

**WHY DID EAST PAKISTAN
SEEK INDEPENDENCE AND
BREAK AWAY TO FORM AN
INDEPENDENT STATE OF
BANGLADESH?**

General Yahya Khan (1969-1971)

CAIE Exam Questions:

- 1. Why did East Pakistan wish to break away from Pakistan? [7]**
- 2. Why did Shaikh Mujib-ur-Rehman demand Six-Points? [7]**
- 3. 'The Six Points made by Mujib-ur-Rehman and the Awami League was the most important factor in creation of Bangladesh in 1971. 'Do you agree with the statement or not? Give reasons. [14]**
- 4. Were economic factors more important than any other factor in the creation of Bangladesh in 1971? Explain your answer. [14]**
- 5. 'Geographical position of East Pakistan was the most important reason for the creation of Bangladesh in 1971'. Discuss in detail. [14]**

On 25th March 1969, Yahya Khan imposed martial law and he declared himself as the president of Pakistan.

- He abrogated 1962 constitution.
- Banned all the political parties and political activities.
- Dissolved national and provincial assemblies.
- Dismissed central and provincial cabinets.

In his address to the nation he announced to protect life, liberty and property of the public. He got the country in a dire situation and tried his best to solve these problems.

Legal Framework Order (LFO) 1970

LFO was a temporary constitution introduced by General Yahya Khan to run the country till elections to be held.

- It was announced on 30 March 1970. LFO meant that many provisions of 1962 constitution would be adhered to.

- He promised to handover the power to the elected candidates of the country.
- He committed himself to elections on the basis of a direct vote by the adult franchise.
- One Unit Scheme introduced in 1955 was abolished and provinces reverted back to their previous position.
- LFO announced to setup a national assembly with 313 seats and out of those 13 was reserved for women.

General Elections - 1970

These were the first elections in which the people were given the chance to choose the candidates according to their desire. All the political parties welcomed these elections and participated with their manifestos. In East Pakistan Awami League was the strongest party led by Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman. He issued Six Points aimed at separation of East Pakistan. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto participated in these elections under the banner of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) with the motto **"Food, clothing and home for everyone"** that attracted the lower class. The elections were held on 7 December 1970. The masses turned out enthusiastically and the voting turnout was 90%. The results of the election showed that:

- PPP got 81 out of 138 seats and got the majority in West Pakistan.
- Awami league led by Mujib-ur-Rehman got 160 out of 162 seats in East Pakistan which was sweeping majority but he could not get a single seat in West Pakistan.
- General Yahya Khan announced that Awami League and PPP will have a joint session of national assembly that the new national assembly would frame new constitution in 120 days.

Emergence of Bangladesh 1971

This is a very important event in the history of Pakistan. After the general elections of 1970 Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman insisted on his constitutional right to form the government as he had won majority of the seats on the basis and strength of his six-point formula.

Six Points

1. Federal form of government with directly elected Parliament.
2. Federal govt. would be left with only two subjects i.e. Defense and Foreign relations leaving all the subjects to the concern of the provinces.
3. Federal govt. would share in the state taxes but would have no powers of taxation.
4. Separate currencies and fiscal policies for East Pakistan.
5. Right for each province to enter into external trade agreements with other countries and control foreign exchange earnings.
6. Provinces would have their own paramilitary or territorial forces.

This formula was neither acceptable to Mr. Z.A. Bhutto nor Yahya Khan because it was a move towards separation. This situation finally led to the massive mass movement and civil war in Pakistan and resulted in fall of Dacca in December 1971. The main causes responsible for this saga are as follow:

Causes for the Separation of East Pakistan in 1971

Geographical:

A thousand miles of foreign territory separated East and West Pakistan. As the central government was in West Pakistan, it could not effectively manage the areas, which was too far, so a close contact between the people of East Pakistan and West Pakistan couldn't develop. That's why East Pakistan became weak from defensive point of view. The means of communication were not developed at that time and it was difficult to control law and order situation promptly by West Pakistan government.

Economic Causes:

There was economic disparity between the two wings because of the following reasons:

- Historically the area of West Pakistan especially of Punjab was more developed because of the fertility of the land and its central position. Irrigation system, transport links were all developed in large areas of West Pakistan.
- Economic policies of Ayub Khan's reign intensified the regional disparity by establishing industries in West Pakistan and making capital at Islamabad.
- The foreign exchange earned through the export of jute from East Pakistan was spent on the development projects of West Pakistan. The issue of economic disparity was further exploited by Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman which finally led to separation.

Cultural and linguistic differences:

- The cultural and linguistic differences between the two wings were significant.
- People in East Pakistan used to speak Bengali while in West Pakistan Urdu and other regional languages were spoken.
- The style of living such as food, dress, and habits were also different from West Pakistan.

