

**Regional Geopolitical Trends and the Dismemberment of Pakistan:
Assessment of Relevant Events during 1965-72**

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Abstract

Pakistan was dismembered in 1971 after a civil war in its eastern wing, followed by Indian intervention. The regional and global geopolitics of the time played a vital role in the division of the country into two parts. Geopolitical complexities and the corresponding priorities of the stakeholders got involved into the separation of East Pakistan- now called Bangladesh. The process of the dismemberment precipitated after Indo-Pak war of 1965 which had caused fears of insecurity amongst the people of Bengal. The fears were exploited by the geopolitical forces that finally caused the fall of Dhaka. The story of the fall of Dhaka accomplished when India and Pakistan signed Simla Agreement in 1972. This paper focuses on the geopolitical dimension of the turmoil period and its end point till the creation of Bangladesh. The study is conducted through qualitative methods of secondary data analysis. The secondary data is analyzed under the standards of thematic approach. Theoretical model of geographical determinism is applied to understand how geopolitics contributed in the dismemberment of Pakistan. Saul B. Cohen's model of Shatter belts is helpful in this regard. Shatter belts are the volatile geographical areas that are polarized in ways that determine the politics of the surrounding region/s. In a nutshell, the study combines history with the political expression of geography to know geopolitics as one of the causes responsible for the dismemberment of Pakistan. The study applies secondary data analysis as it is constrained by access to primary data, found in the official files of the stakeholder countries. Still, it is an attempt to understand the dismemberment phenomenon through the involved geopolitical lenses.

Keywords. Region; Geopolitics; Agreement; India; Pakistan; Dismemberment; Shatter belts

Geopolitics has always played a pivotal role in the politics and history of Pakistan. Pakistan has been taking pride in its geographical location since independence. If the country's geographical location has been a blessing, it also proved a challenge for the survival of Pakistan in 1971, when Bangladesh got carved out as a new independent country. They were the peak years of the Cold

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War between United States and Soviet Union. India had allied itself with Soviet Union while Pakistan 'wrongly' expected help from the United States in its wars against India. The dismemberment of Pakistan is therefore, needed to be understood in the light of the geopolitics of the time. The provisions of Tashkent Declaration which was signed after the 1965 Indo-Pak war, called for good neighborly relations. Pakistan and India were supposed to improve relations though that remained a distant hope, only. The signing of the declaration caused huge uproar in Pakistan; which later was led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (Ziring, 2005, p.108). He propagated emotionally, against the terms of Tashkent Agreement and blamed Ayub Khan for 'losing on table' what the army had 'won on ground'. He accused the president of Pakistan, Ayub Khan for what, he himself had concluded with his Indian counter-part, as the then foreign minister of Pakistan. Bhutto's antagonism went deeper and expressed that Ayub Khan Government is based on 'oppression, coercion and misrule'. Bhutto proved an opportunist for being pro-Ayub and anti-democracy while in the Ayub's cabinet; and turned anti-Ayub and pro-democracy after leaving the cabinet. A politician observed him as the one for whom, "end justified the means; the end being the capture of power" (Hossain, 2010, p.171).

Bhutto launched a left-wing political party, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in 1967. The ideology of the party was attractive for the down-trodden masses in Pakistan. It was a popular time for left-wing politics in the world and region. Afghanistan, Central Asia and China played the role of gateways in bringing the ideology to Pakistan. The 1965 war provided an opportunity for the rise of leftist political forces in the both wings of Pakistan; East and West. The demoralized Ayub regime became unpopular and therefore, its criticism became attractive and popular (Paul, 2015, p.49). All the previous political movements against Ayub Khan could not succeed due to his strong control over media and propaganda. The struggle of Syed Hussaid Shaheed Soherwordi against Ayub Khan for restoration of democracy had failed to mobilize the masses.

The conditions in East Pakistan went worse in the context of 1965 Indo-Pak War. The situation deteriorated when Maulana Bashani supported Ayub Khan for his closeness and friendship with China. It was a dilemma for the political parties of East Pakistan whether to support president Ayub for his Chinese-Closeness-Approach or to oppose him for his undemocratic political system. After the death of Hussian Shaheed Soherwordi, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman became the new leader of Awami League. Mujibur Rahman disagreed with Maulana Bashani for his policies and launched his movement against Ayub regime (Hossain, 2010, p.177). His hard-liner approach proved harsh enough that finally led the situation to extreme level.

