
by.

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to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April, 1978

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ABSTRACT

The partitioning of India in 1947 along religious lines left a large minority community in both India and Pakistan. The purpose of this study is to examine politics of the Hindu minority in East Bengal from independence in 1947 to the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971.

Two hypotheses have been examined in the course of this study. Firstly, it is hypothesized that when a previously dominant community is thrown into a minority position, its leaders attempt to reconcile the community with the existing situation and attempt political readjustment involving compromises. The corollary hypothesis is that the achievement of the goals of the minority is dependent on the attitude and the internal cohesion of the dominant community. The evidences we find from this study show that the Hindu minority in East Bengal made compromises in its stand on issues such as (1) a secular-democratic constitution, (2) Islamic nomenclature of the republic, and (3) reservation of the office of the head of state for Muslims. However, they fought to establish a joint electorate system. They were successful in attaining this goal only with the division of the Muslim political parties in East Bengal, and later with the estrangement of the Muslims in East and West Pakistan.
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>Awami League</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AML</td>
<td>Awami Muslim League</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPC</td>
<td>Basic Principles Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Constituent Assembly of Pakistan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBDO</td>
<td>Elective Bodies (Disqualification) Order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBLA</td>
<td>East Bengal Legislative Assembly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPCP</td>
<td>Communist Party of East Pakistan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPSU</td>
<td>East Pakistan Students Union</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAP</td>
<td>National Awami Party</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAC</td>
<td>Students Action Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDF</td>
<td>National Democratic Front</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCF</td>
<td>Scheduled Caste Federation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UF</td>
<td>United Front</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPP</td>
<td>United Progressive Party</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The history of modern human civilization is full of instances of violence deriving from the hatred of one religious community against another, or one race against another. Millions of people have been killed or driven out of their homeland because of their differences with the dominant racial, religious, or linguistic group. Many minority communities have been crushed, condemned to wither away, or denied the right to develop. The Indian subcontinent, in particular, has witnessed many scenes of communal conflict between majority and minority. The purpose of this study is to investigate minority politics in the geographic area which is now called Bangladesh during the period 1947-1971.

Present-day Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan until the latter's dismemberment in 1971. India was partitioned on the basis of the "two-nation" theory, and Pakistan came into existence as a Muslim state in 1947. But this Muslim state was left with a large non-Muslim minority, particularly in East Bengal (now Bangladesh). The non-Muslims made up nearly one-fourth of the total population of East Bengal after partition and accounted for approximately 14 per cent of the entire population of Pakistan. The Hindus constituted the bulk of the non-Muslim minority; 13 out of 14 people in the minority were Hindus. The other religious minorities consisted of negligible numbers of Christians, Buddhists, and Parsis.
Socially, the Hindu community was broadly divided into two groups: upper class Caste Hindus, and the lower class Scheduled Castes. The latter comprised nearly 55 per cent of the entire community. Since the Hindus were the most important religious minority, and politically very significant, the present study deals with them.

**TABLE I**

Religious Distribution in Pakistan, 1951

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Caste Hindu</th>
<th>Scheduled Caste</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Pakistan</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Bengal</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Population Census of Pakistan, 1951, Table VI. The "others" include the Buddhists and Parsis. No separate entry was made for these two communities in the census figures.

In India as a whole before partition, Hindus were in a majority while Muslims were a minority. In East Bengal, the Hindus were politically, economically, and socially far more advanced than the Muslims. Numerically they were a minority, but they dominated the fields of trade and commerce, the administrative services, and the professions. The Caste Hindus lived in towns, and the majority of the buildings and properties—in some cases more than 85 per cent—in each town of East Bengal were owned by them. In undivided Bengal, they made up 60 per cent of the total urban population. In Dacca and Chittagong they were in a majority. All noteworthy industrial concerns,
including nine cotton mills, two glass factories, four match factories, and one cement factory were owned by them.\(^5\) They owned big import-export companies, big businesses, and had a considerable share in banking. They also had a near-monopoly in professions such as law, medicine, and teaching. The vast majority of government servants were Hindus. They were also the biggest landlords of the province.\(^6\)

