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The Speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 7th March 1971: A Historical Analysis

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Abstract

The 20th century witnessed a lot of nationalist movements, which gave the birth of many independent states. All these nationalist movements were led by some charismatic leaders who could convince, organize, and motivate people by their character, speech, and wonderful leadership. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was one of them. He was such a leader who opened the eyes of the East Pakistani people about their right and led them towards independence. He could ignite the light of the nationalist spirit among the people by his public speaking capacity and heart-rending speech. His historic speech of 7th March 1971 is often considered as one of the most influential speeches over the world. UNESCO recognized the 7th March speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as part of the world's documentary heritage in 2017. This study sheds light on the historical importance of that speech. An extensive historical background of this speech will also be demonstrated based on the documents of the liberation war of Bangladesh and other reliable sources. This study shows that the 7th March speech of Bangabandhu paved the way for independent Bangladesh in 1971.

Keywords: Speech of Bangabandhu, 7th March 1971, Independence, Bangladesh, World Heritage, UNESCO

1. Introduction

Bangladesh is one of those countries which gained their independence through struggle and series of movements. In the case of Bangladesh, it was even tougher because it had to achieve independence twice-once from the British colonial rule and another from the semi-colonial rule of Pakistan. Pakistan emerged as an independent country in 1947, splitting off from India. The Muslim majority province of East Bengal joined Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan to form an undivided Pakistan, a separate homeland for Muslims. These latter four provinces altogether comprised West Pakistan, being separated from the East by 1100 miles of Indian Territory (Asadullah, 2006). This partition and the birth of a separate state was an expected victory for the Muslims of Pakistan. But the way the partition was done, that eventually contributed to the disintegration because of three main reasons. First, the long-distance between the two wings of Pakistan, which

was covered by India, turned into a discomfort both for India and Pakistan and mistrust between the East and West Pakistan. Second, after the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911, the capital was transferred from Calcutta to Delhi. As a result, the central leadership of the Muslims in undivided India mostly fell into the hand of people living in Delhi (irrespective of their origin). Even though, All India Muslim League, the proponent of a separate homeland for Muslim, was founded in Dhaka in 1906; the main leadership during and after the partition of India fell into the hand of Muhajir leaders who migrated from Delhi to West Pakistan after the partition of India in 1947. Along with that, Muslims of Punjab became very influential in the politics of Pakistan with their overrepresentation in British armed forces and advancement in agriculture, which also continued in Pakistan (Schendel, 2012, p. 110). This entire leadership remained indifferent to East Pakistan and its people, which increased the gap instead of conciliation. Third, Dhaka lost the status of capital during the rule of Nawab Murshid Kuli Khan. Since then, East Bengal started witnessing a huge disintegration. This declining process of East Bengal continued during British era even faster than ever. This disparity was supposed to be immediately addressed by the West Pakistani leadership, but they increased the gulf instead, which contributed to the emergence of a new nationalism among Bengali people.

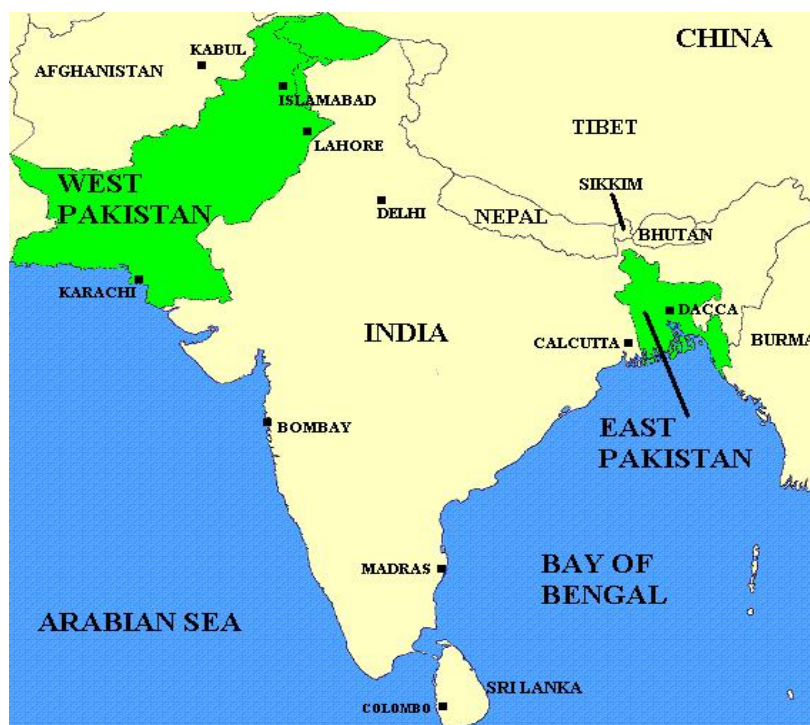


Figure 1. Map of East Pakistan and West Pakistan (University of Central Arkansas, 2019)

