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PAKISTAN SHOULD NOT APOLOGISE TO BANGLADESH ON 1971 (Islamabad considers the issue settled and fully resolved, with the conclusion of the Bangladesh-India-Pakistan Agreement of 9 April 1974)

Afrasiab Mehdi Hashmi
(Former High Commissioner
to Bangladesh)

Pakistan considers Bangladesh, a Muslim brother. This is not a cliché, but a fact. The people of the two countries struggled together for independence from the colonial rule. Both share a common history. Islam is too important to the common man in Bangladesh and to the common man in Pakistan, which resulted in the establishment of Muslim Pakistan in 1947.

The All India Muslim League, whose efforts resulted in the creation of Pakistan, was established in Dhaka (1906). Prominent Bengali leader Abdul Hamid Bhashani was so devoted to the cause of Pakistan, that he, in a pamphlet, 'Achieve Pakistan or Perish,' at the time of the Partition, underscored (*Book 'Abdul Matin Chaudhury-Trusted Lieutenant of Mohammad Ali Jinnah,' by Atful Hye Shibly, page 132, published by Juned A. Choudhury, Dhaka - 2011*) :

Pakistan is our only demand, History justifies it, Numbers confirm it, Justice claims it, Destiny demands it, Posterity awaits it, Plebiscite verdicts it, "Let do or die" be the motto of our life, Let us be prepared for any suffering or sacrifice, Let us be prepared to give up our lives if necessary, to "reach the goal of Pakistan."

Since its establishment in 1947, Pakistan has had major successes and major failures.

1971 was a major failure.

Pakistan has always desired the best of relations with Bangladesh. Pakistan does not have any issues with Bangladesh.

Dhaka has outstanding issues with Pakistan, when Awami League is in power. The Awami League government insists that without the resolution of these, there cannot be any forward movement in the relations with Pakistan.

Foremost is the demand that Pakistan make a formal and an unconditional Apology for what Awami League alleges, is the "genocide of 3 million" Bengalis and rapes of "200,000" Bengali women by the Pakistan Army in East Pakistan in 1971.

Intrinsically linked to the issue of Apology, is their demand that Islamabad pay Reparations in respect of these ‘atrocities.’ By international standards, if US \$ 5000 to 10,000 per person is to be paid for an excess committed against one (person), multiplying this figure with 3 million plus, would total billions of dollars. Depending on the intricacy of the situation and the complicated calculations, maybe Pakistan would be required to pay more than \$ 30 billion as ‘War Reparations’ to Bangladesh in respect of 1971.

In the past, UN Security Council Resolution 687 declared Iraq’s financial liability for the damages caused to Kuwait during the Gulf War. Later, Iraq was reportedly constrained to accept making payment of ‘compensation claims’ worth US \$ 52.4 billion for around 1.5 million war reparation petitions. As of 2 March 2021, Iraq seems to have made payments to the tune of \$ 49.5 billion. (*May also see Anadolu Agency report, 2 March 2021.*)

While impartial analysts (Bengali, Indian and in the West) have strongly contested the veracity of the 1971 statistics propagated by Awami League, questioning these sacrosanct figures (of 3 million and 200,000) in Bangladesh today amounts to ‘treason’ against the state and its very creation. Nevertheless, questions have been asked as to how could the 34,000 or so

Pakistani troops in East Pakistan in 1971, have committed crimes of such magnitude as claimed by the Awami League! Were these 34000 soldiers, fighting a war against the 300,000 plus troops of the Indian Army, aided in terror tactics by India-trained Mukti Bahini (Bengali insurgents), or killing and raping their own countrymen in East Pakistan, that too in the month of Ramadan which fell in October/November 1971!

Syed A. Karim, the first Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh in Sheikh Mujib government, while referring to the subject, stated that the figure of 3 million killed in 1971 was “a gross over-statement.” (*Article ‘Sayedee indictment-1971 deaths’, 11 November 2011, by David Bergman, bangladeshwarcrimes.blogspot.com.*) Sarmila Bose a (Hindu) Bengali research scholar at the Oxford, underscores, “The number of 3 million appears to be nothing more than a gigantic rumor.....it appears possible to estimate with reasonable confidence that at least 50,000–100,000 people perished in the conflict in East Pakistan/Bangladesh in 1971, including combatants and non-combatants, Bengalis and non-Bengalis, Hindus and Muslims, Indians and Pakistanis. Casualty figures crossing one hundred thousand are within the realm of possible, but beyond that one enters a world of meaningless speculation.”

