Directorate General of National Security Intelligence and the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence are usually the president's closest advisers. The Police Special Branch also operates an intelligence wing, which augments both directorates' intelligence capabilities. Since assuming power in 1982, Ershad has exercised tight control over the intelligence establishment.

Another security organization is the Presidential Security Force. Formed by Ershad while he was chief martial law administrator, the organization's mission is to ensure the physical security of Ershad and his family. Because two of Ershad's predecessors were gunned down during army rebellions, Ershad was undoubtedly

concerned over threats to his life. The commander of the Presidential Security Force is an army brigadier who reports directly to the president.

Security Environment

Bangladeshi defense planners have long regarded India as a regional bully, a perception shared by the Bangladeshi public in the late 1980s. According to this perception, governments in New Delhi continued to regard South Asia as an integral security unit in which India played the dominant role because of its size and resources. Thus, New Delhi's ability to project power gave India a self-assigned responsibility for ensuring the security of smaller states and maintaining stability and peace in the area. Aside from the potential threat of direct military intervention, Bangladeshi leaders also believed India had the capacity to destabilize the country by extending covert assistance to tribal insurgents, the Bangladeshi Hindu minority, or the regime's domestic political opponents.

Bangladesh has been the object of three main Indian security concerns since independence: Bangladeshi internal stability, its strategic position in relation to China, and Dhaka's alleged involvement with Indian tribal insurgents. India denied any intention or desire to destabilize Bangladesh and argued that a stable Bangladesh is a critical component of India's eastern defenses. Bangladesh was strategically located near the India-China disputed frontier in the north. In the event of a border clash with China, Indian lines of communication would be restricted to the narrow Siliguri corridor between Bangladesh and Nepal. Moreover, as a worst-case scenario, Indian defense planners feared that a desperate regime in Dhaka might grant military base rights to the United States or China. These security concerns were compounded by Indian charges that Dhaka turned a blind eye to Indian tribal insurgents using safe havens in eastern Bangladesh and allowed a tide of Bangladeshi emigrants to move into the Indian states of Tripura and Assam. India also expressed the concern that serious instability in Bangladesh could trigger another exodus of refugees into India.

Bangladesh's capacity to mount a conventional defense against India was extremely limited. India supported the world's fourth largest army, a sophisticated arsenal of weapons for all three service branches, and a population and economy larger than those of the six other states of South Asia combined. By necessity, any government in Dhaka had to rely primarily on diplomacy to deter India.

Bangladesh's only military defense against a potential Indian attack was based on limited deterrence. Bangladesh's armed forces would try to stall an Indian advance until international pressures



Bangladesh student officers at the Defence Services Command and Staff College pose with colleague from Nepal
Courtesy James Dunn

could be mobilized to bring about a cease-fire and a return to the status quo.

Geography also limited Bangladesh's capacity to mount a conventional defense of the nation. A paucity of roads, bridges, and railroads impeded cross-country military movements, particularly during the monsoon months of June through September. The army's lack of bridging equipment was a severe liability, especially for the armor brigades. In the mid-1980s, there were eighteen airports suitable for military transport operations, although the lift capacity of the Bangladesh Air Force was extremely limited. As Indian, Pakistani, and Bengali partisan forces discovered in 1971, however, Bangladesh provides ideal terrain for conducting guerrilla warfare. The country's primitive lines of communication would slow an enemy advance and frustrate an occupying force. Jungles, rivers, and isolated villages would allow locally based guerrillas to hold out almost indefinitely. There were no indications, however, that Bangladesh had developed a guerrilla war fighting doctrine; the nation's defense rested primarily on a strategy of deterrence by conventionally equipped regular forces.

The 2,400-kilometer border with India was patrolled by a paramilitary force called the Bangladesh Rifles (see Auxiliary Forces, this ch.). During peacetime, Bangladesh Rifles commanders

have authority to conduct "flag meetings" with their Indian paramilitary counterparts whenever stray firing incidents occur. For instance, in April 1984 a Bangladesh Rifles *jawan* was killed when India began construction of a barbed wire fence along the Indo-Bangladeshi border as part of a campaign to curb illegal immigration into Assam (see Foreign Policy, ch. 4). After conducting several flag meetings, Bangladesh Rifles commanders and their Indian counterparts agreed to withdraw some of their forces from the border area and submit the legality of the fence to a bilateral committee. Under this mechanism, Indian and Bangladeshi regular forces avoided a confrontation that could have escalated.

Throughout its existence, the Bangladesh Army has had to contend with severe shortages of weapons, communications equipment, spare parts, and transport vehicles. One 1982 report maintained that target practice—a basic military skill—was restricted because of ammunition shortages. Under these conditions, it is doubtful the army could fight a conventional war for more than a few days without massive assistance from a foreign power.

The country's 600-kilometer coastline was patrolled by the tiny Bangladesh Navy, whose missions were to protect Bangladeshi fishermen, ward off foreign poachers, and assert sovereignty over the nation's territorial waters. A potential challenge to the Bangladesh Navy occurred in 1983, when a *char*—a speck of land formed by alluvial deposits—emerged in the Bay of Bengal along the maritime boundary with India. Both India and Bangladesh dispatched patrol boats to stake their claims to the island and to the expanded 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone that went with it. The two sides avoided a military confrontation, and the matter was remanded to diplomatic negotiations. It was clear, however, that Bangladesh's coastal defense force was not in a position to challenge the Indian Navy. As part of its policy of nonalignment, Bangladesh allowed foreign naval vessels to conduct routine port visits at Chittagong. Bangladesh has not granted naval base rights to any foreign power.

Defense Spending

Because it has been in power almost continuously since 1975, the military has been in position to channel resources to the defense sector. According to A.M.A. Muhith, a former Bangladeshi finance minister and a critic of the military, "the defense establishment has become virtually unaccountable and has appropriated a disproportionate share of resources for its perpetuation and enrichment." Muhith asserts that whereas public spending increased ninefold between 1974 and 1986, defense spending during that same

period increased more than twentyfold. The army has received the best treatment. According to 1985 data, the army received over 50 percent of defense outlays. Moreover, army personnel strength has tripled since 1975. Navy and air force expansion has been less spectacular, although their capital outlays for such high-cost items as ships and aircraft represented an onerous economic burden. Analysts calculate that actual outlays for defense were considerably higher than published government budgets suggested.

Nevertheless, the armed forces continued to experience severe economic constraints. The defense budget for fiscal year (FY—see Glossary) 1989 totaled US$290 million and was the largest budget item, accounting for 17.2 percent of the national budget. In per capita terms, Bangladesh spent about US$3 per year, or about 2 percent of its gross national product (GNP—see Glossary), on defense. By any standard, this was a small sum for a military establishment numbering just over 100,000 personnel under arms. Foreign procurement took 15 to 20 percent of the defense budget. Recurring costs, such as training and pay, accounted for more than 50 percent.

Foreign Acquisitions and Ties

Bangladesh's primary concerns since its establishment have been internal security and economic survival. In mid-1988 no Bangladeshi military personnel were operationally deployed abroad. During the 1950s and 1960s, when united Pakistan was formally aligned with the United States, a number of Bengali officers in the Pakistan military received advanced training in the United States (see The Superpowers, ch. 4). By 1988 those officers who had started their careers during the heyday of United States-sponsored security pacts occupied the most senior positions in the Bangladeshi military.

Since 1975 Bangladesh has cultivated close relations with China. Although Sino-Bangladeshi security relations have remained informal, the two sides have regularly exchanged high-level military delegations to review relations, negotiate weapons transfers, inspect military facilities, and cement personal contacts. For instance, Chinese advisers and technicians have periodically served in Chittagong and Dhaka to assist with making Chinese equipment operational in the Bangladeshi armed forces. In January 1987, Yang Dezhi, chief of the general staff of China's People's Liberation Army, conducted a five-day goodwill visit to Bangladesh. While in Dhaka, the Chinese delegation met with Ershad and the three service chiefs. Three months later, the Bangladesh Navy chief of staff, Rear Admiral Sultan Ahmad, conducted a six-day visit to China. Press reports noted the two sides shared "similar views on

all important matters.'' Most of Bangladesh's inventory of fighter aircraft, coastal patrol boats, and tanks were supplied by China.

Bangladesh has had to court a variety of states for weapons and training support. The country's only defense production facility was a munitions factory built during the Pakistan era with Chinese assistance. Because it depended on foreign sources for most of its military equipment, Bangladesh had a diverse weapons inventory. However, most of the inventory was obsolete, even by Third World standards. The diversity of equipment imposed severe maintenance problems for a military that lacked technical sophistication. Most overhauls of major equipment items had to be performed by foreign technicians or in the country of origin. Whenever these services have not been available—for instance when Soviet military assistance ended after the 1975 coup—foreign-supplied weapon systems have become inoperable. In extreme cases Bangladesh has had to cannibalize weapon systems, such as older MiG-21 aircraft, to keep some of the inventory in operation.

