

CHALLENGES OF NATION-BUILDING IN PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH: QUEST FOR A CRISIS MANAGEMENT

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Introduction

The phenomenon of nation-building or nation-destroying in the newly independent states of Asia, Africa and Latin America is a common interesting feature. The integrative crisis that confronted several of the new states of these regions should be viewed as part of an historical process of political development. The process of integration¹ or disintegration is always present in both new and old states, in both developing and developed parts of the world.

The case of Pakistan provides us a striking example of a developing state that appeared to have achieved a reasonable degree of national integration through an overwhelmingly popular adherence to Islamic ideals. The eventual breakup of Pakistan, therefore, came as a surprise not only because of its finality but also because the disintegration was completed within a relatively short period.

Pakistan, however, was not unique in undergoing this disintegration crisis. The Federation of Malaysia was the first one to disintegrate when the political differences between Singapore and Malaysia led to the expulsion of Singapore from the Malaysian Federation in 1965 which was formed only two years back. Of course, problems of nation-building are not without precedent nor

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¹ The terms 'nation-building' and 'national integration' are used interchangeably in the current literature of political development.

only related to the new states of Asia and Africa. European states have and are also facing analogous problems of integration.

The purpose of this article is to identify challenges in the process of nation-building in Pakistan and Bangladesh. An attempt will also be made to suggest some measures towards building a cohesive integrated nation.

The Conceptual Framework

There is no single blueprint for nation-building or national integration. What then do we mean when we speak of nation-building? In fact, the term nation-building covers a vast range of physical, social, economic, and political phenomena extending from physiological integration in a human body, social integration in the fields of education, language, legal systems or literature, to economic integration of the advanced and the backward sectors of a society and integration of the primordial groups into a national community².

Thus, it is difficult to define the concept of integration in relation to the developing areas as a whole because of the wide range of differences between them. But in order to understand the integrative problems of developing societies confronting social, economic, and political changes, certain general aspects or features can be identified such as identity integration, elite-mass integration, cultural integration, economic integration and political integration, which are a few of the many aspects of nation-building. We shall, however, confine our discussion to examining the relevance of these aspects of nation-building in the context of the post-independence political experiences of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

² Boon-Ngee Chan, *Towards a Malaysian Malaysia: A Study of Political Integration*, Ph.D Thesis, the University of Alberta, Canada, Spring 1971, p.3. Also see M. Nazrul Islam, *Problems of Nation - Building in Developing Countries: The Case Study of Malaysia*, (Dhaka: University of Dhaka, 1988), pp. I-25

1: Identity Integration

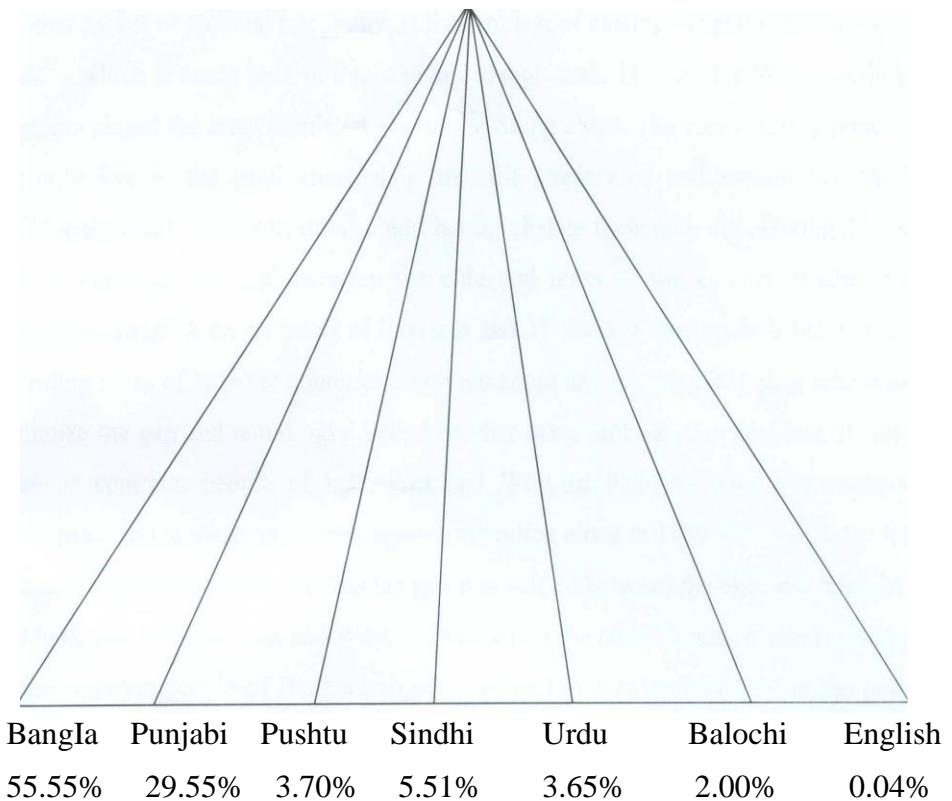
One aspect of national integration is the problem of national identity. It is, however, considered to be the crisis of first magnitude in the history of the emerging states. The social group cleavages of these states are both horizontal and vertical.³