**TABLE II**

Percentage Distribution of the Population by Religious Groups for East Bengal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Bengali Hindus played a very prominent role in the Indian nationalist movement and Bengal was the cynosure of it.\(^7\) Until the end of World War I, the freedom movement of India was dominated by them. The first Indian president of the Indian National Congress was a Bengali. At the turn of this century, Bengal witnessed the famous swadeshi movement over the issue of the partition of Bengal. At the same time, terrorist movements were spearheaded by the Hindus, and the two leading terrorist groups, the Jugantar Dal and the Anushilan Samity, were based in
East Bengal. Later, these terrorists were persuaded to join the Congress, and they became the main organizational force of the Congress party. The leadership of the Bengal Congress and the terrorist organizations was drawn from the Hindu bhadralok. Bengali prominence in the nationalist movement, however, declined with the rise of Gandhi after the close of World War I. Two Bengalis, C.R. Das and Subhas Bose, unsuccessfully challenged the Gandhian leadership of the nationalist movement in the 1920s and 1930s. Despite the fact that Bengali Hindus lost prominence in the nationalist movement, Bengal remained one of the most volatile centres of the freedom struggle through to the end of the British raj. Before partition, the Bengal Congress was dominated by East Bengal congressmen, and their nominee, Dr. P.C. Ghosh, became the first chief minister of West Bengal after partition. The two most important bases of Congress support, the Khadi Pratisthan of Satish Das Gupta, and the Abhoy Ashram of P.C. Ghosh, were located in East Bengal.

The history of the birth of Pakistan was associated with unprecedented communal strife and bitterness. In the final days of the Pakistan movement when the possibilities of peaceful negotiation between the two communities disappeared, the city of Calcutta witnessed the ghastly "Calcutta Killings" in which thousands of unarmed members of both communities were slaughtered in unrestrained communal warfare. The Calcutta riots were followed by the same kind of communal violence in the neighbouring province of Bihar, and, as well, in the district of Noakhali in East Bengal. These bloodbaths undoubtedly helped to influence the Congress leadership to finally accept the Muslim
demand for a separate homeland and the division of India on a religious basis.  

The Hindus did not feel secure in the new Pakistan because it was meant to be a Muslim state, and communal harmony was already upset. The mass migration of Hindus and transfer of assets began as early as June and July of 1947. Almost all of the Hindu families were joint families, and when they decided to leave Pakistan, they left behind one or two members of their families to look after their property. Calcutta was the centre of Bengal's financial, commercial, and professional activity, and the Hindus had traditional links with this city. Moreover, most of the upper class Hindus had property and relatives in Calcutta and other parts of West Bengal. As a result, divided families were very common among the Hindus in East Bengal after partition. At the time of independence, all high-ranking Hindu civil servants opted for service in India instead of Pakistan. Divided families, the transfer of assets and businesses, and the migration of civil servants all contributed to the growth of suspicion among Muslims that the Hindus were trying to weaken the new Muslim state. They often accused the Hindus of having a "divided loyalty".

The Hindu minority in East Bengal began its life in the new political system in an atmosphere of communal hatred, distrust and disgrace. The Hindus had struggled for the independence of India and had been deadly opposed to the partition of Akhand Bharat (undivided India). To them, partition meant the "vivisection" of their motherland. Under the
circumstances, they were not favourably disposed to citizenship of Pakistan. Moreover, the political party of the Muslims, the Muslim League, which captured power in Pakistan, had waged a bitter struggle against the Hindus during the past several decades. Not surprisingly, the East Bengali Hindus felt insecure when they found that they were to become citizens of Pakistan by fate. Most observers predicted that the Hindu community was likely to diminish in size, in wealth, and in talent. The exodus of Hindus from East Bengal to India continued throughout the existence of Pakistan. As shown in Table III, the Hindu proportion of the population dropped by 21 per cent during the period 1941-1951.

In view of the bleak prospect of the survival of the minority in East Bengal, the following questions will be examined in this study: What was the response of the Hindus to the new political system of Pakistan? What general policies were followed by the Hindu leadership in order to safeguard the interest of the community? How did they endeavour to safeguard their interests in the constitutional framework of Pakistan? How successful were they in maximizing their position and achieving their goals when they held the balance between the two vying Muslim political parties in East Bengal during the period 1954-1958? Finally, what was the strategy of the community during the autocratic rule of the Ayub regime and the rapidly changing interlude of the last days of Pakistan?