Unlike Bhutto, who criticized Ayub for Tashkent Agreement, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman started mobilizing people on the pretext of ignoring the security of East Pakistan during the war (Brecher, 2008, pp.170-74). Apprehensions of insecurity in East Pakistan led to demands of autonomy to make its own security arrangements. He played upon the geopolitical 'realities' that were embedded in the 'wrong' geographical structure of the time; as both the wings were separated by ocean for almost 1000 miles. The distance became a shatter belt (Cohen, 2015, p.43) for Pakistan that finally divided it into two sovereign countries; Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Shiekh Mujibur Rahman presented his famous set of demands known as the 'six points' outlining maximum financial and internal autonomy for the Eastern wing of Pakistan (Kapur, 2006, p.56). After the death of Soherwordi and Fazal Haq, Mujib remained very steadfast in his demands and successfully mobilized the masses to gain public support. The pro-Ayub attitude of Maulana Bashani provided further support to his somehow revolutionary thoughts for depicting the deplorable conditions of East Pakistanis. Failure of Ayub regime in addressing the problems of Bengalis gave lease to Mujib's movement against him.

Students' protests across East Pakistan were already on the rise, since early 1960s primarily, against Ayub's educational reforms which got transformed into a movement against the maltreatment of administrators. The eastern wing of Pakistan turned into a shatter belt for western part of the country. The movement led by students, conveyed a message to the common masses that people were not happy with Ayub government and its policies (Jones, & O'Donnell, 2012, p.78). The use of force against students invoked hatred against the West Pakistan. East Pakistani society was different from its Western counterpart. The society was homogenous unlike the West Pakistan, dominated by the landlords. The students, studying at Dhaka or other cities represented the rural (coming from villages) society and therefore, any atrocity against them were psychologically owned by the whole social fabric. Resentment therefore, was becoming more acute that finally added to Shiekh Mujibur Rahman's anti-Ayub movement.

The two movements of Zulifiqar Ali Bhutto and Mujibur Rahman coincided; though with different approaches and different interpretations of the problems. Mujib's six points depicted what the people desired in East Pakistan for maximum autonomy; while Bhutto wanted a Pakistan under his party's control after the 1970 election. Bhutto's objective was achieved after the resignation of president Ayyub; but for Sheikh Mujib it was just a starting point of disagreement (Cochrane, 2009). Resultantly, Bhutto emerged as the charismatic leader in West Pakistan and Mujib became a popular leader in East Pakistan.

Ayub Khan resigned in March 1969 and handed over power to Yahya Khan, the then Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) of army. Yahya Khan issued Legal Framework Order and announced general elections for 5th October 1970, which later became postponed for December 7. The result of the elections caused a rift. In East Pakistan, Awami League won all the seats while in West Pakistan, PPP won in Punjab and Sindh, while other coalitions got victory in NWFP and Baluchistan (Abbas, 2005, p.60). The result showed a huge provincial division as both the winning parties could not get even a single seat in the opposite wing of Pakistan. Overall, the Awami League was in majority by getting 169 seats out of 300 in the National Assembly. The transfer of power however, became disputed as Bhutto was not ready to accept Sheikh Mujib as prime minister. The delay in the transfer of power caused resentment in East Pakistan and demonstrations started.

The demonstrations in East Pakistan went violent and the situations became volatile. Pakistan army was deployed to control. The political efforts failed in bringing the two leaders to negotiate and adopt an agreeable formula (Cochrane, 2009). The use of coercive tactics by security institutions to quell the resistance proved counter-productive. A flood of Bengalis started crossing Indian border for as refugees, finally dragging India into the war. India started supporting Bengalis in their resistance against Pakistan. The unguarded long border of Bengal with India provided easy grounds for India to exploit the geographic weakness of Pakistan and to inflame the deteriorated conditions. The shatter belt of the time thus, was utilized by India against its enemy- Pakistan.

On January 30, 1971, an Indian airplane, Ganga was hijacked to Lahore by two Kashmiris, named Hashim and Ashraf (Rajgopal, 2011). The hijackers belonged to Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). The hijacking instigated anti-Pakistani emotions and sentiments in India. As a result, India stopped Pakistani airlines passing through its air space. Thus, once again the inherent geopolitical complexity caused problems for Pakistan. It made the situations problematic as Pakistani transportation and logistics had to travel a long distance of 3000 miles to reinforce its army in East Pakistan. It became Pakistan's Achilles heel to sustain its military operation which was best exploited by Mukti Bahini, a separatist militant organization, fighting for the creation of Bangladesh (Lyon, 2008, p.57). India provided aid and support to 'Bangladeshi government in exile', while ignoring Pakistan's concerns. India also complained about the cleansing of Hindus in East Pakistan that caused refugees influx into India. Thus, it was a chance for India to exploit shatter belt conditions for Pakistan in Bengal to create a gateway for itself.