(Book, *'Dead Reckoning,' Sarmila Bose, pages 177 & 181, Oxford University Press, London, 2011.*)

There is another account which suggests that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made a mistake when he claimed that 3 million Bengalis had been massacred by the Pakistan Army in 1971. According to Serajur Rahman, former Deputy Head of the BBC Bangla Service, what Mujib really meant was that 300,000 Bengalis were killed, and not 3 million. (*'Mujib's confusion on Bangladeshi deaths,' The Guardian, 24 May 2011.*)

Earlier, Swedish journalist Ingvar Oja wrote in March 1973, "The allegation regarding killing of 3 million people is highly exaggerated." (*Article on Bangladesh war in 'Dagens Nyheter' of 1 March 1973.*) Peter Gill also opined in the Daily Telegraph of 16 April 1973, "The wild figure of 3 million Bengalis killed during those 10 terrible months, is at least 20 times higher (than the reality), if not 50 or 60 times (higher)."

Importantly, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman also established two committees to prepare a detailed list of the 'war dead.' However, the government never publicly released the findings. According to the British Jewish investigative journalist, David Bergman (also cited above), "it has been suggested that this was because

the details of only 57,000 people could be identified.” (*‘Questioning an iconic number’, David Bergman, The Hindu, 29 July 2016. Bergman is the son in law of Kamal Hossain, who served as the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh in the Sheikh Mujib government*).

Analyst Asif Raja observes, “The falsity” of Sheikh Mujib’s allegation of rapes was “exposed when the abortion team he had commissioned from the United Kingdom in early 1972, found that there were no more than a hundred or so pregnancy cases they could deal with throughout their stay in Bangladesh.” (*‘Myth of 300,000 raped in Bangladesh’, 9 April 2013, www.seerahwest.com/2013/04.*)

According to Sarmila Bose (*Article ‘Losing the Victims: Problems of Using Women as Weapons in Recounting the Bangladesh War’, in the Economic and Political Weekly, of 22 September 2007*) :

- The issue of sexual violence in the 1971 war is long on political rhetoric but short on reliable material, with only a handful of accounts available as “evidence” of sexual violence during 1971.

- Unsubstantiated and implausible claims of hundreds of thousands of victims have distracted attention for three decades....Many of these shrill voices seem motivated more by a desire to smear the enemy and shore up an ideology of victimhood, than any concern for the real victims.

The third demand (after Apology and War Reparations) that the Awami League government has raised with Pakistan in bilateral interactions, relates to the Division of Assets. Meaning, if the Pakistan Army had ten tanks in 1971, cost of six be paid to Dhaka as East Pakistan at that time had more population than West Pakistan. Same would be the case with other assets common between the two sides when East Pakistan was part of Pakistan.

These (three) demands were officially conveyed to the Government of Pakistan with regularity by the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh and other functionaries of the Awami League government, when I was serving as Pakistan's High Commissioner to Bangladesh from 2011-2014. (*May also see article 'Bangladesh asks Pakistan to apologize for war', Dawn newspaper of 20 November 2011.*) Dhaka has also been emphasizing the return of the Biharis from Bangladesh to Pakistan. Islamabad has already

repatriated more than 170,000 Biharis to Pakistan since 1971.)

It would be important to note that Awami League is not the sole political party representing the wishes and aspirations of the people of Bangladesh, a country where a significant number of Bengalis do not even consider Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as ‘the Father of the Nation’ of Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has its own powerful standing, with a huge following, even though it has been presently suppressed by the Awami League with help of New Delhi. Its head Begum Khaleda Zia served two times as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. By and large, BNP and the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami which is the third largest political party in the country, do not go by the Awami League narrative on 1971.

In fact, these main opposition parties have seriously questioned the authenticity of the statistics propagated by the Awami League on 1971. Importantly, these opposition parties do not highlight the demand for an apology by Pakistan on 1971 in their statements; with some prominent opposition leaders even going to the extent of specifically demanding of Islamabad not to apologise on 1971.

On their part, Bangladeshi commentators have also been underlining that after Sheikh Mujib's assassination, no government in Dhaka had "ever raised the issue of apology" with the Government of Pakistan, for a period of almost two decades. To quote one Ekram Kabir from his article on the subject, in the Bangladeshi newspaper The Daily Sun of 11 January 2012, "If we look back, the governments that were in power in Bangladesh between 1975 and 1996, did not raise this issue with the Pakistan authorities."