The people of East Pakistan joined with West Pakistan during the partition of India in 1947 with an aspiration that it will put an end to all the deprivations which used to occur under British colonial rule. But their expectations started to vanish in the ashes from the very first year of the independence of Pakistan. It mainly happened due to the arrogant attitude of West Pakistani vernacular elites who tried to make Urdu as the only state language denying Bangla, the language of the majority (Jahan, 1973). This attitude of West Pakistani leaders towards Bengali language and culture initiated language movement, which sewed the seed of Bengali nationalism among East Pakistani people. This nationalist spirit ultimately laid down the foundation of independent Bangladesh by influencing the continuous struggle for 23 years against the repression of West Pakistan (Shamsuddoha, Influence of Bengali Nationalism and the Emergence of Independent Bangladesh in 1971, 2017). Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman recalled the memory of these 23 years in his historic speech of 7th March. However, the Language Movement erected a curtain between the two wings of Pakistan. One of the best examples is the division in the Muslim League and the birth of the Awami Muslim League in East Pakistan in 1949 (later renamed as Awami League in 1955), which led most of the movements in the 1950s, 1960s and finally the liberation war in 1971.

The disunity between the two wings of Pakistan became more fatal due to the dominating attitude of West Pakistani elites and the repeated military interventions starting from its inception. East Pakistan was the main victim of this dominating attitude and frequent military intervention because they were the demographic majority which could only reflect in democracy and equal distribution of constituencies based on adult franchise which was impossible in a military rule and continuous denial of participatory democracy (Shamsuddoha, *Refugees in India during the Liberation War of Bangladesh and Human Rights: A Historical Analysis*, 2017). The Landslide victory of the United Front in 1954 (alliance of popular East Pakistani Political Parties) and the denial of power, Two Unit System in the constitution of 1956, and the victory of Awami League in the election of 1970 are some examples where West Pakistani authorities did not show any respect to the popular mandate rather tried to suppress it under autocratic rule and military intervention. For instance, after the victory in the election of 1954, United Front formed the provincial government, but they were not allowed to rule the province accusing them responsible for the failure to control the riot between Bengali and non-Bengali workers of the Adamjee Jute Mills at Narayanganj. Denying the people's verdict, Governor Rule was imposed in East Pakistan. Bangabandhu defined this as a preplanned conspiracy by the West Pakistani authority (S. M. Rahman 2012). The demand of the East Pakistani people was not even reflected in the first constitution of Pakistan in 1956 which has been portrayed in the following statement of H. S. Sahrawardy in the parliament where he stated: "The people in East Bengal have no confidence in the Ministry here or in the constitution prepared by them and they desire that adequate provision should be made in the constitution for their welfare and development (Rahman H. H., 2009, pp. 467-68)". Following this trend, Field Marshal Ayub Khan came to power in 1958 by overthrowing Iskander Mirza and continued autocracy under military rule for almost ten years. During his era, he wanted to suppress democracy under his 'Basic Democracies Order' which curtailed the power of the people and empowered the President by narrowing down the voting right to only elite class people. This was not the only story; Ayub Khan initiated such an education policy that went against the interest of the common people of Pakistan. Thus, a lot of dissatisfactions grew up against Ayub Khan by the early 60s. Awami League and other political parties continued their movement demanding the fall of Ayub Khan.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman became the president of the Awami League in 1963 after the death of Hussein Shahid Sahrawardi. In the meantime, Indo-Pak War started in 1965, where West Pakistani authority did not take enough security measures for the safety of East Pakistan. Subsequently, Awami League declared Six Point Program in 1966, which rapidly gained huge popularity and acceptance among the people. As a result, the Agartala Conspiracy Case was filed in 1968 against Bangabandhu and other prominent Awami League leaders, which led to a movement demanding the release of those leaders. Along with this, six points and other demands turned the protest into a Mass Upsurge Movement, which ensured the fall of Ayub Khan in 1969 and welcomed General Yahya Khan in power. Following the promise of General Yahya Khan, there was an election in December 1970. In that election, Awami League backed the majority not only in the Provincial Assembly of East Pakistan but also in the National Assembly of Pakistan. Awami League won 160 seats out of 300 in the National Assembly and 288 seats out of 300 in the Provincial Assembly (Rahim 1997). Even after getting this landslide victory, Yahya Khan and Pakistan People's Party leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto started procrastinating in handing over power to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Instead, they started a conspiracy to form a coalition government that was against the mandate of the people. As a part of post-election development, negotiation continued from January to March 1971. As all went in vain by March, Bangabandhu appeared with his historic speech on 7th March with an outline of his upcoming move for the emancipation of East Bengali people.