For Pakistan, the root causes of identity integration lay in the very unusual geographical division between the two wings of Pakistan by more than one thousand miles of Indian territory which made the communication between the East and West of Pakistan difficult. The lack of communication between the peoples of two wings of Pakistan was further accentuated by ethnic, linguistic, societal and cultural differences. Pakistan is a multiracial and multicultural state in the sense that her people speak as many as six different languages-Bangla, Punjabi, Pushto, Sindhi, Urdu and Baluchi. Each of the languages is roughly identified with one of the geographic areas of the State. The people of East Pakistan, except some tribal populations and some Urdu-speaking immigrants from the Bihar province of India, the majority of them speak in their mother tongue, follow the same habits, and have the same identity - they are Bangalis.

In contrast, the cultural diversity of West Pakistan is apparent as localized into four different territories - the Punjab, NWFP, Sindh and Baluchistan. Though four provinces are physically compact, each has had its own regional language - Punjabi, Pushto, Sindhi, Baluchi. No single language has had general acceptance either in East and West Pakistan or even within West Pakistan (please see Figure -I)

³ C.W. Welch Jr., (ed.), *Political Modernization: A Reader in Comparative Political Change*, (Belmont, California: Duxbury Press, 1971), p.168. Also see, M. Nazrul Islam, *op.cit.*, p.25

Figure - I
Socia-Political Bases of Identity
In
Pakistan
Types of Identity
Multiple -Ethnicity
Frequency of Languages Spoken as Mother Tongue



This state of affairs clearly indicates that both the wings of Pakistan had nothing common except majority of them adhered to same faith-Islam. The conflicting situation prevailing within and between the two wings of Pakistan, therefore, became the roadblock to evolve the national identity i.e. Pakistani identity out of the

existing regional identities. This was the most urgent problem before the ruling elites of Pakistan which they failed to address properly and thus the process of disintegration in Pakistan was set in.

Unlike Pakistan, the case of Bangladesh provides us unique example of a homogeneous nation state. As stated earlier, a small segment of the population are hilly people. And a very few of the population are Urdu-speaking immigrant Muslims from India. About 98 percent of the people speak in their mother tongue and have the same identity - Bangladeshi nationality.

II: Elite-Mass Integration

Another aspect of national integration is the problem of closing the gap between elite and masses⁴ - which is acute both in Pakistan and Bangladesh. In both, the Western-educated elements played the most dominant role of the ruling elites. The vast majority of population not only lives in the rural areas, they are still uneducated and remain tied to their traditional values. Modernization⁵ could hardly change their outlooks. During 24 years' rule of Pakistan, the gap⁶ between the elite and masses of the country reached to an irreparable stage. After 61 years of Pakistan and 37 years of Bangladesh Independence, the ruling elites of both the countries could not adopt any meaningful policy which could minimize the gap and could have settled its elite-mass problem. For instance, it was the mass or common people of both East and West of Pakistan who overwhelmingly participated in the mass-movement against the ruling elites in 1969-70 as the latter failed to create conditions for minimizing the gap that existed between the elite and mass on the one hand and between East and West of Pakistan on the

⁴ For critical concept of Elite-Mass, see, Gaetano Mosea, *The Ruling Class*, (New York; McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1939), p.72, and Edward Albert Shils, *Political Development in the New States*, (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1962), p.87

⁵ M. Weiner(ed.), *Modernization: The Dynamics of Growth*, (New York: Basic Books Inc. Publishers, 1966), pp. 1-52

⁶ For a critical study of 'gap' theories of political development, see Ann Ruth Willner, "The Underdeveloped Study of Political Development", in, *World Politics*, vo.16, April 1964, pp.468-482

other. Again, it was the majority of the common people of Bangladesh who were large in number and took part in the popular movement against the authoritarian regime of General Ershad, in 1980s and 1990s.