When we proceed to an examination of the minority question in East Bengal, we should note that communal bitterness in
TABLE III

Growth Rate of Religious Communities in East Bengal as Recorded in 1901 to 1961 Censuses
Number of Persons in Thousands and Percentage Variation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communities</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>P.C. Increase</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>P.C. Increase</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>P.C. Increase</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>P.C. Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>19,113</td>
<td>21,202</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22,646</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24,731</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29,509</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32,227</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus (1)</td>
<td>9,545</td>
<td>9,952</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10,166</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10,453</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11,747</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9,239</td>
<td>-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>-13</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>-48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28,927</td>
<td>31,555</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33,254</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>35,604</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>41,997</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>41,932</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Hindus included both Caste Hindus and Scheduled Caste, as Scheduled Caste Order was made in 1936.

Bengal is of relatively recent origin. Hindus and Muslims lived side by side in Bengal for centuries without any major communal strife. As a matter of fact, there had been little difference in culture between the two communities. As noted by A.F. Salahuddin Ahmed: "In fact, in many respects, the culture of the upper class Hindus was similar to that of the upper class Muslims, and this continued to be so down to the early part of the nineteenth century..." Similarly, rural Muslims led lives that were much the same as those of their Hindu neighbours. They were oppressed by the same zamindar and the same money-lender in the same way. They shared each other's sorrow and happiness. Communal politics was generated in the latter part of British rule. Even Sir Syed Ahmed, the philosophical father of the Pakistan movement, admitted that the increasing hostility between the two communities was due mainly to the rise of educated classes.

The minority question has attracted little attention from political scientists though it has been instrumental in World War I and other major wars in this century. Anthropologists and sociologists in recent years have taken initiatives to explain ethnicity and minority problems. At the close of the Second World War, Louis Wirth pioneered the study of minority problems and offered a definition and a classification of minorities. He defined a minority "as a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who, therefore,
regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination. The existence of a minority in a society implies the existence of a corresponding dominant group enjoying higher social status and greater privileges. Minority status carries with it the exclusion from full participation in the life of the society."

J.A. Laponce has examined the problem of protecting minorities from the perspective of political science. Addressing himself to a host of questions relating to democracy and minorities, the impact of minorities on political parties, the electoral system, parliament, administration, and the judiciary, Laponce develops a definition which is more appropriate to our case study. According to him, "A minority is a group of people who, because of a common racial, linguistic, religious or national heritage which singles them out from the politically dominant cultural group, fear that they may either be prevented from integrating themselves into the national community of their choice or be obliged to do so at the expense of their identity." By this definition a minority can be a racial, linguistic, religious, or nationality group, different from the dominant group by any of these traits. A minority can either seek to maintain a separate identity or to integrate with the national community.

With the above definition in mind, Laponce makes an important classification of minorities into two groups: minorities by will, and minorities by force. The key element of this classification is the attitude of the minority towards the dominant group. The minority may wish to be assimilated
within the majority, or it may refuse to do so. According to
him, "The minority that desires assimilation but is barred is
a minority by force. The minority that refuses assimilation is
a minority by will." The Negroes of the United States
exemplify the former, while the French Canadians represent the
latter. Although assimilation is the key concept of his
classification, Laponce does not define the term. Assimilation
bears both sociological and political connotations. Milton
Gordon demonstrates that the process of assimilation has
different dimensions like cultural, structural, marital,
identificational, attitude receptional (absence of prejudice),
behaviour receptional (absence of discrimination), and civic.
A minority may wish to assimilate in the political sense, in
that it would be treated equally with the majority, but may not
wish to undergo other dimensions of the assimilation process.
In my judgement, when the term assimilation is used in the
political sense, integration would be a more appropriate term.
Integration is a process through which previously separated or
segregated elements are brought together. A politically inte­
grated minority may or may not be an assimilated minority.