2. Objectives

This paper is expected to analyze the speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered on 7 March 1971. In addition to that, it will also be involved in the discussion of the background of that historic speech.

3. Methodology

As this is historical research, it will mainly depend on historical sources. Here, the speech of 7th March will be seen from the historical point of view. A detailed background analysis will be done to clarify the historical context of the speech. Hence, the video clip and the text of this speech are the main sources of the study. Often it will be seen in the light of modern techniques of public speaking to understand the contextual meaning and the quality of articulation. The efficient use of historical facts in the speech in the guise of storytelling method will also be analyzed.

4. Analysis

The historic speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is often considered as one of the best speeches delivered around the world. The speech has been included by Jacob F. Field in his famous book "We Shall Fight on the Beaches: The Speeches That Inspired History", where the writer listed out the most rousing and inspirational wartime speeches in the last 2,500 years (Field, 2013). Furthermore, the 7th March Speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was submitted to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the perusal in 2016. Finally, UNESCO declared the inscription of the 7th March speech of Bangabandhu on the Memory of the World Register in 2017. UNESCO wrote in its introduction, "The speech effectively declared the independence of Bangladesh. The speech constitutes faithful documentation of how the failure of post-colonial nation-states to develop inclusive, democratic society alienates their population belonging to different ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious groups" (UNESCO, 2017). Here it admitted the speech as the declaration of the independence of Bangladesh and conversed the disparities between two wings of former Pakistan. The Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Mokova, defined this speech as the historical source of inspiration and emancipation (Centre for Research and Information, 2018). This inscription has been a great honor and recognition for Bangladesh. The speech delivered at the Ramna Racecourse Maidan (currently known as Suhrawardy Udyan) encouraged the Bengali people to start their nine-month-long struggle for independence.



Figure 2: Bangabandhu, addressing to the mass on 7th March 1971 (Bangabandhu Museum, 2019)

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered his historic speech on 7th March after the landslide victory in the election of 1970. The election of 1970 was the first election in Pakistan based on universal adult franchise. As the East Pakistani people were the oppressed majority in united Pakistan, it reflected in the election like sunshine where East Pakistani political party Awami League got a total victory not only in the Provincial Assembly of East Pakistan but also in the National Assembly of Pakistan. This victory of the Awami League was unanticipated by the West Pakistani leaders. Therefore, they started procrastination about the transfer of power to the elected representatives. This delayed the session of the National Assembly for several times. On March 5, 1971, President Yahya Khan addressed to the nation in radio where Bangabandhu, the leader of the majority, was held responsible for the deadlock. Furthermore, his speech could not come with an acceptable solution but a conspiracy to neutralize the majority. Meanwhile, the Non-cooperation Movement, coupled with continuous Hartal (strike), was going on in East Pakistan demanding the political solution of the crisis. During the first week of March 1971, several people were killed by the authority of Pakistan to control the situation. But this could not stop the resentment of the people as they wanted to see that their elected people are ruling the country, which could only put an end to the plight of the toiling mass.

The Public meeting on 7th March was very crucial for Bangabandhu as well as for the Bengali nation. Therefore, Bangabandhu had to remain very tactful while delivering the speech; because West Pakistani authority would have got a chance to prove him as a secessionist for any wrong decision or statement in his speech. Bangabandhu had been suffering from cold fever on the day of 7 March 1971. He was very apprehensive as well in this critical situation. The context before the speech can be understood from the following statement of Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Bangabandhu: “The historic 7th March. Many suggestions came to my father. He listened to all the suggestions with patience....When my father was getting ready, my mother brought him to a room and told him to take rest for a while...My mother said to my father, ‘the fate of the nation depends on you today. You should remember that you have ‘stick’ in front and ‘gun’ in your behind...You have been suggested by many to speak so many things. As the fate of the mass depends on your statement, follow your way. Whatever you will deliver that will go right because the people of the country loves you and depends on you’ (Hasina, The historic speech of 7th March: Some Memories, 2014, pp. 91-92)”.