The Bangladeshi military began its development with weapons surrendered by Pakistani forces and small arms supplied by India to the Mukti Bahini. After Indian forces left the country in October 1972, Mujib turned to India and its primary supplier, the Soviet Union, for military equipment and training. The Soviets supplied MiG-21 aircraft, An-26 transports, and some miscellaneous equipment items. In addition, Egypt transferred thirty Soviet-built (Type 54/55) tanks, and Yugoslavia donated a small naval patrol craft. Following Mujib's assassination, the military looked elsewhere for basic equipment items. Britain sold three aging frigates to Bangladesh, and the United States transferred limited quantities of small arms, mostly for police and paramilitary use. A major breakthrough occurred in 1975, when China extended diplomatic recognition to Bangladesh following the normalization of relations between Dhaka and China's longtime ally, Pakistan. By the early 1980s, China had become Bangladesh's primary supplier of military equipment.

Since the mid-1970s, Bangladesh has sought close relations with oil-rich Arab states, most notably with Saudi Arabia. Shortly after staging the 1982 coup, Ershad traveled to Riyadh to meet with the Saudi leadership. Nine months later, a ten-member Saudi military delegation arrived in Dhaka for talks with their Bangladeshi counterparts and for an inspection tour of military facilities. Press accounts reported that the Saudis were considering a plan to station a Bangladesh Army division (some 15,000 personnel) in the kingdom. The proposal was originally suggested by Zia, according to these reports. Although both governments have consistently denied

reports of an impending Bangladeshi troop presence in Saudi Arabia, rumors to this effect persisted in 1988.

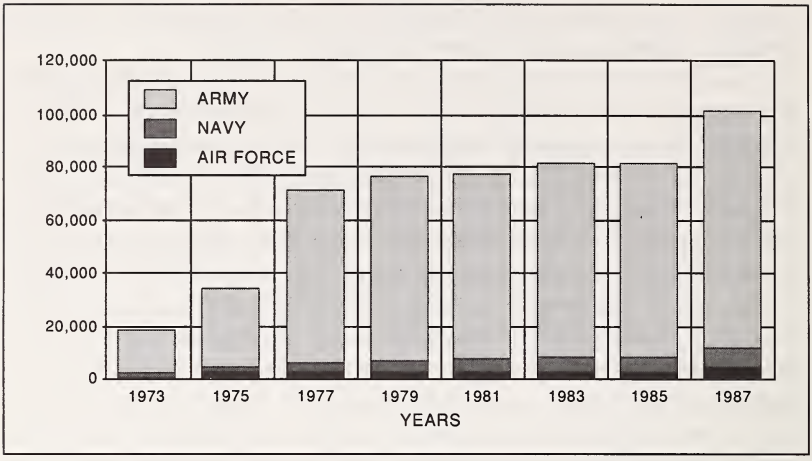
In addition to relying on foreign weapons supplies, Bangladesh has looked to other countries for advanced officer training and for education in specialized military skills, such as repairing aircraft engines. Under Mujib, many Bangladeshi officers, including then-Brigadier Ershad, attended Indian military schools and academies. India was largely responsible for training and organizing the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini, an elite parallel army raised by Mujib in an effort to insulate his regime from coups (see Postindependence Period, this ch.). After Mujib's death and the absorption of the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini into the regular army, training in India ended, and Indian military advisers were sent home. Bangladeshi military personnel started attending courses in China on a regular basis in the late 1980s. Starting in the late 1970s, the United States annually appropriated International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds to train limited numbers of Bangladeshi officers in the United States. In FY 1988, these IMET funds totaled US$300,000. In return, foreign officers regularly attend one-year courses offered at the Bangladesh Military Academy near Chittagong. The United States, Britain, Indonesia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and several small Asian and African states have sent military personnel to Bangladesh for staff courses.

The Three Services

Army

The army is the dominant service in Bangladesh. Because of its historic role in influencing civilian governments and taking over the administration of the country, the army is also a critical political institution (see Armed Forces and Society, this ch.; Political Dynamics, ch. 4).

Starting with a nucleus of Bengali deserters from the Pakistan Army—paramilitary personnel, police, and civilians who had fought with the Mukti Bahini—the Bangladesh Army has expanded considerably although erratically since its formation on December 26, 1971. Between 1973 and 1975, the army absorbed many of the 28,000 personnel who had been detained in Pakistani jails for the duration of the war of independence. Following the 1975 coup, additional personnel were absorbed into the regular army when the martial law government abolished the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini (see Postindependence Period, this ch.). Under Zia's rule, army expansion slowed, in part because of his campaign to purge mutinous



Source: Based on information from *The Military Balance,* London, 1973–88

Figure 12. Growth of the Armed Forces, 1973–87

elements and collaborators from the ranks. When Ershad assumed power in 1982, army strength had stabilized at about 70,000 troops. Starting in 1985, Ershad accelerated the transition from martial law to elected civilian government. The army then experienced another spurt in growth. As of mid-1988, it had about 90,000 troops (although some observers believed the number was closer to 80,000), triple the 1975 figure (see fig. 12).

Zia reorganized the army following the military upheavals of the mid-1970s, in part to prevent coups and *jawan* uprisings. Under Zia's program, the reorganization was intended to neutralize rival factions of freedom fighters and repatriates. Bangladesh was divided into five military regions. The army—cooperating with civilian authorities while maintaining autonomy—preserved internal security and resisted possible Indian domination. Divisions coordinated their operations with paramilitary groups in their respective areas of command, and they mobilized mass support of the government.

The army in 1988 was divided into six strategically located divisions. The location of these divisions' headquarters, five of which were formerly brigade headquarters, underscored the army's primary mission of internal security rather than defense against external threats. The most powerful and prestigious commands were the Ninth Infantry Division, headquartered at Savar on the outskirts of Dhaka, and the Twenty-fourth Infantry Division, headquartered in the city of Chittagong. Elements of both divisions have been involved extensively in the military upheavals that have

plagued Bangladesh since independence (see Restoration of Military Rule, 1975–77, ch. 1). Although the Ninth Infantry Division has an armor regiment, the Twenty-fourth Infantry Division does not. The Ninth Infantry Division has played a central role in staging coups and maintaining military governments once they were in power. According to one observer of the Bangladesh Army, "the role of the Savar division would be crucial in any military coup." The Twenty-fourth Infantry Division, with four brigades, has conducted counterinsurgency operations against tribal guerrillas in the Chittagong Hills since the late 1970s. The army garrison at Chittagong was the site of the coup of May 30, 1981, that resulted in Zia's murder. Other infantry divisions were headquartered at Jessore (the Fifty-fifth), Bogra (the Eleventh), and Comilla (the Thirty-third). Each of these divisions has an armor regiment. In April 1988, a sixth infantry division (the Sixty-sixth) was formally established with headquarters at Rangpur, and plans were in place to raise its armor regiment. The major generals who commanded the six divisions, along with the army chief of staff, formed the center of power within the army and, by extension, within the government, in the late 1980s.

Army formations subordinate to the six division headquarters included fifteen infantry brigades, four armor regiments, nine artillery regiments, six engineering battalions, and various support elements, such as signals, medical services, and ordnance. In addition to the six division headquarters, major army cantonments (barracks and housing areas that serve as the focal point of army life) were at Saidpur, Tangail, Khulna, Jalalabad, and elsewhere. The army also has a small fixed-wing regiment stationed in Dhaka. Army units are not known to operate with the navy in an amphibious assault capacity, although an amphibious assault map exercise is done at the staff college. The army's lack of bridging equipment was a severe liability, especially for its armor regiments. Unlike armies in Pakistan and India, the Bangladesh Army did not have a specially designated "para" (airborne assault) brigade but in 1988 was planning to develop such a capability. In mid-1988 the army reportedly was planning to raise a seventh infantry division to be held in reserve.

The army adopted and has retained the British Indian Army system of ranks. As of mid-1988, Lieutenant General Atiqur Rahman, the army chief of staff, was the only three-star general in the army. Immediately below him were twenty-one two-star generals, eighteen of whom were from the more prestigious combat arms (fourteen of the generals were infantry officers). The remaining officers ranged in rank from brigadier to newly commissioned

second lieutenants. Between the commissioned officers and the enlisted ranks is a separate category of junior commissioned officers (JCOs), who act as a bridge between the officers and their troops. Borrowed from the colonial commissioned officer system of the British Indian Army, JCOs are roughly equivalent to United States Army warrant officers (although few JCOs are technical specialists). JCOs are selected from noncommissioned officer ranks and advance through a three-tier ranking system (*naib subedar, subedar,* and *subedar major*). At the bottom of the hierarchy are the *jawans,* or common soldiers, who make up the bulk of the army (see fig. 13; fig. 14).

Recruitment into the all-volunteer army is open to all male citizens of Bangladesh. There are no restrictions based on religious or ethnic affiliation, though the army is composed almost entirely of Bangla-speaking Sunni Muslims. The language of the military is Bangla. All officers are required to have at least a working knowledge of English. Army officer recruits must be between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one. Before 1980 the maximum age for both officer and enlisted recruits who had fought in the war of independence as civilian irregulars was twenty-three years. With the aging of the liberation generation, however, the army discontinued preferential recruitment of freedom fighters.