Ironically, no Awami League leader would admit in public that the Mukti Bahini committed atrocities against the West Pakistani men, women and children in East Pakistan in 1971, which forced the Pakistan Army to step in. They would never admit that they massacred Biharis and raped Bihari women in East Pakistan. Tens of thousands perished in these pogroms, carried out by the Mukti Bahini in coordination with Indian RAW and activists of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) before and after 16 December in 1971.

Importantly, the first Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh (appointed in June 1972), James Bartleman, speaks of "millions of persons" incarcerated in "huge refugee camps" in Bangladesh, who had sided with Pakistan" during the war in 1971.

(*'On Six Continents-A Life in Canada's Foreign Service'*, page 59, Douglas Gibson Books, 2005.) The inmates of these camps were not only pro-Pakistan Bengalis, but also Biharis who still call Pakistan "their very own country."

In his book 'Death by Government', Rudolph Rummel, professor emeritus at the University of Hawaii, estimated that perhaps 150,000 Biharis were murdered by the vengeful victors (Mukti Bahini) in the brutal bloodlettings; with Lawrence Lifschultz speaking of the Mukti Bahini leader Abdul Kader Siddiqui personally bayoneting "prisoners to death" and the gory killings filmed by foreign film crews whom Siddique had himself invited to witness. (*Lifschultz wrote extensively for The Guardian, Le Monde Diplomatique and the BBC.*)

According to Rushbrook Williams, British historian and a senior civil servant who spent years in South Asia, "Whenever the (Pakistani) troops went into action, a minimum of force was used; they did not interfere with peaceful processions or political meetings, but only with mobs engaged in looting and arson." (*Book 'The East Pakistan Tragedy' by L. F. Rushbrook Williams, Drake Publishers New York, 1972; page 54.*)

In the same vein, Tajammul Hussain observes, “Security of life and living had become a rare commodity in Mujib’s Bangladesh. Lawlessness was promoted by Mujib himself and his own clans and his bully boys. His son Shaikh Kamal, nephew Fazlul Haq Moni and his pet Dacca Police chief, S.P. Mahbub, became a synonym for terror in Dacca. The unconstitutional paramilitary force, Rakhi Bahini, raised under the guidance of Indian General Ovan, having been under the control of Mujib himself from about mid-1972, became another terror symbol for the peaceful and patriotic people of Bangladesh. (*Book ‘Bangladesh: Victim of Black Propaganda, Intrigue and Indian Hegemony’, Mohammad Tajammul Hussain, Al-Hilal Publishers Ltd., London, 1996; page 97.*)

The above are a few quotes.

In a written interview published sometimes back, the then sitting Deputy Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament, Colonel (Retd) Shawkat Ali, admitted his and Sheikh Mujib’s involvement in the break-up of Pakistan in 1971. Ali stated (*Bangladeshi magazine ‘Dhakacourier’, 10 February 2012 issue*) :

- *I joined the (Pakistan) army in 1958. In the 1960s, army personnel from the then East Pakistan*

banded together and decided on a plan to attack and take over all cantonments in East Pakistan on a given date, in an attempt to stage a coup.

- *It was also decided that under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib, who wasn't yet "Bangabandhu" — he was Mujib bhai to us; we would declare the independence of East Pakistan from Pakistan. I got involved with the plan in 1966 when I was stationed at the Comilla cantonment as a captain in the (Pakistan) army. In the plan, I was in charge of the takeover of the Comilla cantonment. Sadly, the plans were leaked before they could be executed. And that is how the historic Agartala Case came to be.*

- *The name "Agartala Conspiracy Case" is a misnomer. The actual name of the case filed against us was State vs Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and others. The name of Agartala became associated with the case due to a small incident. A two-member delegation from our group went to Agartala, India, to meet Indian authorities to discuss with them our plans and ask them if they could aid us.*

- *Until recently, it was believed this case was a ploy to get rid of Sheikh Mujib, when in reality it was*

a case filed on very concrete and true accusations.

- *We did conspire for secession of East Pakistan!
The accusations were 100 percent true.*

The following comments by Sheikh Hasina about her father's interaction with India, reported by the Bangladeshi media, would also be relevant:

Quote

In a dispatch from Dhaka dated 7 March 2010, Bangladeshi online news agency bdnews24.com quoted Sheikh Hasina as stating that her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had formulated detailed war plans for Bangladesh's eventual liberation from Pakistan during a stay in London in 1969. Hasina was addressing a discussion in Dhaka to mark the historic March 7 speech, the day in 1971 when Sheikh Mujib called on the Bengali nation to prepare for the secession struggle from Pakistan.