As this research is an initiative to analyze the speech of 7th March by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, it is better to start the process by denoting the full text which has been attached in the appendix-1 (Department of Films and Publications- Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 2017). The Bengali version of the speech can be found from the document of the Independence War of Bangladesh (Rahman H. H., 2009, pp. 703-705) or the web content (Kaler Kantho 2017). Bangabandhu covered a lot of issues in his 19 minutes speech of 7th March 1971. This script had become a complete prescription for the War of Liberation. He tried to cover the interest and expectations of all classes of society. He initiated his speech with the discussion of historical memories of deprivations and concluded with the strategic directives and hope for the emancipation of the nation.

Table 1. Different segments in the speech of 7th March 1971

	Issue/Subject Covered	Approximate Number of Words Uttered (it may vary because of the use of phrase/s as the original speech was in Bengali)	Percentage of words uttered
Step 1	Creating common ground with the recent update	Around 85	7.72%
Step 2	Recalling the memory of oppression and disparity to arouse the mass	Around 109	9.90%
Step 3	Post-election (1970) political development and negotiation for solution	Around 439	39.90%
Step 4	Four Strategic preconditions to the authority of Pakistan for solution	Around 59	5.36%
Step 5	Thoughtful Tactical directives and call for peaceful non-cooperation	Around 384	34.90%
Step 6	Strategic declaration for the War of 1971	Around 24	2.18%

The entire speech of 7th March can be categorized into six stages. The starting of a speech is considered very crucial. Bangabandhu started his speech with the phrase 'My brothers'. These two words became able to grab the attention of the entire mob in a non-communal manner (Haque, 2017). Then, he began with the recent incidents as a clincher, which helped him to bring the audience into the common ground. That also helped the audience to relate to the recent happenings. Bangabandhu had started his speech in this way: "Brothers of mine! Today I appear before you with a heavy heart. You know and understand everything. We tried with our lives. But the painful matter is that now the streets of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi and Rangpur are stained with the blood of my brothers. Now the people of Bangla want freedom. The people of Bangla want to live. The people of Bangla want to have their rights" (Department of Films and Publications- Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2017). This was a very powerful introduction to the speech, which clearly defined the subjects of the speech to the audience and involved them in the session. At this point, he utilized around 8% words of his speech (see table 1).

Afterward, Bangabandhu recalled the historical memory of twenty-three years under the rule of Pakistan, where he stated: "But it's a matter of great sorrow that today I have to tell painfully the pitiful history of the last twenty-three years. The bloody history of Bangalis tortured in Bangla itself. The history of the last twenty- three years is the history of the wailing of dying men and women. The history of Bangla is the history of the staining of streets with the blood of the People of this country..." (Department of Films and Publications- Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2017). In this part, he covered the brief historical journey under Pakistan from 1952 to 1971. This helped him to arouse people with emotional memories. He utilized around 10% words of his speech for historical arousal (see table 1). Here he mentioned all the disparities and deprivations under the rule of Pakistan, which provoked them for emancipation. Recently, Imran Khan, the Prime minister of Pakistan, admitted that the disparity against the Bengali people was mainly responsible for the disintegration of Pakistan (Shahnawaz, 2019, p. 84). As a result of this inequality, the demand for autonomy became very prominent.

In the 3rd stage of the speech, Bangabandhu mentioned about the political development followed by the election of 1970 and the negotiations between Yahya Khan and Bangabandhu after the election. He added: "As President, Mr. Yahya Khan had summoned the Assembly. I said that I would attend. Mr. Bhutto said that he won't. Thirty-five members from West Pakistan came here. Then all of a sudden, the Assembly was closed. The people of Bangla were blamed; I was blamed too...What did we get? The weapons we bought at the expense of our money to protect the country from the invasion of foreign enemies are now being used against the poor and unarmed people of our country; they are being shot down. We are the majority of the people of Pakistan. Whenever we Bangalees tried to gain power; tried to rule this country as our own, they assaulted..." (Department of Films and Publications- Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2017). This was the largest segment in his speech (see table 1), where he tried to justify his political stand and to refute the blames of West Pakistani authorities.