III: Economic Integration

Perhaps the most important single source of integration is economic opportunity. The hypothesis is that economic integration will contribute strongly to the possibility of nation-building and, conversely, that communities whose members have different economic characteristics from one another may have a very hard time achieving or maintaining national integration.⁷ In the case of Pakistan, economic policies were devised in such a way that helped a particular region of West Pakistan to develop more rapidly at the cost of the development of other regions of Pakistan in almost all the major areas of economic activity. Eventually, underdeveloped areas of the country were turned into a protected market for the manufactured goods of Pakistan. Thus, the problems of nation building in Pakistan were compounded by the very fact of economic predominance of a particular section of the country. Indeed, the subsequent policies of the Federal Administration of Pakistan were geared up maintaining that, and this might have been the single independent variable for the problem of nation-building in Pakistan. The case of independent Bangladesh is not much different from that of Pakistan. Here the ruling elites amassed and plundered the wealth of the nation to such an extent that the country is now on the verge of economic breakdown.

IV. Political Integration

For the new states of Afro-Asia, one of the most crucial problems for building a nation is the problem of political integration. In brief, it implies a relationship among the people within the same

⁷ For an example of research procedures on homogeneity using socio-economic characteristics, see Eshref Shevky and Wendell Bell, *Social Area Analysis, Illustrative Application and Computational Procedures*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1955)

political territory. During the pre-Independence period, the majority Muslims of North-West and East of India demonstrated their unprecedented political cohesiveness in the elections of 1946 in which the Muslim League won all the Muslim seats in the Central Legislature and absolute majority in the Provincial Assemblies.⁸ The striking feature of the elections was that the majority votes polled from East Pakistan, the then East Bengal, not only projected the solid support of the Bangali Muslims for Pakistan but also opened up new vistas for Pakistan. Unfortunately, the elites of the new State of Pakistan could not grasp the reality of political cohesiveness of the Bangalis. Instead of nursing political understanding for nation-building, the ruling elites' socioeconomic and political policies not only accelerated the process of destroying the nation but its centrifugal forces ultimately posed a serious threat to the very foundation of the state.

To study the constraints of political integration, the course of Federal politics of Pakistan may be examined in four different stages, each stage instead of building a nation, complicated the process of nation -building.

First Stage: The Interim Constitution of Pakistan 1947 -1956

(This stage may be divided into A, B & C)

During the first half of Pakistan's political history, the seeds of authoritarian rule were carefully sowed. For example:

(A) Administrative Policy

Executive and legislative measures of the Federal Government deprived the Provinces of their only sources of revenue, such as Sales Tax, Income Tax and Customs Duties which they enjoyed under the Government of India Act 1935.

⁸ See M. Nazrul Islam, *Pakistan and Malaysia: A Comparative Study in National Integration*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Ltd, 1989), pp. 97-168. Also see, Chaudhuri Muhammad Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p.48

(B) Cultural Policy

The ruling elites' policy of cultural uniformity by introducing Urdu as the only State Language had a disastrous effect to the process of nation - building.

Although subsequently the 1956 and 1962 Constitutions recognized Urdu and Bangla as State Languages of Pakistan, but the bitter struggle which Bangalis had to suffer to establish their mother tongue left a permanent scar on the process of building a nation. In fact, language issue was one of the factors responsible for the birth of Bangali sub-nationalism out of Pakistani nationalism.

(C) The Constitutional Issue

During the first decade of Pakistan's existence, controversy over the framing of the Constitution in respect of regional or population basis of representation in the Federal Legislature, the quantum of provincial autonomy and, finally, *One Unit* issue which reduced a majority Province into a minority status and abolished territorial identities of other Provinces, aggravated the political conflict in Pakistan.

Second Stage: Abrogation of the 1956 Constitution

While the nation was approaching towards first ever general elections under the 1956 Constitution, the country went under Martial Law in 1958. For the next 10 years, Ayub exercised his personal rule. The emergence of army dictatorship marked the end of Federal Parliamentary democracy in Pakistan. It destroyed all possibilities of reconciliation and integration between the two wings of Pakistan on one hand, and on the other, among the four Provinces of West Pakistan.