She (Hasina) said Bangabandhu made war plans just months after his release from Kurmitola where he had been detained in the Agartala Conspiracy Case, in which the Pakistan government had brought sedition charges against Bangabandhu and 34 others. "He went to London on 22 October 1969, following his release in the

Agartala case on 22 April that year. I reached London the next day from Italy, where I was living with my husband," she recalled. "It was there that Bangabandhu at a meeting, made plans for liberation, including when the war would start, where our freedom fighters would be trained and where refugees would take shelter....All preparations were made there (London). I was serving tea and entered the room several times where the meeting was being held. I heard their discussions," the Prime Minister said.

Unquote

In a writeup published in a Bangladeshi daily in August 2012, Bangladeshi analyst Syed Badrul Ahsan revealed that sometime in the later part of the 1950s, Sheikh Mujib, then a young politician, threw a question at the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy (Suhrawardy was from East Pakistan). He asked, "Is it not possible for East Pakistan to become independent someday?" In a state of disbelief, the Prime Minister admonished Mujib, saying, "Do not ever entertain such thoughts. Pakistan has been achieved at a huge cost and its unity needs to be preserved." Mujib murmured, almost muttered: "We shall do our job when the time comes." (*The Daily Star, 14 August 2012.*)

Pakistan's position on the issue of Apology to Bangladesh has been clear and consistent. Islamabad considers the subject settled and fully resolved, with the conclusion of the Bangladesh-India-Pakistan (tripartite) Agreement, signed in New Delhi on 9 April 1974. The following segments of the Agreement, need to be studied:

- *The Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs of the Government of Pakistan, said that “his government condemned and deeply regretted any crimes that may have been committed (in respect of the 1971 war).” [PARA 13]*
- *The Ministers noted, “the Prime Minister of Pakistan had declared that he would visit Bangladesh in response to the invitation of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, and appealed to the people of Bangladesh to forgive and forget the mistakes of the past in order to promote reconciliation (between Pakistan and Bangladesh).” [PARA 14]*
- *Similarly, “the Prime Minister of Bangladesh had declared with regard to the atrocities and destruction committed in Bangladesh in 1971, that he wanted the people to forget the past and to*

make a fresh start, stating that the people of Bangladesh knew how to forgive.” [PARA 14]

Swaran Singh signed the above tripartite Agreement on behalf of the Government of India, Aziz Ahmed signed it on behalf of the Government of Pakistan, and Kamal Hossain signed the Agreement on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh. Significantly, the document was signed by these Foreign Ministers of the three countries with the clear approval of, and on the specific instructions of Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the three important figures of 1971 who were in power in their respective countries at the time of the signing of the Agreement.

This Agreement led to the development of mutually beneficial relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh. Later, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto visited Bangladesh in 1974; and subsequently, Islamabad established its diplomatic Mission in Dhaka.

Earlier on 29 February 1973, the Government of Pakistan had issued a strongly worded statement, which had underscored, “The loss of life and property during 1971 is deeply regretted, lamented and mourned by everyone.” During his visit to Dhaka in

July 2002, President Pervez Musharraf sincerely apologised to the people of Bangladesh on 1971 by using the words “sorry” and “regrets.” Before Musharraf, while addressing the issue, President Ziaul Haq had declared in no unequivocal terms, “Your heroes are our heroes.” However, the Awami League leadership continues to demand an ‘Unconditional, formal Apology from Pakistan.’

Here, it would be significant to quote J.N. Dixit, the first Head of the Indian Mission (Ambassador) in Dhaka after the establishment of Bangladesh. In his book, Dixit who later became India’s High Commissioner to Pakistan, and his country’s Foreign Secretary and then the National Security Adviser of India, discusses the first ever visit to Bangladesh by the Prime Minister of Pakistan (Zulfikar Ali Bhutto) in 1974, as under (*‘Liberation and Beyond – Indo-Bangladesh Relations’*, J. N. Dixit, pages 189-190, published in 1999 by Konark Publishers Pvt, Delhi):

Quote

Bhutto arrived in Dhaka in July 1974. I drove to the airport through dense crowds lining both sides of the streets all the way from the Tejgaon airport to Banga Bhavan, resounding with slogans like ‘Bangladesh-Pakistani maitri (friendship) Zindabad’ and ‘Zulfikar

Ali Bhutto Zindabad.’ This was a far cry from the massive anti-Bhutto demonstrations held in Dhaka in the second fortnight of March 1971. All the heads of the diplomatic missions were lined up at the tarmac.