In the fourth stage of the speech, Bangabandhu mentioned four preconditions to the solution where he added the withdrawal of Martial Law, withdrawal of the army, justice for the people who had been killed in the recent political move, and the transfer of the power to the people's representatives. With these strategic demands, he wanted to create pressure on Pakistani authority. He said that only after the fulfillment of these demands, he would consider whether he can sit in the Assembly or not. Before that, he cannot sit in the Assembly. The people have not given him that right. With this, he again showed his political charisma by considering people as the source of his power and inspiration.

In the fifth stage of the speech, Bangabandhu shared further directives for his followers, where he also outlined a peaceful Non-cooperation Movement comprising ten points. In this part, he appeared like a de facto ruler of East Pakistan. In his ten-point program (Rahman H. H., 2009, p. 706), he instructed the people from all walks of life to get engaged in civil disobedience and non-cooperation to create pressure on the West Pakistani authorities. He also warned his people not to be trapped in the conspiracy of the Pakistani authority. He stated: "Listen and bear in mind, the enemy has penetrated us to create divisions amongst us and to start looting. Hindus, Muslims,

Bengalis and non-Bengalis, all those who live in this Bangla are our brothers. The responsibility of protecting them is on you. Ensure that our reputation is not smeared in any way” (Department of Films and Publications-Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 2017). With this caution, he instructed the people to maintain communal harmony under any situation.

Bangabandhu gave further directives for the coming days to ensure a systematic movement. Even, things to be done in his absence were also clarified in this speech. He added: “Secondly, in every village, every locality, every union, and every sub-division, establish ‘Resistant Council’ under the leadership of the Awami League. And be ready with whatever you have. Bear in mind that since we have given blood, we will give more. By the grace of Allah, we will surely liberate the people of this country” (Department of Films and Publications-Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 2017). At this stage, he uttered around 35% of his speech (see table1) where he clarified every minor detail of the strategic directives. This is how the 7th March speech of Bangabandhu became a complete code of revolution of a nation. Fidel Castro stated regarding this speech: “The 7th March speech of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was not only a speech, but it was also an outline of war strategy (Mahmud, 2019).”

Finally, in the sixth stage of the speech, Bangabandhu tactfully gave the declaration of the struggle for Independence, where the choice of his phrasing was praiseworthy. He came with the awaited declaration at the end in a way that people had got what they wanted, and it was done in such a way that the West Pakistani authority could not accuse him with secession. He stated in his bold voice:

**“The struggle this time is the struggle for our emancipation.
The struggle this time is the struggle for our independence”.**

These two lines were more than enough to declare independence and to provide the source of inspiration to the people to fight for the liberation of their country. With this call of Bangabandhu, the unarmed civilians of Bangladesh took arms in their hands and liberated their country with a war of independence.

In the speech of Bangabandhu, most of the modern techniques of public speaking were applied. His articulation and intonation were outstanding. While delivering a speech, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman used to speak spontaneously. He never read the speech written by anybody else. Therefore, spontaneity used to be reflected in all of his speeches (Wahab, 2014, p. 51). This spontaneity helped him to get emotionally attached to the people.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman preferred to speak in a conversational language. His effective conversational style was also visible in the speech of 7th March. He used ‘I’ and ‘we’ a lot of times in his speech (Noor, 2019). Gerard O’Grady (2017) analyzed the use of “I think” in political speeches where he tried to examine the categories and effectiveness of ‘I think’ in political speech. According to him, ‘I think’ is often used to place semantic views or strong arguments. In the speech of Bangabandhu, he often used ‘I’, ‘we’, ‘us’ and ‘ours’ to create the ownership and to justify his statements (see table 2). This kind of use of pronouns helps the speaker to speak in a conversational tone, which eventually creates the attachment with the audience. Bangabandhu anchored with some significant phrases in a conversational manner, which helped him to create a common ground and better attachment with the audience. For instance, he often used the phrase ‘brothers of mine’, which probably allowed him to reach the core of the heart of the people. Even while pointing to the armies of Pakistan, he stated: “You are our brothers. You stay in your barracks; no one will say anything to you. But don’t ever try to shoot us. This will do you no good. You can’t keep seven crores of people subjugated. Since we have learned to die, no one can dominate us”. The effective use of this kind of phrase has also been found in most of the other speeches of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Wahab, 2014, p. 45). In the 19 minutes long speech of 7th March, he used ‘I’ for 20 times, ‘We’ for 20 times, ‘Our’ for 14 times and ‘My/Mine’ for 17 times (Noor, 2019).