Laponce concludes that minorities by force do not want to
be treated as a separate group, but, on the contrary, want to
share fundamental and civil rights with all other citizens.
Minorities by will, meanwhile, demand preferential treatment
in order to maintain their identities. With regard to electoral
systems, an intercommunal party system based on membership of
both dominant and minority groups is favoured by both types of
the minorities because it greatly increases their bargaining position. Separate electorates and the reservation of seats in parliament often contribute to the development of communal parties, so they are not always seen as a means of safeguarding the minority interest. Separate electorate and communal party systems may be rejected by the minority because under such circumstances it would be in a position of permanent minority, with a permanent place in the opposition. Communal electorate and party systems increase the danger of reinforcing the cohesion of the dominant group and increasing anti-minority feelings. As a result, the tension between the minority and the majority is a natural corollary of such a system.

In the course of this study, Laponce's categorization of minorities will be used and his assertions relating to the electoral and party systems will be tested. It should be noted that he does not present a comprehensive theory of minority politics in his study. He is primarily concerned about how to protect minorities in modern democratic states. Moreover, some of his claims do not seem to be valid in all situations. For example, he is of the opinion that the members of the minority groups are often associated with a particular social class. This might be true in the case of the Negroes in the United States, or Tamils in Sri Lanka, or Chinese in Malaysia, but this is not so in India, or in Bangladesh. The nature of the problem of the minorities is different in different contexts. Whenever we proceed to examine one problem of a certain country, we should always have an eye on the peculiar aspect of the political culture of that country. If we try to
apply a theory developed in the West to South Asia in toto, that might be an impediment to a proper understanding of a phenomenon.

In view of the absence of any theory pertinent to the pattern of minority behaviour and the majority-minority relationship in East Bengal, the following hypotheses will be examined in the course of this study:

1. When a previously dominant community is thrown into a minority position, it perceives a great threat to its continued dominance and survival. When it finds that it is not possible to regain its previous position, its leaders attempt to reconcile the minority community with the existing situation, and adopt pragmatic policies to adjust to the new political system. In the case of the Hindus of East Bengal, this political readjustment involved a number of compromises in its previous political stand on issues such as: 1) a secular democratic constitution; 2) the Islamic nomenclature of the republic; 3) the reservation of the office of the head of the state for Muslims; and 4) the electoral system.

2. It is also hypothesized that the achievement of the goals of the minority is dependent on the attitude and internal cohesion of the majority community. If the latter is a compact group, it does not need to be responsive to the minority. But if it is divided, the minority is in a better position to bargain and to maximize its interests. Thus, in the case of the Hindus of East Bengal, it can be shown that a transition took place in its political position. In the first few years
after partition, when the Muslims were a cohesive community and communalism was at its peak, the Hindu community was plunged into a chaotic struggle for survival during which its leaders fought for constitutional safeguards. After the 1954 elections in East Bengal, the cohesion of the dominant Muslim community was lost. With the schism in the dominant community, the Hindus were successful in maximizing their position. Under attack from the martial law regime, they retreated after 1958. Later, as the Muslims of East and West Pakistan became more and more estranged the Hindus regrouped with the Muslims in a struggle for an autonomous East Bengal.

The following chapter describes the first phase of minority politics in the initial chaotic years of independence covering the period 1947-1954. In doing so, emphasis is given to the role of the Hindu members in the first Constituent Assembly and in the East Bengal Assembly. Chapter III discusses the role of the Hindu members in the second Constituent Assembly and in United Front politics during the period 1954-1958. Chapter IV deals with the last phase of minority politics in Bangladesh during the period 1958-1971. In Chapter V, the validity of the hypotheses and the answers to the questions posed in this chapter are discussed in the light of the evidence provided.
1. According to the "two-nation" theory, the Hindus and Muslims of India comprised two 'nations' and these two nations could not successfully live together in one political unit. M.A. Jinnah formulated this theory and demanded a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. To the Hindus and the Congress party this theory was unacceptable and they opposed it to the very last minute of the British rule in India. For a full account of the "two-nation" theory and the partition of India, see Hafeez Malik, Moslem Nationalism in India and Pakistan (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1963); Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968); V.P. Menon, The Transfer of Power (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); C.H. Phillips, et al., The Partition of India (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970); Abdul Hamid, Muslim Separatism in India (1858-1947) (Lahore: Oxford University Press, 1967); Choudhury Mohammad Ali, The Emergence of Pakistan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967); and H.V. Hodson, The Great Divide (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

2. The name of the province of East Bengal was changed to East Pakistan with the promulgation of the 1956 Constitution. However, East Bengal was often referred to as East Pakistan since 1947. I sometimes use the terms East Bengal and East Pakistan interchangeably.