Officer candidates must be unmarried and have a high school diploma or the equivalent. The minimum height requirement is 160 centimeters; the minimum weight is 49.8 kilograms. Promising candidates attend a two-year officer training course at the Bangladesh Military Academy at Bhatiary, near Chittagong. After successful completion of the course, graduates receive commissions in the army as second lieutenants. The academy graduated its first class in 1977. Advanced military training is offered at the Defence Services Command and Staff College, founded in Dhaka in 1977. Attendance at the staff college is a preferential assignment for mid-career officers. In addition, the army operates a number of combat schools, such as the School of Infantry and Tactics in Sylhet. The only advanced training beyond the staff college point is in foreign military schools, primarily in the United States or Britain. These choice assignments are reserved for a few select officers. An officer usually serves from fifteen to twenty-five years, after which he is eligible to receive a pension, as well as perquisites such as preferential hiring in the civil service, reduced-price housing, and free land on or near military cantonments.

Military pay and allowances are fixed by the National Pay Commission into ten grades with a total of seventeen steps, or pay scales. Nevertheless, the range in pay between the upper and lower strata of the officer corps remained basically the same in 1988 as in earlier years.

The army's armor regiments in the mid-1980s were equipped with Type 59, Type 54/55, and, its most recent acquisition, Type 62 light tanks (not to be confused with Soviet Type 62 medium tanks). The Type 59 main battle tank and Type 62 light tanks were supplied directly by China. Details regarding the terms of purchase, the training of Bangladeshi tank crews, and maintenance arrangements were never publicized. Following the series of coups and mutinies that erupted between 1975 and 1977, Zia removed the army's tanks from Dhaka in order to guard against further coups. The appearance of Type 59 and Type 62 tanks at the Victory Day parade in Dhaka in 1987, however, marked the first time that any tanks had appeared in a Victory Day parade and suggested that tanks may again be deployed in the vicinity of the capital. Other army weapons included 105mm and 122mm howitzers, 60mm and 120mm mortars, and 57mm, 76mm, and 106mm antitank weapons. The weapons had been acquired from a variety of sources, including as spoils of war from the Pakistan Army.

Navy

The three primary missions of the Bangladesh Navy are to maintain sovereignty over the nation's territorial waters, to safeguard Bangladesh's economic interest and exercise maritime control within the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf, and to protect Bangladeshi shipping. During the Pakistan era (1947–71), the navy was accorded a low priority. Pakistani leaders were preoccupied with maintaining the West Wing's land defenses against India. The Mukti Bahini did not have a naval force, other than a few frogmen who sabotaged Pakistani merchant ships. Wartime naval operations, including an amphibious landing near Chittagong, were left entirely to the Indian Navy. As a result, at independence, Bangladesh inherited virtually nothing in the way of naval equipment or personnel.

Founded as a separate military service on April 7, 1972, the Bangladesh Navy started with a nucleus of twelve officers and 1,000 seamen, most of whom had served in the Pakistan Navy. Their equipment included six captured speedboats and some miscellaneous small arms. From these humble beginnings, the Bangladesh Navy grew into a coastal and riverine defense force estimated in 1988 to include 600 officers and 6,900 enlisted personnel. The navy's center of operations and training was at the country's major port, Chittagong, where, in 1988, the new Bangladesh Naval Academy began its first academic year. Navy headquarters was in Dhaka. Smaller naval facilities were located at Kaptai and Khulna.

BANGLADESH RANK	2D LIEUTENANT	LIEUTENANT	CAPTAIN	MAJOR	LIEUTENANT COLONEL	COLONEL	BRIGADIER	MAJOR GENERAL	LIEUTENANT GENERAL	GENERAL	FIELD MARSHAL
ARMY											
U.S. RANK TITLES	2D LIEUTENANT	1ST LIEUTENANT	CAPTAIN	MAJOR	LIEUTENANT COLONEL	COLONEL	BRIGADIER GENERAL	MAJOR GENERAL	LIEUTENANT GENERAL	GENERAL	GENERAL OF THE ARMY
BANGLADESH RANK	PILOT OFFICER	FLYING OFFICER	FLIGHT LIEUTENANT	SQUADRON LEADER	WING COMMANDER	GROUP CAPTAIN	AIR COMMODORE	AIR VICE MARSHAL	AIR MARSHAL	AIR CHIEF MARSHAL	MARSHAL OF THE AIR FORCE
AIR FORCE											
U.S. RANK TITLES	2D LIEUTENANT	1ST LIEUTENANT	CAPTAIN	MAJOR	LIEUTENANT COLONEL	COLONEL	BRIGADIER GENERAL	MAJOR GENERAL	LIEUTENANT GENERAL	GENERAL	GENERAL OF THE AIR FORCE
BANGLADESH RANK	NO RANK	SUB-LIEUTENANT	LIEUTENANT	LIEUTENANT COMMANDER	COMMANDER	CAPTAIN	COMMODORE	REAR ADMIRAL	VICE ADMIRAL	ADMIRAL	ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET
NAVY											
U.S. RANK TITLES	ENSIGN	LIEUTENANT JUNIOR GRADE	LIEUTENANT	LIEUTENANT COMMANDER	COMMANDER	CAPTAIN	COMMODORE ADMIRAL	REAR ADMIRAL	VICE ADMIRAL	ADMIRAL	FLEET ADMIRAL

Figure 13. Officer Ranks and Insignia, 1988

BANGLADESH RANK	JAWAN	LANCE NAIK	NAIK	NO RANK	HAVILDAR	NAIB SUBEDAR	SUBEDAR	SUBEDAR MAJOR
ARMY	NO INSIGNIA							
U.S. RANK TITLES	PRIVATE	PRIVATE 1ST CLASS	CORPORAL	SERGEANT	STAFF SERGEANT	SERGEANT 1ST CLASS	MASTER SERGEANT	SERGEANT MAJOR
BANGLADESH RANK	AIRCRAFTSMAN	LEADING AIRCRAFTSMAN	CORPORAL	NO RANK	SERGEANT	FLIGHT SERGEANT	WARRANT OFFICER	MASTER WARRANT OFFICER
AIR FORCE								
U.S. RANK TITLES	AIRMAN	AIRMAN 1ST CLASS	SERGEANT	STAFF SERGEANT	TECHNICAL SERGEANT	MASTER SERGEANT	SENIOR MASTER SERGEANT	CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT
BANGLADESH RANK	NO RANK	ABLE SEAMAN	LEADING SEAMAN	PETTY OFFICER	CHIEF PETTY OFFICER	MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER		
NAVY		NO INSIGNIA						
U.S. RANK TITLES	SEAMAN APPRENTICE	SEAMAN	PETTY OFFICER 3D CLASS	PETTY OFFICER 2D CLASS	PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS	CHIEF PETTY OFFICER		

Figure 14. Enlisted Ranks and Insignia, 1988

The most formidable ships in the navy were three vintage frigates purchased from Britain in the late 1970s. These included two Leopard-class Type 41 frigates, renamed *Abu Bakr* and *Ali Haider,* and one Salisbury-class Type 61 frigate, renamed *Umar Farooq.* The most modern craft in the inventory were twenty-four patrol boats purchased from the Chinese between 1982 and 1984. These included four Hegu-class fast attack craft, armed with missiles; four P4-class fast-attack craft, armed with torpedoes; and eight Hainan-class and eight Shanghai II-class fast attack patrol craft. These vessels patrolled coastal waters and rivers to interdict foreign fishing vessels and assert Bangladeshi sovereignty over its territorial waters. Other vessels in the Bangladeshi inventory included vintage patrol craft purchased from China, Yugoslavia, India, Japan, and Singapore; a recommissioned Pakistani patrol boat; a similar craft converted from a Thai fishing boat; and five indigenously built Pabna-class riverine patrol craft. Bangladesh also maintained a merchant fleet comprising 274 vessels. Since all were government owned, merchant vessels could be pressed into service during hostilities. In the late 1980s, the Bangladesh Navy had no air wing, marine corps, or reserves.

Air Force

The Bangladesh Air Force, descended from the Pakistan Air Force, had a 1988 personnel strength of 5,000, including more than 400 officers, of whom about 175 were pilots. Like the navy, it started from humble beginnings, inheriting destroyed aircraft, damaged runways, looted stores, and neutralized maintenance facilities. After its formation as a separate service in April 1972, the air force acquired various fighters and transport aircraft from the Soviet Union. The Soviets also trained some air force pilots. Following the political turmoil of the mid-1970s, the air force looked to China for the bulk of its aircraft, as well as for training.

As of mid-1988, the air force inventory included three squadrons of combat aircraft, some of which were probably unserviceable. These squadrons included vintage MiG-21 interceptors supplied by the Soviet Union during the Mujib period. In 1978 China supplied fifteen F-6s (the Chinese version of the Soviet MiG-19) and sixteen A-5s in 1986. The Chinese-supplied fighter inventory in early 1988 totaled two squadrons, or about thirty A-5s and F-6s. Transport aircraft included one An-26 squadron supplied by the Soviets. Helicopters, used in disaster relief and troop transport operations, included thirteen American-made Bell 212s (twin-engine Hueys) and eleven Soviet-supplied Mi-8s. The air force's main





Bangladesh Air Force ground crew maintains a Chinese-made Xian F–7 fighter
Courtesy Bangladesh Ministry of Information
Defence Services Command and Staff College student officers pose with Bangladesh Air Force Mi-8 helicopter
Courtesy James Dunn

operating base and headquarters were in Dhaka. Other air force bases were located at Jessore, also the site of the Bangladesh Air Force Academy, and Chittagong. Small satellite airfields, all of

which doubled as civilian airports, were dispersed throughout the country. The government-owned passenger airline, Biman Bangladesh Airlines, could also be considered an air force asset during emergencies (see Civil Aviation, ch. 3). Aside from conducting relief operations, the air force's main mission is to transport troops and equipment to isolated army outposts in the tribal insurgent belt in the Chittagong Hills.