Third Stage: Imposition of the 1962 Constitution

This stage may be divided into two sub-stages:

To legalize his personal rule, Ayub imposed a new Constitution in 1962 based on Basic Democracy. This Constitution

deprived peoples' fundamental rights of electing their representatives for the National as well as Provincial Assemblies based on universal adult franchise.

I: Economic Policy

Instead of removing economic disparity, Ayub's economic policies helped to increase economic imbalances between the two wings and within the West wing of Pakistan (please see Tables: I&II). During his authoritarian rule, the wealth of Pakistan was concentrated in the "twenty-two families" and Ayub's own family was one of them.

TABLE-I

GNP of East Pakistan at 1959-60 Constant Factor Cost

(rupees in millions)

		Annual Compound Rate of per capita growth (per cent)		
<u>1949-50</u>	<u>1959-60</u>	<u>1969-70</u>	<u>1959-60</u>	<u>1969-70</u>
East Pakistan	14,945	23,119	0.2	5.4
West Pakistan	16,494	31,157	3.6	7.2
All Pakistan	31,439	54,276		

Source: *Report of the Panel of Economists on the Fourth Five- Year Plan (1970- 75)*, Islamabad: Government of Pakistan Press, 1970, p.132

TABLE-II
Annual Compound Rate of Per Capita Growth in Percentages

	1959-60	1969-70
East Pakistan	-0.3	2.0
West Pakistan	0.8	4.8

Source: *Ibid.*, p. 133

II: Disparity in Regional Representation

The ruling elite of Pakistan was mainly composed of senior civil-army bureaucrats. Paradoxically, none of them was a Bengali (please see Tables: III, IV & V). This situation had a direct impact on the alienation of the East Pakistanis from the political system of Pakistan. Similarly, within West Pakistan, disparity in ruling elites persisted.

TABLE-III
Military Elites in Pakistan, July 1955-56

(number of officers)

Service	East Pakistan	West Pakistan
Army	14	894
Navy	7	593
Air Force	60	640

Source: *Dawn* (Karachi); January 9 and 18, 1956

T ABLE-IV
East Pakistan's Representation in the Military Establishment,
1963
 (percentage of total)

	Commissioned officers	Junior Commissioned officers	Warrant officers	Other ranks
Army	5%	7.4%	-	7.4%
Air Force	17%	-	13.2%	28.0%
	Branch officers	Chief Petty officers	Petty officers	Leading Seamen and below
Navy	5%	10.4%	17.3%	28.8%

Source: *National Assembly of Pakistan, Debates*, March 8, 1963, Karachi: Government of Pakistan Press, 1963, pp.30-31

TABLE-V
Interwing Representation in the Higher Ranks of the Central Secretariat, 1955-1956

Rank	East Pakistan	West Pakistan	% of total
Secretary	Nil	19	00
Joint Secretary	3	38	7.3
Deputy Secretary	10	123	7.5
Under Secretary	38	510	7.0

Source: *Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, Debates*, Vol. I, January 17, 1956, Karachi: Government of Pakistan Press, 1956, p.1844

These Tables show that the East Pakistanis were given hardly any scope for effective and equal participation in the decision-making process of the country. They were marginalized and obviously they were dissatisfied.

III: Movement Against Ayub and His Constitution

In fact, neither the people of East Pakistan nor those of West Pakistan were happy with Ayub's Constitution and his system of Basic Democracy.

Anti-Ayub movement in East Pakistan was intensified when H. S. Suhrawardy, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, was arrested on January 30, 1962 and this situation was further aggravated during the 1965 War between India and Pakistan and its subsequent cease fire followed by Tashkent Agreement. In fact, during the Indo-Pak War, Eastern part of Pakistan was left unprotected. Similarly, anti-Ayub movement in West Pakistan got its momentum when Z. A. Bhutto disassociated himself from Ayub regime and built up his own political party, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP).