Bhutto descended from a special air force aircraft in the uniform of the supreme leader of the People’s Party of Pakistan. I was introduced when he reached me in the reception line. Shaking me by the hand, he turned to Mujibur Rahman and said: “So, he represents the country which re-arranged the map of the sub-continent in 1971.” Then, addressing me, he said: “May be, he (would) help us a second time in re-arranging the map by resolving the Kashmir problem which has been pending for such a long time.” ...It was the journey back from the airport which was a politically and emotionally disturbing experience for me.

As the motorcade moved out, the frenzied enthusiasm of the mass of the people lining the route reached a high pitch, with slogans and shouting in favour of Bhutto and Pakistan. The new and striking feature of this show were the many slogans very critical of the Awami League and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I was told later that people threw garlands of shoes at Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s car on his journey back to the President’s House. My flag car was vandalized

and the Indian flag tampered with by the crowds as it slowed down near the road crossing at the Inter-Continental Hotel. Abusive slogans were shouted against the Indian High Commission and the Government of India.

I have to confess that I had tears of anger in my eyes, when I returned to my office and sat down to draft my telegram reporting on the arrival ceremonies and attendant political events.

Unquote

The question is, if Pakistan and its army were as “monstrous” as has been alleged in Bangladesh today, why was the Prime Minister of Pakistan given such a tumultuous welcome in Dhaka in 1974, just a little more than two years after the establishment of Bangladesh? If the common man in Bangladesh considered India as the benefactor of the people of Bangladesh, why was the Indian Ambassador’s official car garlanded with shoes? If Pakistan has been such a hated country in Bangladesh, why is it so that so many Bangladeshis came to the airport to welcome Zulfikar Ali Bhutto? They should have raised full-throated slogans against the Prime Minister of Pakistan, rather than shouting ‘Bhutto Zindabad (Long live Bhutto).’

These are some facts sifted from fiction.

The tragic fact remains that Bangladesh lost its independence to India the day it was created. Focus on the National Anthem of Bangladesh ‘Amar Sonar Bangla’, would be noteworthy which is a poem by Rabindranath Tagore composed in 1905 against the aspirations of the Muslims of Bengal. Bangladesh was forced to adopt this poem as its national anthem by New Delhi. Even Sheikh Mujibur Rahman went into a state of shock when he learned about this on his return from Pakistan in early 1972. Many in Bangladesh still hold Indian RAW responsible for the assassination of Sheikh Mujib, because he proceeded to Pakistan to attend the OIC Summit in February 1974, against the “firm advice” by New Delhi.

India bullies Bangladesh.

The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) personnel routinely abuse, threaten, detain and torture Bangladeshi civilians residing along the border with Bangladesh. Acts of rape and looting have also been perpetrated by the BSF in the border areas. Over the last five decades, several hundred Bangladeshis have been killed by the BSF. Dhaka cannot do much. In private, Bangladeshis would mention that promotions

in the Bangladesh armed forces in senior ranks are made on the recommendations of RAW.

Indian Army Chiefs preside over as Chief Guests at the graduation parades of the Bangladesh Military Academy, Chittagong. (*Report titled 'Indian Army chief takes salute of Bangladesh Military Academy cadets', bdnews24.com dated 16 June 2015.*) If officers of the Bangladeshi establishment are to be believed, the personal security of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh today is handled by India, not by the security personnel of Bangladesh.

Senior Bangladeshi intellectual journalist (who has also been cited above), Badrul Ahsan, in a writeup published in a Bangladeshi newspaper, thus opines (*'India shouldn't make Bangladesh feel small', Syed Badrul Ahsan, 'The Daily Star', 14 February 2014*):

Quote

It is natural for India, the emerging super-power, to harbor some sort of hegemonic ambition. It is understandable if that country expects Bangladesh to walk in its shadows. India surely demands respect, and by no means should we step on its toes even in our wildest imagination. India is even expected to bully us. It suits us best to patiently overlook many of

its vagaries. For all practical reasons, India will want to dominate us. It will impose its likes and dislikes on us, its wishes being our command.