Table 2. The art of questioning, use of pronouns in a conversational manner, and political negotiation with preconditions in the speech of 7th March

Questions are highlighted in 'red', preconditions are in 'green' and pronouns are in 'yellow'.	
Some parts of the speech (Bengali Version)	<p>কি অন্যায় করেছিলাম?... কি পেলাম আমরা? আমার পয়সা দিয়ে অস্ত্র কিনেছি বহিঃশত্রুর আক্রমণ থেকে দেশকে রক্ষা করার জন্য, আজ সেই অস্ত্র ব্যবহার হচ্ছে আমার দেশের গরীব-দুখী নিরস্ত্র মানুষের বিরুদ্ধে তার বুকের ওপরে হচ্ছে গুলি। আমরা পাকিস্তানের সংখ্যাগুরু আমরা বাঙালীরা যখনই ক্ষমতায় যাবার চেষ্টা করেছি তখনই তারা আমাদের উপর ঝাঁপিয়ে পড়েছে। ... ভায়েরা আমরা, ২৫ তারিখে এসেম্বলি কল করেছে। রক্তের দাগ শুকায় নাই। আমি ১০ তারিখে বলে দিয়েছি, ওই শহীদের রক্তের ওপর পাড়া দিয়ে আরটিসিতে মুজিবুর রহমান যোগদান করতে পারেনা। এসেম্বলি কল করেছেন, আমার দাবী মানতে হবে। প্রথম, সামরিক আইন- মার্শাল ল' উইথড্র করতে হবে। সমস্ত সামরিক বাহিনীর লোকদের ব্যারাকে ফেরত নিতে হবে। যেভাবে হত্যা করা হয়েছে তার তদন্ত করতে হবে। আর জনগণের প্রতিনিধির কাছে ক্ষমতা হস্তান্তর করতে হবে। তারপর বিবেচনা করে দেখবো, আমরা এসেম্বলিতে বসতে পারবো কি পারবো না। এর পূর্বে এসেম্বলিতে বসতে আমরা পারি না। আমি প্রধানমন্ত্রীত্ব চাই না। আমরা এদেশের মানুষের অধিকার চাই।</p>
Questions are highlighted in 'red', preconditions are in 'green' and pronouns are in 'yellow'.	
Some parts of the speech (English Version)	<p>What wrong did we commit? What did we get? The weapons we bought at the expense of our money to protect the country from the invasion of foreign enemies, are now being used against the poor and unarmed people of our country; they are being shot down. We are the majority of the people of Pakistan. Whenever we Bangalis tried to gain power, tried to rule this country as our own, they assaulted.... Brothers of mine, the Assembly has summoned on the 25th March. The marks of bloods have not yet dried. I had clearly said on 10th March that Mujib Rahman can't join RTC, treading the bloods of martyrs. They have called the Assembly. They have got to accept my demands: First, martial law must be withdrawn. All army personnel must go back to the barracks. There has to be an inquiry into the way the killings were carried out. And the power has to be handed over to the people's representatives. Only then, we will consider whether we can sit in the Assembly or not. Before that we can't sit in the Assembly. The people have not given me that right. I don't want Prime Ministership. We want to establish the right of the people of this country.</p>

Bangabandhu raised questions at different stages of his speech. Five specific questions engaged the audience in his conversational speech: “What wrong did we commit? What did we get? What R-T-C? With whom shall we sit? Shall we sit with those who had taken the blood of my people?”(see table 2 and appendix 1). He asked and answered all of these questions in a way that effectively connected the audience in the discussion (Siddique, 2016). Bangabandhu often spoke in a colloquial language to create an attachment with his people. He covered a lot of historical incidents in his speech in a story-telling method to make that easier for the audience.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman stressed the emancipation of the Bengali nation in his speech. He coupled emancipation with the word ‘independence’ for several times in this speech. Bangabandhu knew that without autonomy and economic emancipation, it is not possible to achieve real independence. That is why he mentioned ‘emancipation’ before the word ‘independence’. In his short speech, he mentioned the word ‘emancipation’ three times (Husain, 2019). He would have finished his speech by the ‘phrase struggle for freedom’, but he ended with the phrase ‘struggle for emancipation’ instead. With this, in reality, he became the leader of humanity (Wahab, 2014). Amartya Sen evaluated the speech of Bangabandhu in this way: “The value of the articulateness of his speech is not only recognized in Bangladesh but also in the whole world. Sheikh Hasina, the elder daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, shared her reflection about the speech in this way: “The imperishable speech of 7th March attracted and gathered every Bengali people. Being inspired by this speech, the brave Bengalese fought in the war, and brought victory by defeating enemies (Hasina, 2019, p. 44).” The way the 19 minutes speech of 7th March of Bangabandhu ignited a nation and triggered the birth of a country will be always remembered by the world.