5. Guha, op.cit., p.33.


8. The term 'bhadralok' is key to the understanding of Bengali Hindu society. The term bhadralok literally means "respectable people" or "gentlemen". They are the dominant elite in both rural and urban society, and are drawn mainly from the three highest castes of the Hindu society. They usually have a landed interest, or are employed in professional occupations. They are distinguished from others by their deportment, their speech, their style of housing, their eating habits, their occupations, and their associations. Bengali Hindu society of today is still dominated by the bhadralok. For an analysis of the bhadralok, see Broomfield, op.cit., pp. 5-20.


11. For an account of the Calcutta Riots, see Sir Francis Tuker, While Memory Serves (London: Cassel, 1950).


14. At the time of partition in 1947, the total Muslim representation in the Indian Civil Service (ICS) and Indian Political Service (IPS) cadres was only nine per cent. Out of the total 95 Muslim ICS-IPS officers who opted for service in Pakistan, only two were Bengalis. While the number of Muslim officers in Bengal was very insignificant, that of Hindus was equal to the British ICS-IPS officers in Bengal in early 1947. Hindus had more representation in the lower administrative services. See Ralph Braibanti, "Public Bureaucracy and Judiciary in Pakistan", in Joseph La Palombara, ed., Bureaucracy and Political Development (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 2nd ed., pp.364-365; and Muzaffar Ahmed Choudhury, The Civil Service in Pakistan (Dacca: NIPA, 1963), p.78.


23. For an analysis of the assimilation process, see Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); and his essay, "Toward a General Theory of Racial and Ethnic Group Relations", in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds. *Ethnicity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 84-110. His hypotheses are that in a majority-minority group contact cultural assimilation will occur first, acculturation may take place without other types of assimilation, and finally, if structural assimilation occurs along with or subsequent to acculturation, all other types of assimilation will inevitably take place. Gordon, in Glazer and Moynihan, p.84.

24. Laponce, *op.cit.*., pp.178-180; also Chapters VII and VIII.


26. The term communalism is used in the Indian subcontinent to denote politics based on religious lines. I use the term in that sense here.
CHAPTER II


August 14, 1947 marked the beginning of a new era in the political life of East Bengal. With independence and partition, accompanied by an unprecedented communal holocaust, the existing political matrix was completely changed. The achievement of Pakistan indicated the reversal of the dominance of the Hindus in East Bengal. The place of the Hindu elites of the prepartition era was taken over by West Pakistanis, refugee Muslims from other parts of India, and Bengali Muslims. The Hindus faced a unique situation because they were not prepared to accept Pakistan and the partition of Bengal. The resulting dilemma among the Hindus charted the course of Hindu politics for the first few years of independence. The object of this chapter is to examine how the defeated Hindu elite tried to safeguard the Hindu interest in Pakistan in the first confusing years of the newly born political system.

Initial Reaction to Partition

The Hindus were the champions of Indian nationalism and fought for the independence of "undivided" India. When Pakistan actually came into being, it was a great shock for the Hindus. The typical Hindu attitude towards this new nation was described by Pravash Chandra Lahiry, a leading Congress leader of East Bengal, in his memoirs. Recalling the first day of independence in his home town, Rajshahi, he lamented that he
was a freedom fighter of the Indian nationalist movement. It was unfortunate that he was no longer an Indian, but had to become a Pakistani. He had to accept this dishonour. He further added that the Hindus' eyes expressed "a sense of defeat but they had to keep an artificial smiling face".