Unquote

This is sad.

Bangladesh has been a highly divided society: with Awami League termed as ‘staunchly pro-India,’ and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) “more concerned with the sovereignty of Bangladesh,” thus “less supportive of India.” Many in Awami League have outright hatred for Pakistan; so many in BNP have a soft corner for Pakistan. The Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami which is the third largest political party in the country, gravitates towards the Islamic identity of Pakistan.

As regards the common Muslim Bangladeshi, so many even today have positive feelings for Pakistan. By various estimates, more than 50 percent of Bangladeshi Muslims can be included in this category. Analyst Sabria Balland concludes, “If any independent survey or referendum is conducted in Bangladesh today, over 80 percent Bangladeshis will vote for restoring normal relations with Pakistan.” And these feelings, India has tried to erase for the last 50 years, without much success. People have been

hanged to death in Dhaka in recent years, for their belief in Muslim Pakistan. Many Bangladeshis look up to Pakistan.

All this does not mean that the people of Bangladesh have forgotten 1971; or 1971 is not in the Bangladeshi psyche. 1971 left a deep scar on the minds of the people of Bangladesh. On its part, India with help of Awami League, makes the people of Bangladesh live through 1971 every day, lest the Islamic identity of the Muslims of Bangladesh starts reconnecting them with the idea of Muslim Pakistan. In short, common Bangladeshi Muslim does not feel comfortable with ‘Hindu India.’ This is a fact. While Indians sometimes describe Bangladeshis as “the most ungrateful nation on earth”; and “cockroaches”; Bangladeshis retort by calling Indians, especially the Brahmans of the Indian State of West Bengal, “Hindu Malaoons (jin per laanat ki gai).”

Pakistan has always stood by Bangladesh. In the 1980s, Islamabad gifted 46 aircraft of the Pakistan Air Force to the Bangladesh Air Force at the special request of the then President of Bangladesh, Hussain Muhammad Ershad, made to President Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan. (Shahid Alvi who retired from the Pakistan Airforce as Air Marshal in 2020, at that time in a junior capacity was included in the Pakistani

technical team that had gone to Bangladesh to deliver the aircraft to the Bangladeshi side.) When I made a courtesy call on Hussain Muhammad Ershad after taking up the assignment as High Commissioner in Dhaka in 2011, he in particular referred to this gift and thanked Islamabad for the assistance given to Bangladesh.

Earlier, Pakistan gifted 35 tanks to the Bangladesh army. Bangladeshi armed forces personnel have been regularly availing training facilities in Pakistan. In the summer of 2014, the two countries reached an understanding according to which, Islamabad later provided training in Pakistan to more than 60 Bangladeshi defense personnel in respect of the Al-Khaled tank. Ironically, the Pakistan Army which has been accused of committing a “genocide” of Bengalese in 1971 by the India supported intellectuals in Bangladesh, has been the most ardent supporter of Bangladesh whenever Dhaka needs any assistance in respect of its security and defense. All these important aspects of the relations between the two countries, are not publicised for understandable reasons.

As a Muslim brother, Pakistan will always stand by Bangladesh.

A little focus here on the 1970 general elections in (united) Pakistan would not be off the mark. Yes, power should have been handed over to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, since the Awami League had won the majority in the elections. But what if, whatever is being stated about him in Bangladesh today (mentioned above), is true! What if he really desired the separation of East Pakistan even in the 1950s, when he had made this point to the (Bengali) Prime Minister of Pakistan, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy! What if he had actually conspired with India to separate East Pakistan in the context of the Agartala case, as asserted by the sitting Deputy Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament, Colonel (Retd) Shawkat Ali, in February 2012!

Maybe Yahya Khan knew all this. Afterall, he was the President of Pakistan: and all intelligence was provided to him!

History is important. Pakistan and Bangladesh have to learn from history.

In their masterly account, 'This Age of Conflict,' British scholars Chambers, Harris and Bayley underscored, "India is an object lesson to those anthropologists who say that character is a function of the physical environment. For no two communities

could have been more different than the Hindu and the Moslem. Yet the land they lived in was the same land burned by the same sun, watered by the same rains....(Both communities) stood against one another in sporadic and incurable hostility. They might live side by side in formal peace in the same town or village for years, and then some little provocation, when least expected-perhaps the killing of a cow by Moslem or the playing of a band by Hindu marriage or funeral procession passing a mosque at prayer time - could start a riot.”