5. Conclusion

The liberation war of 1971 was one of the epoch-making events not only in the history of Bangladesh but also in the history of the world, which gave the birth of a new country and created a new identity for 70 million people. But the birth of Bangladesh was not only the result of nine months of the war; rather it was the ultimate result of the continuous struggle for 23 years. In this struggle for independence, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman played an unparalleled role for which the whole nation would be indebted to him forever. He, himself, dreamed about independence and sparked the light of that spirit among the whole nation which ultimately led to an all-out war. In this process, his speech of 7th March 1971 can undoubtedly be considered as a milestone in the struggle for the independence of Bangladesh. It did not only motivate the people but also presented the outline and strategy of the movement. For instance, he said in his speech, "In case I can't give you any further order, I tell you; close all roads and highway indefinitely... Whatever you have, be ready with that... Bear in mind that since we have given blood, we will give more. By the grace of Allah, we will surely liberate the people of this country. The struggle this time is the struggle for our emancipation. The struggle this time is the struggle for our independence." This is how he covered almost every preparatory steps and instructions of the liberation war in his speech of 7th March. Therefore, it can be considered as the precursor of the independence of Bangladesh.

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7. Appendix 1.

The Historic Speech (Translated from Bengali) of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, 07 March 1971 (Department of Films and Publications- Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2017)

The Historic Speech (Translated from Bangla) of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, 07 March 1971

Brothers of mine!

Today I appear before you with a heavy heart. You know and understand everything. We tried with our lives. But the painful matter is that now the streets of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi and Rangpur are stained with the bloods of my brothers. Now the people of Bangla want freedom. The people of Bangla want to live. The people of Bangla want to have their rights.

What wrong did we commit?

The people of Bangladesh cast their vote overwhelmingly for me, for Awami League.

Our National Assembly will sit. We will draw up the Constitution there. And we will build this country. The people of this country will have economic, political and cultural freedom.

But it's a matter of great sorrow that today I have to tell painfully the pitiful history of the last twenty three years. The bloody history of Bangalis tortured in Bangla itself. The history of the last twenty- three years is the history of the wailing of dying men and women. The history of Bangla is the history of the staining of streets with the blood of the People of this country. We gave blood in 1952. After winning the election in 1954, we couldn't even form the government. Proclaiming martial law in 1958, Ayub Khan made us slaves for ten years. During the 'Six Point Movement', my children were gunned down on 7th June 1966. After, the fall of Ayub Khan brought about the 'Mass Movement' of 1969 where Yahya Khan usurped power. He said he would give constitution and democracy to the nation. We Agreed. Thereafter the rest is history. There was an election. You know the fault was not ours.

Today I met President Yahya Khan and discussed everything with him. Being the leader of not only of Bangla but of the majority party of Pakistan, I requested him to convene the National Assembly of 15th February. He didn't agree with me, rather he yielded to Mr Bhutto's demand to hold the assembly in the first week of March. We said that was alright. We would sit in the Assembly. I went even to the extent of saying that if anybody, even a lone person proposed something reasonable, we, although the majority will accept the proposal. Mr Bhutto came here. He conferred with us and said that the door for discussion was not closed. There would be more discussions. Then we talked with other leaders and said 'please come and sit together; let's prepare the Constitution through discussion'. Mr Bhutto said that if the members of West Pakistan came here, the Assembly would turn into a slaughter house. He said whoever would come would be killed. If they came to the Assembly, then from Peshawar to Karachi, all shops will be closed down by force. I said that Assembly would continue, then all of a sudden, the Assembly was closed on 1st March.

As President, Mr Yahya Khan had summoned the Assembly. I said that I would attend. Mr Bhutto said that he won't. Thirty- five members from West Pakistan came here. Then all of a sudden, the Assembly was closed. The people of Bangla were blamed; I was blamed too. Because of the closure, the people of this country burst into protest. I told them to observe 'hartal' (strike) in a peaceful manner I told them to close down all mills and factories. The people responded. The people spontaneously came out on the streets. They firmly pledged to continue their resistance in a peaceful manner.

What did we get? The weapons we bought at the expense of our money to protect the country from the invasion of foreign enemies, are now being used against the poor and unarmed people of our country;

they are being shot down. We are the majority of the people of Pakistan. Whenever we Bangalis tried to gain power; tried to rule this country as our own, they assaulted. They are our brother; I asked them 'Why must you shoot your brother? You were deployed to protect this country from the attack of foreign enemies'.