Six-Point Formula of the Awami League in 1966

By this time, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, popular leader of East Pakistan, launched his famous Six-Point Formula. The basic points of the demand included the following:

- i. a Government based on a federal parliamentary structure in which direct elections would determine membership in both central and provincial legislatures, on the basis of population distribution;
- ii. the powers of the federal government were to be limited to national defence and foreign affairs and, to a limited extent, to the issuance of currency;
- iii. either two separate currencies which were freely convertible or one currency with adequate constitutional provisions

provided to ensure no flight of capital from the East and the West, were to be established;

- iv. all power of taxation to be left in the hands of the federating units, while the centre would receive some fixed share for the expenses which it incurred;
- v. all foreign trade and foreign exchange matters were to come within the sphere of provincial powers, this included the economic transactions between the various provinces and other nations. In this provision also the centre would be forced to rely on the provinces for a fixed ratio of the foreign exchange income to meet their requirements; and
- vi. the Governments of the federating units to be empowered to raise and maintain such military establishment as was found necessary for preserving national security.⁹

This formula did not call upon the Federal Government of Pakistan to do more for the East Pakistanis, rather it asked the authority to let the East Pakistanis to act for themselves. In fact, it advocated for a complete provincial autonomy under a Federal System of Pakistan.

Ayub soon realized the real sentiment of East Pakistanis and the magnitude of agitation against him in West Pakistan led by Bhutto. He arrested Mujib and his close associates to crush the autonomy movement in East Pakistan. And Z.A. Bhutto and some leading opposition leaders of West Pakistan were also arrested to shun the anti - Ayub movement in West Pakistan. As a result, the students reacted violently to Bhutto's arrest and thus the anti-Ayub movement in East and West of Pakistan turned into a mass upheaval. As a result, instead of surrendering power to the peoples' representatives, Ayub handed over power to another Army Commander-in-Chief, General Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan. The downfall of Ayub regime confirmed that the military regimes' capacity to solve the problems that confront the people of a country

⁹ Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, *Six-Point Formula: Our Demand for Survival*, (Decca: General Secretary, East Pakistan Awami League, 1966)

is limited. While Ayub betrayed democracy and imposed his personal rule for about a decade, Yahya's belief in democracy was a mere pretence. The results of the first ever General Elections held in 1970 confirmed the legitimate right of the Awami League, the majority party in the National Assembly to form the government and rule the country.

Instead of handing over power to the majority elected representatives of the National Assembly from East Pakistan, the Pakistani troops committed atrocities towards unarmed people of East Pakistan on 25 March 1970 and that wiped out the last hope of integration between the two wings of Pakistan. Thus, Bangladesh emerged as a sovereign independent nation state in late 1971. If the regime believed in democracy as they pretended, one could ask what else counted in a democracy except the verdict of the majority of the people.

Fourth Stage: The 1973 Constitution of Pakistan and its Subsequent Amendments

After having separated from the Eastern part, Pakistan realized the inadequacy of the Ayub's so-called model of Basic Democracy which not only marked the end of Parliamentary Democracy in Pakistan but also gave birth to a strong feeling of sub-regionalism within the remaining 4 units of Pakistan. The sense of regional identity became more intense particularly among the Pathans, Baluchis and Sindhis. Under this uneasy background, the 1973 Constitution was introduced and after long 16 years' absence of constitutional rule, Pakistan returned to Federal Parliamentary Democracy. But within a short span of time, the 1973 Constitution was drastically amended in 1977 and 1999 as a result, the Constitution turned into a pseudo-Parliamentary system where President became the most powerful figure in the polity.

The fundamental dilemma faced by the regime like other praetorian regimes, was how to evolve a national political process where effective participation of the military could be ensured and at the same time involved a myriad of social groups and interests in the governance of Pakistan. However, the regime could not produce a record of good governance. Its promise of order and discipline in the

society, and implementation of basic reforms remained unfulfilled. Rather, the regime produced all powerful executive, a tamed Parliament and a compliant bureaucracy. Thus, the regime faced enormous challenges from within and without - which paved the way for centrifugal forces to grow up. During this period, the country witnessed escalating social and economic inequalities and enormous distortions in the educational and social fabric of the nation. On the other hand, the extremists and terrorists' operations have been a vexing problem of the nation, particularly the patriotic army and other security forces have become the target of the terrorist attacks.

I. Nation-Building and Economic Development

Being aware of the glaring economic disparity which existed among the different regions of Pakistan, General Parvez Musharraf, immediately after assuming state power, focused his attention towards programs of nation-building through economic development. There is no doubt that the regime's economic policy earned some remarkable growth but its distributive aspects of economic development were not satisfactory. As a result, interregional disparity increased further during the regime's 9 years rule and thus created additional problems of nation-building.