Auxiliary Forces

In addition to the three service branches, Bangladesh supports an internal security establishment that numbered approximately 55,000 personnel in mid-1988. These formal auxiliaries included two paramilitary forces—the 30,000-member Bangladesh Rifles and the 20,000-member Ansars—and a 5,000-member specialized police unit known as the Armed Police. Although large—there were 10 million members in 1988—a fourth paramilitary/police element, the Village Defence Party, played a marginal internal security role.

Bangladesh Rifles

The country's first line of defense, the Bangladesh Rifles, is descended from the East Pakistan Rifles formed during the period of a united Pakistan (see Pakistan Era, this ch.). The mission of the force includes patrolling borders, interdicting smugglers, investigating transborder crimes, and extending governmental authority in isolated areas. In addition, paramilitary forces provide backup to the army during wartime.

The Bangladesh Rifles came into existence shortly after independence. The original complement of 9,000 personnel were mostly East Pakistan Rifles deserters who had fought with the Mukti Bahini. By 1973 a vigorous recruiting campaign had swelled Bangladesh Rifles ranks to about 20,000 personnel. For budgeting purposes, the Bangladesh Rifles are subordinate to the Ministry of Home Affairs. The army, however, plays a major role in staffing, training, and directing the force. Most Bangladesh Rifles officers are seconded from the regular army. For instance, the army chief of staff, Lieutenant General Atiqur Rahman, served as director general of the Bangladesh Rifles for four and one-half years. In addition, retired JCOs and *jawans* are often assigned to the Bangladesh Rifles in recognition of long years of service. Although Bangladesh Rifles units can be called upon to assist the police in putting down domestic disturbances, their primary role is to guard the nation's frontiers. The force is organized into battalions along military lines. During wartime or declared national emergencies,

the president, in his role as commander in chief, can authorize the military to assume direct control over all paramilitary and police forces.

Ansars

The Ansars, formed in 1948, are a lightly armed auxiliary force that assists the police in maintaining law and order, participates in civic action projects in rural areas, and performs rear area missions in conjunction with the army during wartime. The word *ansar* (Arabic for helper) alludes to the companions of the Prophet Muhammad who traveled with him during his exile from Mecca.

After independence, Mujib suspected Ansars personnel of being disloyal to his regime and a potential armed threat in the countryside and so played down their role. After Mujib was killed and the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini was disbanded, however, army leaders resuscitated the Ansars in an effort to improve rural security, which had deteriorated sharply under Awami League rule. In 1976 the Ansars were designated a "people's defence force," reorganized into battalions, and placed under the direction of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Army personnel are routinely posted for duty with Ansars battalions. In 1980 the Ansars raised four coastal battalions and made plans to post female Ansars contingents to each district. Ansars headquarters and its National Training Centre are located at Gazipur, about thirty kilometers north of Dhaka.

Police

The Armed Police is an elite unit of the national police system that is specifically charged with responding to violent disturbances and threats to public order whenever local police units prove unequal to the challenge. Functioning under the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Armed Police responds to emergencies anywhere in the country. The unit ordinarily cooperates closely with the army and paramilitary forces. It also operates an intelligence wing. Except for perhaps its elite Presidential Security Force, the army does not acknowledge having any specialized counterterrorist squad for protecting dignitaries, thwarting hijackings, and rescuing hostages. These functions are probably handled by units of the Armed Police.

The police, or local constabulary, are the lowest echelon of Bangladesh's security forces. The upper echelons of the police, or "gazetted officers," rank high in the civil service and are relatively well trained and well paid. By contrast, the lower ranks are often poorly trained, poorly equipped, and poorly paid. In the subordinate grades, whose numbers account for about 90 percent of the police, advancement is slow and educational levels low. In addition,

the police are overworked. Further, the police are often viewed by the public as an oppressive arm of government characterized by widespread petty corruption and political manipulation. According to scholar Craig Baxter, "the police have much more contact with citizens than the army, and therefore take the brunt of criticism when they are called upon to quell disturbances." Despite their reputation for corruption, inefficiency, and occasional brutality, the police remain the most vital component of domestic security. Total police strength in 1988 was estimated between 40,000 and 50,000 personnel.

The police services have had to be rebuilt by the new Bangladeshi government because during the independence war the police system of East Pakistan broke down and there was, in effect, no police system except that maintained by the combatant armies in the areas they controlled. The senior police posts had been held by officers of the elite Police Service of Pakistan, most of whom were from West Pakistan. Lower ranking officers and the police rank and file were Bengalis. When the war of independence broke out in March 1971, most of the East Pakistani police defected and either joined the Mukti Bahini or simply disappeared.

Under administrative decentralization programs first introduced by Zia and later implemented and expanded by Ershad, police administration is headed by the inspector general of police, the equivalent of an army lieutenant general and popularly and officially referred to as the IG. He is responsible to the Ministry of Home Affairs. At the district level there is a superintendent of police, and at the subdistrict level, an inspector of police. Commissioners of police direct the work in major urban areas and report directly to the inspector general. As part of Ershad's political strategy of moving decision-making power closer to the grass-roots level, police administration in 1988 generally paralleled the administrative reorganization introduced by the Ershad regime (see The Ershad Period, ch. 4).

Police officers are categorized as gazetted and subordinate, roughly analogous to commissioned and noncommissioned officers in the military services. The top four gazetted police grades, in descending order, are those of inspector general, deputy inspector general, superintendent, and assistant superintendent. Below these gazetted ranks are the upper subordinate positions of inspector, subinspector, and assistant subinspector. Below them are the bulk of police in the lower subordinate grades of head constable and constable.

The inspector general supervises staff departments handling criminal investigation, identification, communications, administration,



Bangladesh Army Type 59 tank in a tactical field exercise
Courtesy James Dunn

and supply. He is further responsible for supervision over the police "ranges," each of which includes a number of districts and is under a deputy inspector general. Within the ranges, police superintendents control districts and supervise one or more assistant superintendents, a number of inspectors, and other personnel. The station house, at the subdistrict (*upazila*—see Glossary) level, is supervised by one of the upper subordinate officers, called the station house officer, with about ten head constables and constables at the station. Assisting the regular police are part-time village constables and Village Defence Party volunteers, who report violations to the nearest police station or apprehend offenders on police orders. These village constables are recruited locally and receive a very small salary.

At all levels the senior police officer responds to the chain of command within the police organization, but he is also responsible in many matters to the general direction of designated civil government officials. These multiple lines of command sometimes cause confusion and disagreement, but the principle of ultimate civilian control has remained dominant since the colonial period. At the national level the inspector general reports to the home secretary; at the range level the deputy inspector general answers to the division commissioner; and at the district level the police superintendent is subordinate to the deputy commissioner, who is in charge of tax collection, law and order, and administration of justice.

Although the deputy commissioner has no authority to interfere directly in the internal organization and discipline of the police, one of his duties is to inspect the police stations of his district at regular intervals. If the deputy commissioner and the police chief disagree on issues relating to police functioning, the deputy commissioner's judgment prevails, but he is dependent upon police cooperation. In case of serious differences, however, both may refer the disputed matter to higher authorities for reconciliation; the deputy commissioner to his commissioner and the superintendent to his deputy inspector general.

Village Defence Party

A fourth auxiliary force, known as the Village Defence Party, was formed by Zia in 1976. As its designation indicates, the Village Defence Party was charged with routine village security duties, in addition to its primary mission of promoting rural improvement projects, such as digging canals. Under Zia's 1980 Self-Sufficient Village Government Plan, 6 million men and 4 million women were enrolled in local Village Defence Party units. The organization, overseen by the Ministry of Home Affairs, played a peripheral role in village security. After Zia's assassination in 1981, the Village Defence Party plan became less visible, though many of the rural development aspects of the program were continued as part of Ershad's decentralization effort (see Local Administration, ch. 4).

Public Order and Internal Security

Violence and Crime

Bengalis have been opposing governments since those imposed by the Mughals in the sixteenth century (see Islamization of Bengal, 1202–1757, ch. 1). Bengali secession movements, first from Britain and then from Pakistan, were violent struggles that exacted an enormous human toll. This legacy of violence, coupled with the propensity to organize the population into mass movements to overthrow governments, carried over into the postindependence era.

A number of fringe parties that embrace violence as an acceptable political tactic existed. In the mid-1970s, Maoist splinter groups such as the Bangladesh Communist Party/Marxist-Leninist carried on a rural-based insurrection. Acting under the direction of two renowned freedom fighters, Mohammed Toaha and retired Colonel M. Ziauddin, guerrilla bands executed landlords and moneylenders and staged hit-and-run raids on police stations and government armories. By the late 1970s, however, Maoism had lost much of its appeal in the countryside, and most guerrilla factions sought

to become legal organizations. The Bangladesh Communist Party/ Marxist-Leninist, the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal, and dozens of other left-wing parties all followed this route. The country's mainstream Marxist party, the pro-Soviet Bangladesh Communist Party, did not promote organized antigovernment violence, although its student and labor union fronts have been suspected of engaging in violent acts (see Party Politics, ch. 4).