In 1969, the US president, Richard Nixon visited Lahore (Pakistan) and had a meeting with General Yahya Khan. The summit meeting was more than Pak-US

relations. This time United States used the gateway of Pakistan to improve relations with China. "That mini-summit in Lahore would eventually play a role in two subsequent historic events - Nixon's visit to Communist China in 1972 and the 1971 liberation war that created the new state of Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan)" (Palash, 2013). Nixon asked Yahya for his role in establishing US relations with China as they had no relations for almost two decades since 1949- the year when People Republic of China was created. The details were discussed in White House during Yahya Khan's Visit in October 1970. In November, President Yahya made a visit to China and met with Zhou En-lai, the then Chinese Prime Minister, and concluded military and economic agreements (Aijazuddin, 2000, p.40). He also conveyed American message to Chinese officials for improving relations. Chinese response was positive. The selection of Pakistani president by United States for mediating with China depicted that Pakistan was still geopolitically important for her despite Kennedy's priority and tilt towards India during his days in White House. For India, the developments were alarming and were conceived as an evolving Pakistan-US-China Axis (Sisson, & Rose, 1991, pp.237-253). India went for its own counter arrangements.

In August 1971, India concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with USSR. The treaty provided for mutual peace and support to each other in this regard. The timing of the treaty was crucial as Pakistan was grossly engaged against a militant resistance in its Eastern wing. Faced already with a refugee flood from East Pakistan, India started intervening in the conflict. The guerrilla militants of Mukti Bahini were provided safe sanctuaries, trained and sent back to Pakistan for fighting against army (Ziring, 1997, p.361). Thus, the nature of civil war in East Pakistan dragged India into the conflict, as the once East Bengal, was impacting the West Bengal, now under Indian sovereign control. Indira Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister had already worked out diplomacy for minimizing Chinese threat of attack on India as it could have brought Soviet Union to the Indian side under the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation of August 1971. The treaty proved that India and USSR designed how to turn Pakistan into shatter belt.

Anticipating a direct military action from India, President Yahya offered some concessions to appease East Pakistanis, but it was too late then (Agrawal, 2014-15). His offers included safe return of the refugees, release of Sheikh Mujeeb and promises to address the grievances of Bengalis. The Indian Prime Minister rejected such offers on the plea that the people of Bengal had already decided to get independence from Pakistan. Pakistan expected a military support from USA in case India attacked Pakistan. The public opinion in the US was against any such aid to Pakistan because of media portrayal of 'atrocities' caused by the Pakistani army against the people of Bengal.

India was openly asking the world for recognition of independent Bangladesh, as claimed by its people. Indian parliament passed a resolution on 31 March 1971, pledging support for the freedom of Bangladesh. India even ignored the call of the UN Secretary General for the peaceful solution of the issue. Yahya Khan asked UN Secretary General to stop Indian incursion into the territory of Pakistan which failed to materialize. Thus, Pakistan was left alone to defend itself and to face the dismemberment process.

Indo-Pakistan War and Dismemberment of Pakistan (1971)

The hostilities between India and Pakistan were intensified by November 1971. Pakistani forces bombarded Mukti Bahini camps and sanctuaries on the Indian side and India responded with armored and air attacks on Pakistani army units. India's military shelling had neutralized the defense capability of Pakistani forces on its border. India chose December 6 for a full-fledged attack to expel the Pakistan military from East Pakistan and to make possible the independence of East Pakistan into a new state, Bangladesh (Ziring, 1997, p.361). Indian army attacked Pakistani installations on December 5. The attack was vigorous with a strategic superiority in almost everything. Pakistani forces were engaged to fight internal uprising and now they were made to fight Indian forces as well. Indian attack was three-fold; land, naval and air. Pakistan naval passage to East Pakistan was blockaded in the Bay of Bengal (Aziz, 2012).