II. Pakistan Votes 2008: Transition to Civilian Rule

On 18th February 2008, Pakistan went to the polls for the National and Provincial Assemblies. It was claimed that unlike the previous elections, February 18's General Elections were comparatively transparent, free, fair and peaceful, and were fought mainly between the two leading contenders of the state power: the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML -N) led by the former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) led by Asif Ali Zardari, widower of the slain ex- premier, Benazir Bhutto. The ruling PML (Q) suffered a major defeat. The other

parties including the Islamic Alliance, who fielded their candidates, also fared badly.

However, the PPP emerged as the single largest party in the National Assembly polls securing 94 general seats and the PML (N) became the second largest party capturing almost 71 general seats while the outgoing ruling PML (Q) stood third in the race with only 42 general seats and the remaining seats were shared by other parties including Independent candidates (please see Table: VI).

Table: VI
General Elections -2008: National Assembly Results
Party Position Including Reserved Seats

Parties	Votes	%	Elected seats	Reserved seats (Women)	Reserved seats (Minorities)	Total
Pakistan People's Party	10,606,486	30.6%	94	23	4	121
Pakistan Muslim League (N)	6,781,445	19.6%	71	17	3	91
Pakistan Muslim League (Q)	7,989,817	23.0%	42	10	2	54
Muttahida Qaumi Movement	2,507,813	7.4%	19	5	1	25
Awami National Party	700,479	2.0%	10	3	0	13
Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal Pakistan						
Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F)	772,798	2.2%	5	1	0	6

Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan, Tehrik-e-Jafaria Pakistan and Jamiat Ahle Hadith did not participate.						
Pakistan People’s Party (Sherpao)	140,707	0.4%	1	0	0	1
Pakistan Muslim League (F)	5,166,433	14.9%	4	1	0	5
National People's Party			1	0	0	1
Balochistan National Party (Awami)			1	0	0	1
Independents			18	0	0	18
Total	34,665,978	100%	266	60	10	336

Terminated = 02, Punjab – NA-119 & Sindh – A-207

Postponed = 01, FATA, General – NA-42

Withheld = 03, FATA, General – NA-41, NWFP – NA-25 and
Sindh – NA-202

Source: *IT-Wing Election Commission of Pakistan, 18 March 2008*

One of the remarkable achievements of the last General Elections was that Pakistan-a nation of nearly 170 million people, is now embarking on a transition to civilian rule. The country was beset with numerous problems as ethnic differences, governance crisis, increase in violence and terrorism, the lack of participatory democracy and soaring living cost altogether complicated the process of nation-building.

Now, it is the turn of political leaderships to close-up their differences and to build up and institutionalize democratic

institutions which would serve as a bulwark against any kind of intervention or intrusion into the constitutional process of the country. If there is no hope for a better life, justice, equitable distribution of wealth, women's (whose number is around fifty percent of the total population) right to vote, and an educated populace, the specter of extremism or radicalism simply cannot be eliminated. The contending parties should get themselves involved in a dialogue and debate both inside and outside of the National as well as Provincial Assemblies, and they should try to find out mutually agreeable solutions on issues of national importance. If the contending parties fail to address the national issues in a spirit of collaboration, mutual respect and trust in conformity with the democratic norms, then extra-constitutional measure seems to be inevitable, a measure which will not only undo the opportunity of establishing parliamentary democracy, but will eventually destroy the whole fabric of the country's body politic.

Nation-Building in Bangladesh: A Profile of the Problems

Bangladesh, the then East Pakistan, a nation of nearly 160 million people, located in South Asia, bordering the Bay of Bengal, between Burma and India, shared its history, socio-economic and political culture with Pakistan until the country emerged as an independent nation-state on 26 March, 1971. Although integrative crises confronting Bangladesh are less complex than those found in Pakistan, yet one can identify certain constraints of political development in post-independent Bangladesh which complicated her process of nation-building.

I. Problems of Identity Integration

37 years have passed, yet there is no unanimity regarding the identity of the people of Bangladesh. Although officially recognized national identity is "Bangladeshi", yet the Awami League, a major party, claimant to be instrumental in the achievement of independence, calls it "Bangali" while another major party,

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) calls it "Bangladeshi".¹⁰ The issue of identity problem¹¹ should be settled once for all. Otherwise, this issue may alienate one ethnic group (whatever their size and strength) from the body politics of Bangladesh.