Government officials tend not to make a sharp distinction between ordinary crime and political crime or subversion but describe it all as destructive to the country. Customarily, authorities speak of criminal and subversive elements as ''antisocial forces'' or ''miscreants'' and frequently describe them as composed of persons who oppose independent Bangladesh. Similarly, Ershad has condemned democratic opposition parties for engaging in ''terrorism and hooliganism'' in their campaigns to unseat him.

Insurgency in the Chittagong Hills

Probably the longest running source of domestic violence has been the tribal insurgency that has festered in the remote Chittagong Hill Tracts (see Glossary) since the late 1970s (see Ethnicity and Linguistic Diversity, ch. 2). Spearheaded by the predominantly Chakma guerrilla band known as the Shanti Bahini (Peace Force), in the late 1980s the rebels were still seeking autonomous status for the Chittagong Hills, the expulsion of Bengali settlers from traditional tribal lands, the restoration of tribal rights and privileges enjoyed under British and Pakistani rule and subsequently repealed by the Mujib government, and the withdrawal of the army from the Chittagong Hills. With an estimated strength of 2,000 lightly armed guerrillas, the Shanti Bahini carried out attacks against Bengali settlers, government facilities, and army convoys.

Through the late 1980s, military pacification efforts had been ineffective and often brutal. The Twenty-fourth Infantry Division, headquartered in Chittagong, was the army's largest formation with four infantry brigades and a specialized counterinsurgency unit based at Khagrachari. It mounted reprisal raids against civilian tribespeople as warnings against further attacks. Observers through 1986 estimated that about 400 security personnel had lost their lives in the Chittagong Hills; the civilian death toll was estimated at around 2,000. According to a September 1986 report by Amnesty International, the army regularly engaged in ''unlawful killings and torture,'' acts that are specifically prohibited under the Constitution and various international accords to which Bangladesh is a party. Another human rights organization termed the army's Chittagong Hills campaign ''genocide.'' Some commentators allege

that the army has been overly zealous in stamping out the insurgency because the tribespeople are not Muslims.

In the late 1980s, the Chittagong Hills remained off-limits to all outsiders without a special permit. Details of the fighting therefore have been sketchy. Ershad, like his predecessors, denied reports of human rights violations and maintained that tribal rights would be safeguarded if the Shanti Bahini laid down their arms, accepted government offers of amnesty and rehabilitation, and participated in elections. Aside from the domestic implications of widespread violence in the Chittagong Hills, the fighting also had serious regional consequences. Bangladesh has frequently asserted that India has aided the Shanti Bahini by offering arms assistance, military training, and bases. India has denied the charges and has countered that Bangladesh Army operations in the Chittagong Hills have precipitated a massive exodus of Chakma refugees into the Indian state of Tripura.

Criminal Justice

In general, the criminal codes and procedures in effect in Bangladesh derive from the period of British rule, as amended by Pakistan and Bangladesh. These basic documents include the Penal Code, first promulgated in 1860 as the Indian Penal Code; the Police Act of 1861; the Evidence Act of 1872; the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1898; the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908; and the Official Secrets Act of 1911.

The major classes of crimes are listed in the Penal Code, the country's most important and comprehensive penal statute. Among the listed categories of more serious crimes are activities called "offenses against the state." The Penal Code authorizes the government to prosecute any person or group of persons conspiring or abetting in a conspiracy to overthrow the government by force. An offense of this nature is also defined as "war against the state." Whether or not an offense constitutes a conspiracy is determined by the "intent" of the participant, rather than by the number of the participants involved, so as to distinguish it from a riot or any other form of disturbance not regarded as antinational. Section 121 of the Penal Code makes antinational offenses punishable by death or imprisonment for twenty years. The incitement of hatred, contempt, or disaffection toward a lawfully constituted authority is also a criminal offense punishable by a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. Among other categories of felonies are offenses against the public tranquillity (meaning unlawful assembly), rioting, and public disturbances; offenses relating to religion; and offenses against property, such as theft, robbery, and dacoity (robbery by a group of five or more persons).



Dhaka Central Jail
Courtesy Siria Lopez

Punishment is divided into five categories: death; banishment, ranging from seven years to life; imprisonment; forfeiture of property; and fines. The imprisonment may be "simple" or "rigorous" (hard labor), ranging from the minimum of twenty-four hours for drunken or disorderly conduct to a maximum of fourteen years at hard labor for more serious offenses. Juvenile offenders may be sentenced to detention in reform schools for a period of three to seven years. For minor infractions whipping, not exceeding fifteen lashes, may be prescribed as an alternative to detention.

Preventive detention may be ordered under the amended Security of Pakistan Act of 1952 and under Section 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure when, in the opinion of the authorities, there is a strong likelihood of public disorder. Bangladeshi regimes have made extensive use of this provision. Similarly, Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, frequently invoked by magistrates for periods up to two months, prohibits assembly of five or more persons, holding of public meetings, and carrying of firearms. In addition, the Disturbed Areas (Special Powers) Ordinance of 1962 empowers a magistrate or an officer in charge of a police contingent to open fire or use force against any persons breaching the peace in the disturbed areas and to arrest and search without a warrant. The assembly of five or more persons and the carrying of firearms may also be prohibited under this ordinance.

Persons charged with espionage are punishable under the Official Secrets Act of 1911, as amended in 1923 and 1968. As revised in May 1968, this statute prescribes death as the maximum penalty for a person convicted of espionage. In 1966, in an effort to prevent information leaks, the central government passed a regulation prohibiting former government officials from working for foreign diplomatic missions. In general, all persons seeking employment with foreign embassies or any foreign government agencies were also required to obtain prior permission from Bangladeshi authorities.

The custody and correction of persons sentenced to imprisonment is regulated under the Penal Code of 1860, the Prisons Act of 1894, and the Prisoners Act of 1900, as amended. The prison system has expanded but in 1988 was basically little changed from the later days of the British Raj (see Glossary). The highest jail administration official is the inspector general of prisons or, if this office is not separately assigned, the inspector general of police. At the division level or the police range level, the senior official is called director of prisons; at the district level, he is the jail superintendent. Below the district jail level are the subdistrict and village police lockups. Dhaka Central Jail is the largest and most secure prison and has more extensive facilities than those at the successive lower echelons. All installations are staffed by prison police usually permanently assigned to this duty. In general, prisons and jails have low standards of hygiene and sanitation and are seriously overcrowded. Rehabilitation programs with trained social workers were rudimentary or nonexistent through the late 1980s. Overcrowding—the most serious basic problem—was likely to worsen as the 1990s approached because of the mounting number of arrests connected with opposition campaigns to oust Ershad from office.

The Military in the Late 1980s

According to senior Bangladeshi commanders in the late 1980s, the military was the only institution capable of providing the nation with honest and efficient administration. In their view, civilian politicians were obsessed with settling political scores, undercutting the influence of the armed forces, and downplaying the military's role in leading the nation to victory in 1971. Moreover, most officers regarded politicians as hopelessly corrupt and incapable of creating confidence in the government's capacity to make the best use of vitally needed foreign assistance. The military disregarded suggestions made by the opposition to curtail its power, such as the formation of a "people's army," the outright abolition of the military, or various constitutional provisions that would circumscribe the military's political influence.

Many Bangladeshi officers asserted that they would prefer to limit their role in administering the country and concentrate on their traditional role of maintaining defense preparedness. They feared, however, that if the military were not in a position to safeguard the national interest, a government controlled by the opposition would mortgage the country's future and, conceivably, destroy the armed forces. Civilian political leaders did not reassure the military on this score. For instance, Begum Khaleda Zia, the widow of Ziaur Rahman and the head of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, has called on freedom fighters in the armed forces to take matters into their own hands and join with her party in ousting Ershad. Sheikh Hasina Wajed, the daughter of Mujib and the head of the Awami League, has campaigned against "corrupt generals" and threatened to reduce the army to an internal police force if she came to power. Faced with these kinds of threats, the military has consistently supported Ershad's cautious program of retaining the army's watchdog political role in a nominally civilian government.

* * *

Scholarly works on the role of the military in Bangladeshi society include Ashish Kumar Roy's *Nation Building and the Army in Bangladesh* and journalist Anthony Mascarenhas's *Bangladesh: A Legacy of Blood.* "Bangladesh in the Early 1980s: Praetorian Politics in an Intermediate Regime" by Peter J. Bertocci and "Politicization of the Bangladesh Military: A Response to Perceived Shortcomings of Civilian Government" by Zillur R. Khan also provide useful insights. Basic information on personnel strengths, organization, and weapons can be found in the annual *Military Balance.* Craig Baxter's *Bangladesh: A New Nation in an Old Setting* is particularly useful.

There is a rich literature dealing with the organizational history of the Bangladesh military. Included among these are Stephen P. Cohen's *The Indian Army* and *The Pakistan Army,* Rounaq Jahan's *Pakistan: Failure in National Integration,* and Subrata Roy Chowdhury's *The Genesis of Bangladesh.* Details of the internal security problems during the first years of independence are found in Talukder Maniruzzaman's article "Bangladesh: An Unfinished Revolution?" The Hoover Institution's *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs* is also a useful source on left-wing political violence in Bangladesh.