These differences were exploited by a group of politicians and obstructed the development of National unity.

Representation in Government & Civil services:

There was marginal representation of the East Pakistanis in the government services. The appointment of West Pakistan civil servants in East Pakistan without the knowledge of Bengali language created a bitter situation. It is also accused that the west Pakistani civil servants looked upon their Bengali colleagues and sub-ordinates as worthless and inferior people.

Role of Hindu teachers:

The Hindu teachers who created hatred and discontentment among the students by criticizing the economic policies of the central government dominated East Pakistan's educational institutions.

Military intervention by India:

When the movement for autonomy reached its climax, Indian army regiments equipped with the latest and most sophisticated weapons rushed across the border. India and Russia had signed a joint agreement of military and economic cooperation. It is alleged that the arms India acquired from Russia were used to help rebels of East Pakistan. Dacca fell towards the middle of December 1971. The Pakistan army surrendered. Mukti Bahini, a militant force of Bengali rebels was trained in India to fight against West Pakistanis.

Politicians' lust for power:

Even though General Yahya Khan wanted to transfer the power to elected candidates and was ready to invite Shaikh Mujib to form the government, it was not acceptable to Bhutto and other politicians from Pakistan. Bhutto refused to attend inaugural session of National Assembly to be held in Dacca. This attitude of politicians created rift between East and West Pakistan and the violence broke out all over East Pakistan resulted in civil war.

The neutrality of Pakistan's allies – US & China:

At that time Pakistan was a staunch US ally and had also developed great relations with Communist China. The US had promised a naval fleet to support Pakistan's Navy but it never arrived. China, on the other hand, was not a power yet and couldn't argue USSR who had warned them to stay away from the war. In the end it proved fatal for Pakistan Army.

Civil War and separation of East Pakistan

In Jan 1971 Yahya visited East Pakistan and referred Mujib as the next prime minister and tried to tone down his six points. He announced 3rd March 1972 for inaugural session of the national assembly but Bhutto apposed this decision and forbade his members to attend that session.

Yahya thus postponed the calling of national assembly for an indefinite period. In East Pakistan violence broke out with strikes, public demonstration and massive civil disobedience. Tikka Khan was appointed as the chief martial law administrator and governor of East Pakistan. When Yahya, Mujib and Bhutto could not find the solution Mujib called the people for supreme sacrifice. In East Pakistan Mukti Bahini was formed, who killed the people not belonging to East Pakistan and those who did not support six points.

During this violence many people migrated from East Pakistan and many were killed. Due to this critical situation Operation Searchlight was launched on 26th March. As a result of that Mujib was arrested and the Awami League was banned.

War of 1971

Due to military action against Awami league a lot of rebels fled to India. The massive influx of refugees put a burden on India but also gave her reason to exploit and black mail Pakistan.

Indian Prime minister Indira Gandhi played a negative role in that situation and Indian defense minister declared that he would not send those refugees back to East Pakistan but to Mujib's Bangladesh. The **Indian plane hijacking drama on 30th June 1971** gave a reason to India for cutting of airborne supply to East Pakistan so it was difficult for the govt. to supply soldiers and weapons to East Pakistan. In August 1971 India-USSR Defense Pact was signed that gave the Indians the support from a super power. Indira Gandhi demanded withdrawal of Pakistani forces from East Pakistan.

In November 1971, Indian troops started to cross East Pakistan border and on **3rd December 1971** a full scale War broke out and India which lasted till 16 December 1971. Pakistani Army surrendered under General Niazi with about 90000 POW's (prisoners of war). The defeat in 1971 war degraded the name of Pakistani army and Yahya Khan had to step down making a way for Bhutto. On 20th December 1971 Yahya resigned from his post and Bhutto replaced him as the only civil Chief Martial Law Administrator. On **21st December** the Republic of Bangladesh was officially declared. Mujib was released by Bhutto on 8th January 1972. He returned to Bangladesh on **10th January** and became the first Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

What was Operation Searchlight?

[4]

Reward each correct statement with 1 mark. 2 marks can be awarded for a developed statement. Candidates might refer to:

A planned military operation carried out by the Pakistan Army to put down the Bengali nationalist movement in East Pakistan in March 1971. Ordered by the central government in West Pakistan, this was seen as the sequel to “Operation Blitz” which had been launched in November 1970. The original plan envisioned taking control of the major cities on March 26 and then eliminating all opposition, political or military within one month. Bengali resistance was not expected by the Pakistani army and led to many atrocities taking place that caused some 10 million refugees to flee to India. These atrocities enraged the Bengalis, who declared independence from Pakistan, and led to the creation of Bangladesh.