II. Emergence of Coercive Executive

Emergence of all powerful executive has been a road block on the way of building a nation. Huntington maintained that a serious threat to democracy is executive arrogation.¹² Here, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founder of the nation, became first elected Prime Minister of Bangladesh. His party, Awami League, obtained more than 2/3 seats of the Parliament in 1973 General Elections. By virtue of his absolute majority, he changed the pattern of the government from parliamentary to presidential, abandoned competitive party politics, curbed fundamental rights of the citizens, controlled the freedom of the press and publications and finally restricted the powers of the judiciary, the hallmark of a constitutional government. It took less than 30 minutes to get all these amendments passed and incorporated into the Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Act, 1975.

Apart from the infamous Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Act 1975, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, bypassing the Parliament, promulgated several Presidential Orders which empowered him and his government to take any decisions and even those decisions were kept beyond the judicial purview.

After Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, his successors followed the same path. General Ziaur Rehman came to power through a Military *coup* and established his personal rule for about 6 years until he was

¹⁰ See Zaglul Haider, "Parliamentary Democracy in Bangladesh: From Crisis to Crisis", *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*, vol.42, No.1 June 1997, p.78

¹¹ Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp.16-21. Also

see, M. Nazrul Islam, (1988), *op. cit.*, pp. 25-33

¹² Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (New Haven: Yale University Press 1969), p.7

assassinated on 30 May 1981. Thereafter, General Hussain Mohammad Ershad came to power through a bloodless Military *coup* on 24 March 1982, and kept the administration of the country under his direct control for another 9 years until he was compelled to surrender power in early December 1990 to a constitutionally constituted Caretaker Government headed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed.

III. Bangladesh Returns to a Parliamentary Democracy

Under the constitutionally constituted Caretaker Government, General Elections were held for the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th Parliaments. Awami League (AL) led by Sheikh Hasina and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) led by Begum Khaleda Zia, two main contenders of state power, ruled the country for 14 years. It is alleged that none of the popularly elected leaders could follow the norms of the parliamentary democracy, rather they established Prime-ministerial dictatorship. Lord Acton rightly maintained that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Under the Prime-Ministerial system, most of the public institutions, including the Public Service Commission (PSC) were turned into a depot of corruption, nepotism and party politics. The regimes rules may be characterized by terrorism, unabated corruption, politicization of the University as well as government administration, governmental facilities and opportunities. It was alleged that the outgoing ruling party BNP made a plan to manipulate the results of the 9th parliamentary elections which was planned to be held in January 2007. This triggered widespread resentment and the country was divided into pro- and anti-establishment posing a serious threat to its nation-building. Under this backdrop, a military-backed Caretaker Government suspended the planned parliamentary elections of January 2007 in an effort to reform the political system and root out corruption. The regime pledged new democratic parliamentary elections by the end of 2008.

IV. Lack of Democracy in Party Politics

Almost all the political parties in Bangladesh have been adopting authoritarian model to run their organizations. And this

may be the single independent variable for making obstacle to institutionalize parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh. Tyranny of the majority party prevailed immediately after independence in the country. As a result, the system could not bring about good governance and failed to ensure the rule of law in the country. It was maintained that the growing number of peoples were skeptical about the sincerity of the politicians for establishing democratic norms and values in the country as they themselves failed to practice democracy in their political institutions. Thus, the previous regimes of Bangladesh may be characterized as political dynasties, and elected dictatorships. They were alleged to be responsible for the socio-economic insecurity and political instability in the country.

V. Poverty and Soaring Prices

Bangladesh is experiencing serious economic crises due to unemployment. About 40 per cent of the people are below poverty level. The authorities of Bangladesh are yet to tackle poverty and spiraling prices of essentials to a minimum level. As a result the gap between the rich and poor is becoming wider day-by-day leaving the task of building up a cohesive integrated nation more difficult.