Censorship restrictions make the coverage of military affairs in the Bangladeshi press less than enlightening. The English-language *Bangladesh Observer* and the *Illustrated Weekly of Bangladesh* are useful.

The Foreign Broadcast Information Service's *Daily Report: Near East and South Asia* and the weekly *Far Eastern Economic Review* are probably the best resources for military affairs. Although the Bangladeshi armed forces journal *Senani* is accessible only to those who read Bangla, it contains useful photographs of senior officers, weapons systems, and military installations. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Appendix

Table

1 Metric Conversion Coefficients and Factors
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Table 1. Metric Conversion Coefficients and Factors

When you know	Multiply by	To find
Millimeters	0.04	inches
Centimeters	0.39	inches
Meters	3.3	feet
Kilometers	0.62	miles
Hectares (10,000 m^2)	2.47	acres
Square kilometers	0.39	square miles
Cubic meters	35.3	cubic feet
Liters	0.26	gallons
Kilograms	2.2	pounds
Metric tons	0.98	long tons
	1.1	short tons
	2,204	pounds
Degrees Celsius (Centigrade)	9 divide by 5 and add 32	degrees Fahrenheit

Table 2. Climatic Statistics, Selected Stations, 1986

Station	Precipitation (in centimeters)	Temperature (in degrees Celsius)		Humidity (average daily, in percent)	
		Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.
Barisal	211	10.0	38.4	71	92
Bogra	215	9.5	39.5	51	87
Chittagong	278	12.4	35.4	63	84
Comilla	205	10.0	36.6	65	86
Cox's Bazar	286	13.5	34.5	62	89
Dhaka	248	10.6	39.5	52	84
Dinajpur	198	8.8	40.5	45	87
Faridpur	232	10.5	40.5	52	86
Jessore	210	9.4	40.2	52	88
Khulna	242	8.0	38.7	66	88
Maijdi Court	298	10.6	36.5	67	88
Mymensingh	305	11.1	36.2	57	86
Rajshahi	152	7.8	41.5	47	86
Rangamati	244	12.5	37.4	57	86
Rangpur	231	9.0	39.1	53	89
Sylhet	329	10.6	36.7	54	88

Source: Based on information from Bangladesh, Ministry of Planning, Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1987,* Dhaka, July 1988, 23–27.

Table 3. Population Density, Selected Years, 1881–2000

Year	Population (in thousands) [1]	Density (per square kilometer) [2]
1881	25,086	187
1891	27,103	202
1901	28,928	216
1911	31,555	235
1921	33,255	248
1931	35,602	266
1941	41,997	313
1951	44,832	312
1961	50,840	379
1974	71,478	533
1981	87,129	650
1988	109,964	821
1990 [3]	112,865	842
1995 [3]	127,086	948
2000 [3]	142,141	1,060

[1] Some years include enumerated census population data.
[2] Calculation based on land area of 133,910 square kilometers.
[3] Projected.

Source: Based on information from Bangladesh, Ministry of Planning, Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1987,* Dhaka, July 1988, 38, 71; and United States, Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook, 1988,* Washington, May 1988, 20.

Table 4. Area, Population, and Density by Region, 1981 and 1985

Region	Area (in square kilometers)	Population (in thousands)		Density (per square kilometer)	
		1981	1985	1981	1985
Bandarban	4,499	180	200	40	44
Barisal	7,295	4,819	5,385	660	738
Bogra	3,886	2,814	3,245	724	835
Chittagong	7,453	5,664	6,329	759	849
Chittagong Hill Tracts *	8,675	602	674	69	77
Comilla	6,596	7,103	7,937	1,076	1,203
Dhaka	7,466	10,340	11,554	1,384	1,547
Dinajpur	6,563	3,300	3,687	502	561
Faridpur	6,878	4,918	5,496	715	799
Jamalpur	3,347	2,527	2,823	755	843
Jessore	6,570	4,145	4,632	630	705
Khulna	12,163	4,469	4,993	367	410
Kushtia	3,405	2,365	2,642	694	775
Mymensingh	9,664	6,779	7,575	701	783
Noakhali	5,457	3,938	4,401	721	806
Pabna	4,730	3,534	3,948	747	834
Patuakhali	4,093	1,897	2,120	463	517
Rajshahi	9,452	5,440	6,078	575	643
Rangpur	9,592	6,716	7,505	700	782
Sylhet	12,714	5,835	6,520	461	512
Tangail	3,401	2,527	2,823	743	830
BANGLADESH	143,899	89,912	100,567	624	698

* As of January 1988, known as Rangamati Region.

Source: Based on information from Bangladesh, Ministry of Planning, Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, *Statistical Pocketbook of Bangladesh, 1986,* Dhaka, 1987, 117–38.

Table 5. Population by Age-Group, Sex, and Urban-Rural Distribution, 1981 Census
(in thousands)

Age-Group	Urban			Rural			National		
	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes
0–4	955	939	1,894	6,494	6,405	12,899	7,449	7,344	14,793
5–9	935	899	1,834	6,248	6,076	12,324	7,183	6,975	14,158
10–14	947	848	1,795	5,279	4,576	9,855	6,226	5,424	11,650
15–19	744	621	1,365	3,385	3,397	6,782	4,129	4,018	8,147
20–24	741	563	1,304	2,503	2,972	5,475	3,244	3,535	6,779
25–29	709	472	1,181	2,532	2,707	5,239	3,241	3,179	6,420
30–34	528	344	872	1,964	2,127	4,091	2,492	2,471	4,963
35–39	450	267	717	1,908	1,814	3,722	2,358	2,081	4,439
40–44	360	227	587	1,560	1,547	3,107	1,920	1,774	3,694
45–49	259	156	415	1,326	1,121	2,447	1,585	1,277	2,862
50–54	233	174	407	1,184	1,099	2,283	1,417	1,273	2,690
55–59	130	79	209	794	618	1,412	924	697	1,621
60–64	153	112	265	893	791	1,684	1,046	903	1,949
65–69	67	51	118	465	330	795	535	380	915
70–74	74	56	130	465	356	821	535	414	949
75–79	28	15	43	215	135	350	248	151	399
80–84	32	19	51	188	156	344	215	184	399
85–89	9	5	14	56	42	98	68	39	107
90–94	9	6	15	45	37	82	55	43	98
95 and over	7	5	12	45	37	82	49	39	88
TOTAL	7,370	5,858	13,228	37,549	36,343	73,892	44,919	42,201	87,120

Source: Based on information from Bangladesh, Ministry of Planning, Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1987,* Dhaka, July 1988, 36.

Table 6. Foreign Employment of Bangladeshi Nationals by Country, Selected Years, 1979–87

Country	1979	1981	1983	1985	1987
Algeria	25	0	0	0	0
Bahrain	827	1,392	2,473	2,965	2,055
Ethiopia	20	0	0	0	0
Iran	4	0	0	144	0
Iraq	2,362	13,153	4,932	5,051	3,847
Jordan	73	66	42	0	0
Kuwait	2,289	5,461	10,283	7,384	9,559
Libya	1,967	4,162	2,209	1,514	2,271
Malaysia	0	0	2	792	440
Nigeria	51	17	41	0	0
Oman	3,777	7,351	10,351	9,218	0
Qatar	1,383	2,268	7,541	4,751	5,831
Saudi Arabia	6,490	13,384	11,462	37,111	39,350
Singapore	110	1,083	211	0	0
Uganda	50	0	0	0	0
United Arab Emirates	5,055	6,418	6,615	8,336	9,953
Lebanon, Syria, and other	0	1,029	2,279	428	711
TOTAL	24,483	55,784	58,441	77,694	74,017

Source: Based on information from Bangladesh, Ministry of Planning, Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1987,* Dhaka, July 1988, 114.

Table 7. Unemployed Persons by Age-Group, Sex, and Urban-Rural Distribution, Fiscal Year 1984
(in percentage)

Age-Group	Urban			Rural			National		
	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes
10–19	21.1	22.2	21.5	31.2	32.2	31.4	29.0	30.1	29.2
15–19	20.0	22.2	21.5	36.1	38.9	36.7	32.9	36.7	33.7
20–24	27.8	33.3	28.0	17.4	21.1	18.7	19.7	23.5	20.5
25–29	20.0	11.1	18.7	11.2	7.8	10.2	12.9	8.5	12.0
30–34	1.1	5.6	1.9	1.2	—	1.0	1.2	0.9	1.2
35 and over	10.0	5.6	8.4	2.8	—	2.2	4.2	0.9	3.4
TOTAL *	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

— means negligible.
* Figures may not add to total because of rounding.

Source: Based on information from Bangladesh, Ministry of Planning, Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1986,* Dhaka, 1987, 216.

Table 8. Major Religious Communities, Selected Years, 1901–81
(in percentages)

Year	Muslim	Hindu	Other *	Total
1901	66.1	33.0	0.9	100.0
1911	67.2	31.5	1.3	100.0
1921	68.1	30.6	1.3	100.0
1931	69.5	29.4	1.1	100.0
1941	70.3	28.0	1.7	100.0
1951	76.9	22.0	1.1	100.0
1961	80.4	18.5	1.1	100.0
1971	85.4	13.5	1.1	100.0
1981	86.6	12.2	1.2	100.0

* Buddhist, Christian, and "others."

Source: Based on information from Bangladesh, Ministry of Planning, Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1987,* Dhaka, July 1988, 46.