The Indian objectives of the war were to force out Pakistani army from East Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh to neutralize its encirclement from the side of Bangladesh- that far a shatter belt for India. The Indian attack was a political surprise for the world. Indian calculations were right that it will face no serious resistance from the world community. The civil war in East Pakistan was now an international war. Chinese support for Pakistan remained just 'public verbalization'. United States did nothing for the rescue of Pakistan. The US Enterprise, aircraft carrier reached the Bay of Bengal apparently for the evacuation of American nationals (Abbas, 2005, p.65). Even if US carrier was meant for deterring Indian attack, it failed.

Pakistan, while keeping its weakness and strengths in view, focused on diplomatic struggle especially, in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was appointed as Deputy prime Minister by Yahya Khan, led a mission to New York to participate in the UN Security Council meeting, which was already discussing the war in East Pakistan. While leaving for New York on December 8, Bhutto reiterated emotionally that he will return successful even if it consumes thousand years (Abbas, 2005, p.56). Bhutto met Henry Kissinger, the then US Secretary of state before going to the meeting of Security

Council. He was told that USA was pessimist about Pakistan's resistance to India and that Pakistan could not defend its Eastern wing. Kissinger warned Bhutto that 'only rhetoric cannot save Pakistan' (Ziring, 2005, p. 366). Bhutto was disappointed at the response of American officials for not using the Enterprise against India. Bhutto went to address the Security Council under the limitations he knew, after his meeting with Kissinger.

Empty handed and dejected, Bhutto therefore, chose his wordings accordingly in the Security Council meeting. His speech is regarded as the 'longest and sanctimonious' of his political career (Wolpert, 1993, p.166). This speech won him only an 'ignorant' support on return to home. His speech was revolving around criticism of major powers especially, USA and the 'inability' of Security Council to stop Indian aggression. He came harsh on India for intervening into the Civil War of Pakistan and exploiting the same to its favor. His words were emotional. He said, "I am not a rat. I have never rated in my life ... Today I am not ratting, but I am leaving your Security Council. I find it disgraceful to my person and my country to remain here a moment longer" (Qayyum, 1996, p.132). He tore his speech into pieces and came out of the hall with these words, "We will fight ... my country beckons me" (Qayyum, 1996, p.132)

On his return to Pakistan, Bhutto saw the Pakistani army defeated and humiliated at the hands of the Indian military. On December 16, 1971, General Niazi of Pakistan formally surrendered to General Jagjit Singh along with almost 93,000 soldiers (SarDesai, 2008, p.439). In history, this episode is remembered as the 'Fall of Dhaka' and the 'Dismemberment of Pakistan'. The regional geopolitics thus, took a turn and Pakistan dismembered into two states.

The Indo-Pakistan War of 1971 progressed according to the geopolitical dynamics of the regional states i.e. Pakistan, China and India and the global powers i.e. Soviet Union, Britain and United States. The record of India's geopolitical complexities due to its volatile border with West Pakistan provided an opportunity to neutralize threats to its security, strategic and political problems. Separation of Bangladesh solved Indian security dilemma because of being sandwiched between the two Pakistan(s). India did it skillfully and diplomatically by neutralizing Chinese reaction in favor of Pakistan and playing upon its politics and relations with Soviet Union and China. Signing Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Soviet Union in 1971, India was satisfied that no major power would dare to challenge the Soviet Union. India was also satisfied that USA will not side with Pakistan in the context of great powers geopolitics of the time. The high time helped India to act according to geopolitical directions for molding and transforming geopolitics in its favor.

Simla Agreement (July 1972)

Simla Agreement was signed in 1972 after the fall of Dhaka. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto emerged as the only popular leader, out of the ashes of the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War. The geopolitical map of the Indian subcontinent had been altered when he arrived back to Pakistan from the United States after a failed diplomatic maneuvering in Washington and New York. Pakistan had surrendered an army of 93,000, a population of 54 % and a big chunk of territory that was enough for an independent country, Bangladesh (Ganguly, 2006). Mr. Bhutto had successfully portrayed himself the only 'capable' and 'sincere' leader of the demoralized population. Yahya Khan was made to hand over power to Bhutto in the remaining Pakistan, based on the election results of 1970. The 'charismatic' Bhutto, then the president of Pakistan in 1971, faced grave challenges for his foreign policy with India.

The post-war negotiations between Pakistan and India started on 28 June, and concluded with an agreement on July 2, 1972, called Simla Agreement. The agreement was signed by Bhutto and Indra Gandhi, Pakistani president and Indian Prime Minister respectively. It was ratified by both countries in the same year. The agreement finalized certain guiding principles for the conduct of bilateral relations. The principles included: bilateral approaches to be adopted for resolution of mutual issues; increasing cooperation especially people to people contact; and non-violation of the Line of Control (Kochanek, & Hardgrave, 2007, p.488).