They add, “As a community, the Moslems keenly felt their inferior numbers but at the same time, were conscious of belonging to a great international Moslem world outside India, a world which looked not to Delhi or Benares, but to Mecca, a world which the more parochial Hindu could never know.” (*Book ‘This Age of Conflict’ by Chambers, Harris and Bayley, published in the UK; pages 345 and 346.*)

India of yesterday was India of Karamchand Gandhi. Today, Bharat is ruled by those who have deep respect not for Gandhi, but his assassin Nathuram Godse. The persecution of Muslims in India and in Indian occupied Kashmir by the Rashtarya Swayamsevakh Sangh (RSS) activists, is being watched not only in Pakistan, but also in Bangladesh.

The dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 as an RSS sympathiser once termed, was the ‘Second Liberation’ of India, the first in 1947 when the British left the subcontinent. According to others, “India is on the look for her third liberation by fully annexing Bangladesh into ‘Mother India’; and the fourth and final liberation would be when she could completely annex the territory of existing Pakistan.”

Indian analyst Pankaj Mishra in an article in The New York Times, referred to his interaction with Gopal Godse, the younger brother of Nathuram Godse. According to Gopal, Nathuram had advised him to immerse his (Nathuram’s) ashes in Indus, “the holy river of India that flows through Pakistan, only when Mother India was whole again.” (*The Other Face of Fanaticism*, Pankaj Mishra, *The New York Times Magazine*, 2 February 2003.)

1971 evokes high emotions even today. And, it should; why not! So many suffered, both East Pakistanis and West Pakistanis. So many went through an agonising agony. East Pakistanis suffered much more because the main theatre of conflict was in East Pakistan, with their West Pakistani brothers sincerely praying for their safety and well-being, and for the integrity of Muslim Pakistan.

Pakistan is the only country in the world today where every other person has ‘feelings’ for Bengalese; a soft corner for the people of Bangladesh.

Conclusion

The question of ‘Apology’ by Pakistan to Bangladesh on 1971, needs to be looked at in the light of the detailed narrative explained in this writeup.

Pakistan’s position on the subject has been unambiguous. As a matter of policy, Islamabad considers matters relating to 1971, settled, fully resolved once and for all, and not open to discussion, with the conclusion of the Bangladesh-India-Pakistan (Tripartite) Agreement signed in New Delhi on 9 April 1974. As mentioned earlier, Para 13 of this Agreement specifically states that **Pakistan “condemned and deeply regretted** any crimes that may have been committed ” in 1971. Its para 14 adds, the **Prime Minister of Pakistan “appealed to the people of Bangladesh to forgive and forget the mistakes of the past.”** On his part, **Sheikh Mujib declared that “he wanted the people to forget the past and make a fresh start”** adding, **Bengalis “knew, how to forgive.”**

The Tripartite Agreement has served as a solid platform on which Pakistan's relations with Bangladesh were established. To reiterate, this solemn Agreement was formally signed by the Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, on the specific instructions of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who were in authority in their respective countries at the time of the signing of the Agreement.

The following need to be carefully noted, in case the State of Pakistan offers any 'Unconditional Formal Apology' to Bangladesh, especially at this point of time:

- **Pakistan would be succumbing to the demand being repeatedly made by only one major political party in Bangladesh, the Awami League. Awami League is controlled by India; there are no two opinions on this. Other major political parties in Bangladesh have not been emphasizing this demand. (Some media commentators give the impression that entire Bangladesh has rallied behind the Awami League demand that Pakistan formally apologise to Bangladesh on 1971. This is factually incorrect.)**

- **By formally apologising, Pakistan would be accepting that its Army was responsible for killing 3 million Bengalese and raping 200,000 Bengali women, which is an absolutely absurd allegation.**
- **Should Pakistan then pay 30 billion US dollars or more, as Reparations to Bangladesh, as demanded by the Awami League government!**
- **Then, would come the demand in respect of the Division of Assets! How would that be worked out?**
- **There could also be serious legal implications and repercussions, in case of a formal apology by Pakistan.**
- **By apologizing to Bangladesh on 1971, Islamabad would be doing a big favour to the Awami League (and India). By offering Apology, Islamabad would be doing a big disfavor to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) which has so many activists who have a soft corner for Pakistan; and the Bangladesh Jamaat - e - Islami whose senior most members have been hanged to death in recent years, for**

supporting the ideology of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

- **Any Apology by Pakistan would further demoralize the large Bihari community in Bangladesh today.**

Out of sheer goodwill, Pakistan has not asked Bangladesh to apologise for the atrocities committed against the West Pakistanis, Biharis and Bengalis in East Pakistan, who sided with Pakistan in 1971. Nor has Islamabad demanded any compensation in this regard.