Mr Yahya said that I had agreed that there would be a Round Table Conference (RTC) on 10th March. I said no such thing to him. I had a talk with him over the telephone. I told him 'General Yahya Khan, you are President of Pakistan. Come to Dhaka and see the how my poor people, my people of Bangla are being shot down. How the bosom of our mothers are being emptied of their sons. How my people are being killed. You come, see and do justice and then finalise. That's exactly what I told him. I told him long ago, RTC for what? Who do we sit with? With them... who spilled the blood of my people? Without any consultation, with me or any discussion with us, suddenly after 5 hours of secret meeting, Yahya Khan delivered his speech, in which he dumped all the blame squarely on me, squarely on the people of Bangla. (The crowds says shame, shame)

I have said in the meeting, the struggle this time is our struggle for emancipation, the struggle this time is the struggle for our independence.

Brothers of mine.

The Assembly has summoned on the 25th March. The marks of bloods have not yet dried. I had clearly said on 10th March that Mujib Rahman can't joint RTC, treading the bloods of martyrs.

They have called the Assembly. They have got to accept my demands:

- First, martial law must be withdrawn;
- All army personnel must go back to the barracks;
- There has to be an inquiry into the way the killings were carried out;
- And the power has to be handed over to the people's representatives.

Only then, we will consider whether we can sit in the Assembly or not. Before that we can't sit in the Assembly. The people have not given me that right.

Brothers of mine

Do you have faith in me? (The crowds says yes yes)

I don't want Prime Ministership. We want to establish the right of the people of this country.

I want to say in clear terms that from now on all courts, magistrates, offices and educational institutions in Bangladesh will remain closed sine die.

To ensure that no suffering is inflicted on the poor people, to ensure that my people do not suffer, from tomorrow the following things will be put out of range of the 'hartal'. Rickshaws and hackney carriages will work; railway trains and launches will run. But the Secretariat, Supreme Court, High Court, Judge's Court and semi-government offices like WAPDA (Pakistan Water Development Authority) will not function. All employees will draw their salaries on the 28th of the month. If salaries are not paid; if one more shot is fired and if my people are killed again then my request to you is; build a fortress in each and every home. Face the enemy with whatever you have. In case I can't give you any further order, I tell

you; close all roads and highway indefinitely. We will starve them to death. We will make them go without water and choke them to death.

You are our brothers. You stay in your barracks; no one will say anything to you. But don't ever try to shoot us. This will do you no good. You can't keep seven crores of people subjugated. Since we have learnt to die, no one can dominate us.

We, from Awami League, will try our best to help those who are embracing martyrdom and those who have received injuries. Those who are capable, please extend your monetary support, whatever you can to our relief fund. And every owner of industries will pay salaries to all workers who participated in the 7-day 'hartal'.

My instruction to government officials is that you must obey what I say. From now on, tax will not be paid till such time as the freedom of our country is achieved; no one will pay anything. Listen and bear in mind, the enemy has penetrated us in order to create divisions amongst us and to start looting.

Hindus, Muslims, Bengalis and non-Bengalis, all those who live in this Bangla are our brothers. The responsibility of protecting them is on you. Ensure that our reputation is not smeared in any way.

The employees of the Radio and Television; please bear in mind that if our words are not broadcasted by the radio, then no Bangali shall go to the radio station. If our news is not broadcasted by Television, then no Bangali will go to the Television station. The ban shall remain open for two hours every day so that the people can get their salaries.

But from East Bangla, a single paisa will not be allowed to be remitted to West Pakistan.

Telephone and Telegraph service will remain operative in our East Bangla. They shall keep on sending our news to foreign news media. But if there is any sinister move to annihilate the people of this country, the Bangalis, you will have to keep very careful watch.

I am requesting you, you are my brothers .Do not make this country a hell and destroy it.

Do not make this country a hell and destroy it. We will not see each other's face in the future.

If we can solve things in a peaceful manner, we can at least live as brothers. That is why I am requesting you; do not try and run military rule in my country.

Secondly, in every village, every locality, every union and every sub-division establish 'Resistant Council' under the leadership of the Awami League. And be ready with whatever you have.

Bear in mind that since we have given blood, we will give more. By the grace of Allah, we will surely liberate the people of this country.

The struggle this time is the struggle for our emancipation.

The struggle this time is the struggle for our independence.