Table 9. Health Care Indicators, Fiscal Years 1980, 1985, and 1990

Indicator	Unit	1980	1985	1990 *
Infant mortality	per 1,000 live births	140.0	125.0	100.0
Maternal mortality	-do-	7.0	6.0	4.0
Crude birth rate	per 1,000 population	43.3	39.0	31.0
Crude death rate	-do-	16.8	15.8	13.0
Life expectancy at birth	years	56.9	55.1	54.0
Hospital beds	number	21,141.0	21,637.0	40,734.0
Population per hospital bed	-do-	4,128.0	3,589.0	2,712.0
Coverage of population by primary health care services	percentage of population	25.0	30.0	65.0
Physicians	number	11,000.0	16,000.0	22,500.0
Population per physician	-do-	8,810.0	6,640.0	4,755.0

* Target.

Source: Based on information from Bangladesh, Ministry of Planning, Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1987,* Dhaka, July 1988, 59, 372, 376, 378.

Table 10. Major Aid Donors, Fiscal Years 1981 and 1986 (in millions of United States dollars)

Donor	1981		1986	
	Commitments	Disbursements	Commitments	Disbursements
Asian Development Bank	164	46	177	159
Britain	6	51	87	42
Canada	40	70	101	98
International Development Association	334	178	489	348
Japan	232	162	63	139
United Nations system	65	38	148	66
United States	191	134	232	104
Other	630	469	365	347
TOTAL	1,662	1,148	1,662	1,303

Source: Based on information from Bangladesh, Ministry of Planning, Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1987,* Dhaka, July 1988, 408–9.

Table 11. Production of Selected Agricultural Commodities, Selected Fiscal Years, 1981–87
(in millions of tons unless otherwise indicated)

Commodity	1981	1983	1985	1986 [1]	1987 [2]
Cotton (1,000 bales)	10.00	58.00	29.00	29.00	50.00
Food grains					
Rice					
Aus	3.28	3.06	2.78	2.83	3.10
Aman	7.96	7.60	7.93	8.54	8.20
Boro	2.63	3.54	3.90	3.67	4.10
Total rice	13.87	14.20	14.61	15.04	15.40
Wheat	1.09	1.09	1.46	1.04	1.30
Others	0.05	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.04
Total food grains	15.01	15.34	16.10	16.11	16.74
Jute (1,000 bales)	4,943.00	4,881.00	5,111.00	8,610.00	6,750.00
Oilseeds	0.25	0.26	0.27	0.27	0.27
Potatoes	1.00	1.17	1.18	1.10	1.15
Pulses	0.22	0.20	0.19	0.18	0.24
Sugarcane	6.60	7.48	7.00	6.64	7.00
Sweet potatoes	0.70	0.73	0.69	0.61	0.56
Tea (1,000 tons)	40.00	41.00	38.00	37.00	40.00
Tobacco (1,000 tons)	48.00	51.00	50.00	46.00	50.00

[1] Estimated.
[2] Projected.

Source: Based on information from Bangladesh, Ministry of Planning, Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1986,* Dhaka, 1987, various pages.

Table 12. Production of Selected Industrial Commodities, Selected Fiscal Years, 1981–87
(in millions of tons unless otherwise indicated)

Commodity	1981	1983	1985	1987 [1]
Textiles [2]				
Cotton cloth (1,000 meters)	78,612	59,741	62,590	59,410
Cotton yarn (1,000 kilograms)	46,235	45,237	48,139	45,141
Sacking	309,535	241,647	222,595	248,020
Carpet backing	71,276	93,966	80,922	80,308
Synthetic yarn (1,000 kilograms)	1,499	1,381	1,546	1,059
Paper products				
Newsprint	30,902	26,741	45,972	46,643
Particle board	1,228	543	2,308	2,502
Chemicals and fertilizers				
Urea	341,734	371,008	741,463	846,458
Ammonium sulfate	9,233	12,282	9,634	9,316
Caustic soda	5,984	5,685	6,811	8,331
D.D.T.	1,016	412	1,252	911
Paints and varnish (gallons)	424,370	405,784	583,088	635,502
Cycle tires and tubes (dozens)	16,145	12,621	28,236	29,683
Cement	344,830	306,688	240,176	309,677
Steel ingots	139,343	47,401	101,149	82,081
Ceiling fans (units)	83,760	93,694	128,045	122,998
Television sets				
Black and white (units)	26,314	33,452	56,316	60,730
Color (units)	0	174	706	14,341
Transportation equipment (units)				
Trucks	1,297	0	257	456
Buses	508	56	54	400
Automobiles	0	0	0	50
Jeeps	451	0	226	180
Motorcycles	6,122	3,167	17,334	10,469
Bicycles	28,214	13,338	14,712	16,917

[1] Projected.
[2] Includes ready-made garment production.

Source: Based on information from Bangladesh, Ministry of Planning, Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1987,* Dhaka, July 1988, 246–49.

Table 13. Exports, Selected Fiscal Years, 1981–87
(in millions of United States dollars)

Commodity	1981	1983	1985	1986	1987 *
Jute					
Raw jute	119	110	151	124	92
Jute manufactures	357	320	390	293	306
Total jute	476	430	541	417	398
Frozen seafood	40	72	87	113	165
Garments	3	11	116	131	150
Leather goods	56	58	70	61	90
Petroleum products	49	31	21	17	15
Tea	41	46	61	33	38
Other	46	38	39	47	44
TOTAL	711	686	935	819	900

*Projected.

Source: Based on information from Bangladesh Bank, Statistics Department, *Annual Export Receipts, 1985–86,* Dhaka, 1986, 173–77.

Table 14. Imports, Selected Fiscal Years, 1981–87
(in millions of United States dollars)

Commodity	1981	1983	1985	1986	1987 [1]
Food					
Rice	40	97	176	8	21
Wheat	210	288	322	212	267
Edible oil and oilseeds	103	88	109	147	109
Total food	353	473	607	367	397
Intermediate goods					
Crude petroleum	343	240	226	178	137
Petroleum products	160	171	133	176	128
Fertilizer	104	68	137	103	22
Cement	33	44	26	40	55
Raw cotton	108	56	106	52	85
Other [2]	749	539	796	757	851
Total intermediate goods	1,497	1,118	1,424	1,306	1,278
Capital goods	683	655	616	691	725
TOTAL	2,533	2,246	2,647	2,364	2,400

[1] Projected.
[2] Includes minor imports of food.

Source: Based on information from Bangladesh Bank, Statistics Department, *Annual Import Payments, 1985–86,* Dhaka, 1986, 135–41.

Table 15. Major Trading Partners, Fiscal Year 1986
(in millions of takas) *

Country	Exports	Imports	Total	Percentage of Total Trade
Belgium	1,015	347	1,362	1.5
Britain	1,569	2,360	3,929	4.3
Canada	453	2,260	2,713	3.0
China	747	2,370	3,117	3.5
India	76	3,038	3,114	3.4
Iran	959	1,078	2,037	2.2
Italy	1,488	336	1,824	2.0
Japan	1,946	8,233	10,179	11.3
Malaysia	99	1,277	1,376	1.5
Netherlands	477	1,106	1,583	1.8
Pakistan	1,464	2,045	3,509	3.9
Saudi Arabia	190	1,716	1,906	2.1
Singapore	1,272	9,071	10,343	11.5
South Korea	235	3,700	3,935	4.4
United Arab Emirates	195	3,222	3,417	3.8
United States	6,862	5,088	11,950	13.2
West Germany	716	2,623	3,339	3.7
Other	7,633	13,059	20,692	22.9
TOTAL	27,396	62,929	90,325	100.0

* For value of the taka—see Glossary.

Source: Based on information from Bangladesh, Ministry of Planning, Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1987,* Dhaka, July 1988, 329-32.

Table 16. Government Ministries, 1982 and 1988

December 1982	July 1988
Agriculture	Agriculture
Chief Martial Law Administrator's Secretariat*	Civil Aviation and Tourism
Commerce and Industries	Communications
Defence and Civil Aviation	Cultural Affairs
Education, Religious Affairs, Sports, and Cultural Affairs	Defence
Finance and Planning	Education and Culture
Flood Control, Energy, and Mineral Resources	Energy and Mineral Resources
Food and Relief	Establishment and Reorganization
Foreign Affairs	Finance
Health and Population Control	Fisheries and Livestock
Home Affairs	Food
Information and Broadcasting	Foreign Affairs
Labour and Manpower	Health and Family Planning
Law, Land Administration, and Land Reforms,	Home Affairs
Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives	Industries
President's Secretariat*	Information
Public Works and Urban Development	Jute
Social Welfare and Women's Affairs	Labour and Manpower
Transport and Communication	Land
	Law and Justice
	Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives
	Planning
	Religious Affairs
	Shipping
	Social Welfare and Women's Affairs
	Textiles
	Works and Urban Development
	Youth Development and Sports

*Ministerial-level organization.

Source: Based on information from United States, Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence, *Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments,* Washington, December 1982, 6; and United States, Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence, *Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments,* Washington, July-August 1988, 5-6.