The terms of the treaty called for an end to mutual hostilities and conflicts and asked India and Pakistan to work for the resolution of the disputed areas through peaceful approaches. The two countries also agreed upon stopping and discouraging propaganda against each other. They also resolved to improve relations progressively by resuming all communications links i.e. air, land, postal etc, easing travel facilities of nationals, resuming trade links and promoting scientific and cultural exchanges. For the establishment of peace, both the governments agreed for withdrawal of forces on their side of the border; the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir was to be respected irrespective of differences and was not to be altered unilaterally, and the withdrawal was to take place after the enforcement of the agreement. The last section of the agreement reaffirmed the continuity of the dialogues for resolution of issues such as, return of the prisoners of war, civilian internees, the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and diplomatic relations between India and Pakistan.

Bhutto had three priorities in dialogues for Simla Agreement: repatriation of the Pakistanis, captured by India in war; the return of the occupied territory; and the settlement of the disputed issue of Jammu and Kashmir. The objectives could

match the strength of Pakistan as a defeated state. Pakistan was undergoing many problems during this time. Internally, population was demoralized, army was defeated, economy was in a shamble and politics was uncertain. "We had to participate in the talks by being at the weak position. In the very beginning Baharat tried to fulfill its objectives ... We tried to save ourselves from the pressure of India every time and even at the end of the parlays, we refused to sign the agreement" (Rizvi, n.d)

The geopolitics of Kashmir was still on top priority for Pakistan while dealing with India at Simla. Bhutto had accepted the Indian superiority and therefore, was ready to accept to an extent where Kashmir could be 'somehow' saved. Bhutto accepted the Indian demand that Pakistan and India would settle their disputes peacefully through bilateral process (Haqqani, 2018). This was a concession that allowed Pakistan to get back the occupied territories especially in Kashmir which were not under Indian control before the war. They agreed to go back to the position of 17 December 1971 and the dividing line was named as the Line of Control (LOC) (Haqqani, 2018).

The future regional geopolitics was directed by terms of the Simla agreement. The Indo-Pakistan issues were now to be bilaterally discussed - thus minimizing the international role, especially in the Kashmir dispute. Both states regarded the agreement as their win, though the terms were ambiguous in many ways. The editorial page of New York Times assessed Simla Agreement on 3 July 1972 in these words, "couched in vague terms that are likely to be interpreted differently by the two sides" (Kux, 2006, p.38).

Findings

The findings of the study are:

1. Geography has been a strong factor in the politics of Pakistan, and it played a pivotal role in the dismemberment of the country. Diverse ethnic composition- West and East wings of Pakistan-coupled with an uneasy geography determined military victory in East Pakistan
2. Geographical reality was ignored by Pakistan and it paid for it. Pakistani government never worked to go along the geographical reality throughout years. There was more than 1000 km distance between the two wings of Pakistan, and it decided the fate of the country. Finally, as a result the country got dismembered.
3. Pakistan's location cannot be read in isolation. The country is located on the important juncture of various parts of the world. Therefore, the global politics

and the changing trends impacted it deeply. Soviet Union translated the war into power struggle of the Cold War and sided with India. The power politics of the time led this country towards dismemberment.

Conclusion:

The region where the pre-dismembered Pakistan was located after its creation remained very relevant to local and international developments. The country's geographic size and location determined its political future. The two wings of the country were surrounded by important geopolitical entities. The ensuing trends, therefore, impacted the politics of Pakistan. In 1950s, Pakistan aligned itself to the western blocs, e.g. SEATO and CENTO. For a smaller country like Pakistan, it could not have been free of cost as it alerted the Soviet Union and India regarding their security. They needed any excuse to get Pakistan dismembered- and it happened in 1971. The events in 1960s provided enough ground for India and Soviet Union to help Bengalis carve out an independent country from Pakistan.

Two wars and two ensuing agreements, in a history of less than ten years, not only created a new history but also changed the whole map of the region. The results of the turmoil raised many questions regarding the legitimacy and politics that got shaped after 1947 when Pakistan and India were created. The post war security was revisited as witnessed in the long and difficult process of negotiations between Pakistan and India. Both the states claimed differently regarding various articles of Simla Agreement. Disagreements apart, the agreement formally culminated the war with the start of new era of hope.

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