VI. Leadership Crisis

Leadership is the most important quality to organize the parties and lead the nation to a right direction. Leadership evolves through democratic practices. Unfortunately, Bangladesh, and for that reason some other countries of Afro-Asia, have a very poor tradition of having leadership through democratic means. Here personal influence and charisma grew up first by being the founding father of the nation and secondly by means of heredity. The problem with the personal leadership was that it left no scope for the parallel leadership or collective leadership in the party to come up through democratic means. Unlike India, it cared little to respect dissident opinions of the party rank and file members. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the President of the country, Head of the Government, President of the Awami League and the Father of the nation. He took himself all the decisions in running the government as well as amending the Constitution. It was he, the Father of the nation

himself, who sowed the seeds of authoritarianism first in Bangladesh. After the collapse of the Mujib regime, General Ziaur Rahman, and subsequently General H.M. Ershad, emerged as the most powerful ruling figures in Bangladesh politics, and during their times, the dominance of the civil-military bureaucratic elites was complete. And again, after General Zia's exit, his wife Begum Khaleda Zia established Prime-ministerial dictatorship in the country and kept the party under her direct control. Later on Sheikh Hasina, daughter of the Father of the nation emerged as the strongest Prime Minister ever existed in the parliamentary polity. Before they entered into politics, they had very little exposure to parliamentary politics excepting that one of them was the daughter of the Founding Father of the nation and other a housewife of a slain General-turned politician. None of the contenders of the state power left no scope for democratic succession of authority in their parties.

In such a low democratic political culture, political parties failed to provide leadership, both at the state and party levels,¹³ and hence extra-constitutional measures seemed to be inevitable which might put an end to the journey of the parliamentary democracy or for that matter democracy in the country.

Conclusion

The above analytical framework appears to bring in certain critical issues with organic linkage with nation-building in the developing countries of the Third World like Pakistan and Bangladesh. Although no attempt has been made to construct a systematic general theory of nation-building, a number of aspects of nation-building, namely, identity integration, elite-mass integration, political integration, cultural integration and economic integration have been analyzed on the basis of their relevance to the situation of the developing nations with particular reference to the countries under study. The purpose of this analysis was not to measure the

¹³ Hamza Alavi, "The State in Post-Colonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh", in, K. Gough and H.P. Sharma (eds.), *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia*, quoted in, Kristen Westergaad, *State and Rural Society in Bangladesh: A Study in Relationships*, (London: Curzon Press, 1985) p.12, also see Zaglul Haider, *op. cit.*, p.79

degree of success or failure of nation-building in Pakistan and Bangladesh but to identify the problems of nation-building facing both developed and developing states.

The Case Study of Pakistan and Bangladesh reveals that in many ways they are a typical of the new states of South and South East Asia. They fall into category of what Clifford Geertz calls "old societies and new states."¹⁴ They "are not yet nations in being but only nations in hope."¹⁵ They share with other new states many features-along histories of colonial domination, a plural society, and a so-called traditional socio-economic and political structure. Both of them have suffered from mal-development manifested in the form of distortion in the process of development. Inter-sectoral discrepancies in development have been particularly visible. Since independence, both of them have undertaken a number of development-oriented policies and achieved considerable success in many sectors, but failed to provide a definite and comprehensive direction for nation building. As a result, whatever development has taken place has been marred by sectoral bias lacking the sense of direction, which may ultimately threaten the very foundation of their nationhood.

In Pakistan, as in many new states, especially those with numerous sub-national groups, there has emerged an imbalance in the distribution of political and economic power among those groups. Here, a particular group, because of the policy of the Federal Government, has become economically dominant sub-nation of the country. The administrative and political powers have become the monopoly of a single sub-national group to the exclusion of the rest. This sub-national group is reluctant to share its accumulated economic and political powers with others. Thus, in Pakistan and Bangladesh, as in many states of Asia, there is a lag between 'mobilization' modernization in the economic sector and 'representative' modernization in the political sector. The

¹⁴ See, C. Geertz (ed.) *Old Societies and New States- The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*, (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe), 1963

¹⁵ Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation: The Rise to Self Assertion of Asian and African Peoples*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p.94

disintegration of Pakistan, one of the developing states of this region, was, like-wise, the result of her failure to develop a viable economic as well as political order because of her deliberate abandonment of democratic principles in favor of authoritarian rule. It is maintained that "authoritarianism may do well in the short term but experience clearly has shown that only democracy produces good government over the long haul".¹⁶ Thus, it may also be argued that Pakistan's or Bangladesh's success or failure of nation-building, as in most other developing countries, is likely to remain directly dependent on the capacity to respond to democratic values as distinct from authoritarianism. It may be maintained that democracy has, by far, been the most tested and accepted political paradigm which can help create a condition conducive to hold the nation together.

¹⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, "Democracy for the Long Haul", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 7, April 1996, p.6, also quoted in, Zaglul Haider, *op.cit*, p.80

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