Table 17. Parliamentary Election Results, 1973–88

Party	Number of Seats Won			
	1973	1979	1986	1988
Awami League	282	41 [1]	76	—
Bangladesh Nationalist Party	—	207	—	—
Jamaat e Islami	—	—	10	—
Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal	1	8	7 [2]	21 [3]
Jatiyo Party	—	—	153	251
Muslim League	—	—	4	—
Muslim League—Islamic Democratic League	—	20	—	—
Other parties	1	8	18	2
Independents	5	16	32	25
TOTAL	289	300	300	299

— means did not participate.
[1] Abdul Malik Ukil faction thirty-nine seats; Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury faction two seats.
[2] A.S.M. Abdur Rab faction four seats; Shajahan Siraj faction three seats.
[3] Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal three seats; Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (A.S.M. Abdur Rab) eighteen seats.

Table 18. Army Chiefs of Staff, 1971–88

Name and Rank	Appointed by	Tenure
M.A.G. Osmany (General)	Bangladesh government-in-exile	December 1971–April 1972 (commander in chief of armed forces)
K.M. Shafiullah (Colonel)	Sheikh Mujibur Rahman	April 1972–August 1975 (dismissed after coup)
Ziaur Rahman (Major General)	Khondakar Mushtaque Ahmed	August–November 1975 (dismissed in November 3 coup)
Khaled Musharraf (Brigadier)	Self	November 3–7, 1975 (ringleader of short-lived coup; killed on November 7)
Ziaur Rahman (Major General)	-Do-	November 7, 1975–November 1980
Hussain Muhammad Ershad (Major General, later Lieutenant General)	Ziaur Rahman	December 1980–August 1986
Atiqur Rahman (Lieutenant General)	Hussain Muhammad Ershad	September 1, 1986–

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Glossary

Awami League (People's League)—Political party of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Founded in 1949; won absolute majority in putative Pakistan Constituent Assembly in 1970, an event leading to 1971 civil war and Bangladesh independence.

Bangla—Official language of Bangladesh; often referred to as Bengali before 1971. An Indo-European language.

Bangladesh National Party—Political party of Ziaur Rahman (Zia). Founded in 1978 and became majority party during Zia's presidency.

Bengal—Formerly province of British India, now encompasses India's state of West Bengal and all of Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan—*q.v.*) During Mughal period (1526–1858) a province, later governed by a president of the British East India company, and during the British Raj (*q.v.*), a state.

Bengali calendar—Year begins on April 15 of the Gregorian calendar; based on Muslim, or hijra (*q.v.*) calendar and used widely in religious life.

British Raj—Period of British colonial rule (1858–1947) over India, including those parts of British India that were to become Pakistan (on August 15, 1947) and Bangladesh (on December 16, 1971).

Chittagong Hill Tracts—Commonly used name for area comprising Rangamati, Khagrachari, and Bandarban regions in southeastern Bangladesh.

crore—In Bangladesh, as elsewhere in South Asia, large numerical units are usually expressed in crores; a crore is 10 million.

Delhi Sultanate—period of early Indian-based Islamic rule of Bengal (1206–1341). The Delhi Sultanate continued in India proper until 1526.

district—*zila* in Bangla (*q.v.*). One of major administrative subdivisions in Bangladesh; an average of three districts make up each of the twenty-one regions of Bangladesh. In 1988 there were sixty-four districts in Bangladesh.

East Bengal—Eastern part or East Wing of Pakistan from August 15, 1947, to December 16, 1971. Another name for East Pakistan (*q.v.*).

East Pakistan—From August 15, 1947, to December 16, 1971, the eastern part, or East Wing, of united Pakistan. Seceded in 1971 to become Bangladesh.

East Wing—*See* East Pakistan.

fiscal year (FY)—July 1 through June 30.

freedom fighters—*See* Mukti Bahini.

gross domestic product (GDP)—A value measure of the flow of domestic goods and services produced by an economy over a period of time, such as a year. Only output values of goods for final consumption and investment are included because the values of primary and intermediate production are assumed to be included in final prices. GDP is sometimes aggregated and shown at market prices, meaning that indirect taxes and subsidies are included; when these have been eliminated, the result is GDP at factor cost. The word *gross* indicates that deductions for depreciation of physical assets have not been made. *See* also gross national product.

gross national product (GNP)—Gross domestic product (*q.v.*) plus the net income or loss stemming from transactions with foreign countries. GNP is the broadest measurement of the output of goods and services of an economy. It can be calculated at market prices, which include indirect taxes and subsidies. Because indirect taxes and subsidies are only transfer payments, GNP is often calculated at factor cost by removing indirect taxes and subsidies.

hadith—Tradition, based on the precedent of the Prophet Muhammad's nondivinely revealed deeds and words, that serves as one of the sources of Islamic law (sharia—*q.v.*).

hijra—Literally, to migrate, to sever relations, to leave one's tribe. Throughout the Muslim world, hijra refers to the migration of Muhammad and his followers to Medina in A.D. 622, marking the start of the Muslim era. In this sense, the word has come into European languages as "hegira" and is usually and somewhat misleadingly translated as "flight."

imam—In general use, means the leader of congregational prayers, implying no ordination or special spiritual powers beyond sufficient education to carry out this function. The word is also used figuratively by many Sunni Muslims to mean the leader of the Islamic community. Among Shia Muslims, it indicates the particular descendant of the House of Ali who is believed to have been God's designated repository of the spiritual authority inherent in that line. The identity of this individual and the means of ascertaining his identity have been the major issues causing divisions among the Shias (*q.v.*).

International Monetary Fund (IMF)—Established along with the World Bank (*q.v.*) in 1945, the IMF is a specialized agency affiliated with the United Nations and is responsible for stabilizing international exchange loans to its members (including

industralized and developing countries) when they experience balance of payments difficulties. These loans frequently carry conditions that require substantial internal economic adjustments by the recipients, most of which are developing countries.

Jatiyo Party—Political party of Hussain Muhammed Ershad. Established in 1985 and won majority control of Parliament in 1986 and 1988 elections.

jihad—The struggle to establish the law of God on earth, often interpreted to mean "holy war."

Mukti Bahini—Literally, liberation force, frequently taken to mean freedom fighters; the pro-Awami League (*q.v.*) military forces that led civil war against the Pakistani Army in 1971.

sharia—Islamic law.

Shia (or Shiite, from Shiat Ali, the Party of Ali)—A member of the smaller of the two great divisions of Islam. The Shias support the claims of Ali and his line to presumptive right to the caliphate and leadership of the Muslim community, and on this issue they remain divided from the Sunnis (*q.v.*). Shias revere twelve imams, the last of whom is believed to be hidden from view.

Shiite—*See* Shia.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)—comprises the seven nations of South Asia: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka; founded at a meeting of foreign ministers in New Delhi on August 1–2, 1983; inaugural meeting of heads of state and government in Dhaka on December 7–8, 1986. The goal is to effect economic, technical, and cultural cooperation and to provide a forum for discussion of South Asian political problems.

subdistrict—*upazila* in Bangla (*q.v.*). A rural administrative subdivision of a district (*q.v.*). In 1988 there were 460 subdistricts in Bangladesh.

Sufi—Comes from *suf,* the Arabic word for "wool." The term derives from the practice of wearing a woolen robe, a sign of dedicating oneself to the mystical life, known in Islam as becoming a Sufi. Sufis seek mystical union with God and were condemned by some Sunni (*q.v.*) legal schools.

Sufism—*See* Sufi.

Sunni—Comes from sunna meaning "custom," giving connotation of orthodoxy. A member of the larger of the two great divisions of Islam. The Sunnis supported the traditional method of election to the caliphate and accepted the Umayyad line. On this issue they divided from the Shias (*q.v.*) in the first great schism within Islam.

Sunni Islam—*See* Sunni. Sometimes given as Sunnite Islam.

taka—Bangladesh's unit of currency adopted in 1971, derives from the word *tonka,* the Iranian coinage used during the Delhi Sultanate (*q.v.*). In September 1988, the official exchange rate was US$1 equals Tk34.20. One hundred paisas constitute 1 taka; there are 1-, 5-, 10-, 25-, 50-, and 100-paisa coins and banknotes in 1-, 10-, 20-, 50-, 100-, and 500-taka denominations. Ten million takas equals 1 crore (*q.v.*) takas.

ulama—Man trained in Islamic theology.

union—A rural administrative unit, subdivision of a subdistrict (*upazila--q.v.*). In 1988 there were 4,401 unions in Bangladesh.

upazila—See subdistrict.

World Bank—Informal name used to designate a group of three affiliated international institutions: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA), and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The IBRD, established in 1945, has the primary purpose of providing loans to developing countries for productive projects. The IDA, a legally separate loan fund but administered by the staff of the IBRD, was set up in 1960 to furnish credits to the poorest developing countries on much easier terms than those of conventional IBRD loans. The IFC, founded in 1956, supplements the activities of the IBRD through loans and assistance designed specifically to encourage the growth of productive private enterprises in the less developed countries. The president and certain senior officers of the IBRD hold the same positions in the IFC. The three institutions are owned by the governments of the countries that subscribe their capital. To participate in the World Bank group, member states must first belong to the International Monetary Fund (IMF—*q.v.*).

zamindar—Landlord, but particularly of the group of landlords and the zamindar system that emerged after the British Permanent Settlement (Landlease) Act of 1793. In essence, the former tax collectors of the Mughal period (1526–1858) became landlords under the British. Zamindar tenure was abolished in 1950.

zila—See district.

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