Importantly, even if Islamabad makes an ‘unconditional formal apology’ to Bangladesh, exactly the way Awami League wants, the matter would still not be resolved. India would never allow any development to take place which can establish a real brotherly interaction between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Most importantly, any formal apology by Pakistan on 1971, would hit at the very ideology of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Pakistan would be apologizing for protecting East Pakistan in 1971, which was part of Pakistan. How would you account for the sighs of the Shuhada! Analysts would taunt, “Traitors have

been eulogized, and martyrs criminalized.” Others would assert, “So, the creation of a Muslim homeland in 1947, was a waste! Next time, any part of Pakistan can ask for independence; and it will be marked as a right to freedom.”

Finally, a word about the Hamoodur Rahman Commission Report. Questions have been asked about the Report. How many persons have had access to ‘the original report, in its entirety?’ How come, parts of the Report were published of all the places in India! Is any important piece of information on 1971 also missing even in the original report. Afterall, writings of the thinking people on 1971 do not absolve Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of his responsibilities in regard to the tragedy of East Pakistan, who as President of Pakistan had established the Hamoodur Rahman Commission!

Narratives have been quoted in this article about Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. What about the personal character of Yahya Khan, which impacted on his professional responsibilities as the President of Pakistan! He left behind a legacy of shame and ignominy, which Muslim posterity would never like to remember.

Had Yahya Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman shown ‘flexibility’, ‘some flexibility’, for the sake of Muslim Pakistan, situation would have been different. Humans have their fate; nations also have their destiny. Had Manmohan Singh, I. K. Gujral or Morarji Desai, been serving as the Prime Minister of India in 1971, instead of Indira Gandhi, situation would have been different.

All the main characters of 1971, had a tragic end. Maybe, the ideology of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, is unforgivingly vengeful. Maybe it took the ultimate revenge.

These are the dark black facts.

All seems to have been lost in the dust of the past; so much is lost in the lust for power. Man aspires power, but man becomes dust. Power alone and alone, belongs to Almighty the Creator: ALLAH RABUL ALAMEEN. Quoting from the Quran:

“LET THEM PARDON AND OVERLOOK. WOULD YOU NOT LOVE ALLAH TO FORGIVE YOU? ALLAH IS FORGIVING AND MERCIFUL.”

Today, the world is headed towards religious fascism; negative focus is on Islam. The ‘Hindu fundamentalist Bharat’ would like to expand. Proud Muslims of Bangladesh are deeply religious, resilient and fiercely independent. 1947 did not happen only in 1947; it also took place in Bengal in 1905, when East Bengal was partitioned from West Bengal as demanded by the Muslims of Bengal. 1971 did not happen only in 1971; it also happened in 1911 when the British due to the Hindu pressure, annulled the partition of Bengal.

Pakistaniat did not break in 1971. If Pakistaniat means having deep respect for the Prophet of Islam; and defending one’s Muslim identity, values and ethos with dignity and honour, against the hegemony and domineering mindset of Hindu India in the subcontinent, then certainly Pakistaniat continues to exist in the heart, mind and soul of the Muslims of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh never joined India; nor would any Bangladeshi Muslim ever like such a development to take place. The Two Nation Theory of Muhammad Ali Jinnah stands re-validated even in 2021. Supremacism is a bane. The ‘White Supremacist – Zionist – Hindu Fascist Nexus’ which has undiscussed connections with 1971, would like to see a different world tomorrow. Any floccinaucinihilipilification of Islam

would be successfully resisted by the Muslims of Bengal, Muslims of Pakistan and the entire Muslim world.

Pakistan wishes Bangladesh well.

May the Muslims of Bangaal, remain happy forever.

(As officer of the Foreign Service of Pakistan, Ambassador Afrasiab Mehdi Hashmi worked in the Pakistani Missions in Washington DC, New Delhi, Vienna and Beijing. He served as Pakistan's High Commissioner to Bangladesh (2011-2014) and later as High Commissioner to New Zealand (2016 - 2018). He retired from government service in 2018. Afrasiab has authored books on issues relevant to Pakistan's foreign relations, history and {the spiritual aspects of} theology.)