Professor Samar Guha, secretary of the East Bengal Minorities' Association, also bewailed the fact that the Hindus of East Bengal were "no longer Indians". In the first session of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan (CAP), Kiran Shankar Roy, leader of the Opposition Congress party, frankly admitted that the Congress party was not very happy because of the division of India, and the partition of Bengal.

It was quite natural for the Hindus to have psychological reservations about Pakistan because it meant the defeat of their much cherished symbol of Indian nationalism, a symbol with which they identified for a long time. Pakistan was to become a Muslim homeland, and they could easily see that their opportunities would be very restricted. The Hindu fear was redoubled by the fact that political power was captured by the Muslim League, which allowed no place for Hindus in the political decision-making arena. In view of their political prospects in Pakistan, almost all prominent Hindu leaders migrated to India. However, of the leading Hindu politicians, Kiran Shankar Roy and D.N. Dutta, leader and deputy leader respectively of the Congress assembly party in undivided Bengal legislative assembly, decided to stay on in East Bengal. The Hindu leaders who chose to remain in Pakistan were motivated
by the disposition to take the leadership of the now befallen Hindu community in Pakistan, and some of them did not have the necessary base of support in West Bengal to engage in politics there. The mass migration of Hindus to India started immediately before partition. By the middle of 1948, about one million Hindus had migrated to West Bengal. The stream of migrants was relatively thin before the 1950 riots after which more than one million Hindus crossed the border in the year 1950. During the first few years of independence, the migration was mostly confined to the bhadrālok section of the Hindu community. In most cases, they would send the young and female members of the family to India, leaving behind one or two older members to look after their property or professions.

Political Structure of Pakistan After Independence

In order to understand the nature of minority politics in the new republic, it is necessary to have some insight in the working of the political system at that time. The Pakistan movement was spearheaded by the Muslim League and after independence, power was captured by it both at the centre and in the provinces. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was the undisputed leader of the party and became the first Governor-General of Pakistan. He exercised his authority in the same way that British Governor-Generals did. The first Pakistan Cabinet appointed by him was much more like a viceregal "executive council". The nominations to the Cabinet were made by him personally and he also decided their portfolios. As noted by K.B. Sayeed, "With the exception of Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, the other Muslim
League members of the...cabinet were not outstanding leaders of the Muslim League...Prominent Muslim League leaders like Mr. Khaliquzzaman, Mr. H.S. Suhrwardy, the Premier of Bengal, and Nawab Ismail had not been nominated..."11

An important thing to note is that popular Bengali Muslim League leaders were excluded from the top hierarchy of the emerging ruling elite of Pakistan. Before partition, the Bengal Muslim League was largely dominated by H.S. Suhrwardy and Abul Hashim, general secretary of the Bengal Muslim League. But on the eve of partition, they were excluded from the leadership of the party and government by the shrewd manoeuvering of the central leadership of the Muslim League. They were replaced by the members of more conservative and landlord-dominated wing of the party led by Khwaja Nazimuddin and Akram Khan. Fazul Huq, former chief minister and the most popular Muslim leader of Bengal, was also ousted from the Muslim League a few years before independence. Huq, Suhrwardy, and Hashim were the advocates of a more or less independent Eastern Pakistan along the lines of the historic Lahore Resolution. Jinnah feared that the continued presence of Suhrwardy and Huq on the scene might lead to a separatist movement in Bengal. So he opted for the subservient Bengali Muslim League group led by Nazimuddin. The landlord group had common interests with West Pakistani leaders and feared mass politics. On the other hand, Suhrwardy and Huq were mass leaders and represented the rising Bengali Muslim middle class. As early as 1948, the exclusion of popular Bengali leaders resulted in the growth of a sense of frustration
among a section of Bengali Muslim leaders. This frustration was ultimately manifested in a 'fissiparous tendency' in East Bengal, and provincial autonomy became an important theme in the politics of Pakistan almost from the day of its inception.

Minority Parties

Before proceeding to a discussion of the role of Hindu politicians in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan and in the East Bengal Legislative Assembly, let us turn to the organizational characteristics of the minority parties. Before partition, the Indian National Congress was the party of Indian nationalism, and the Hindus of East Bengal were solidly behind it. With growing communal politics, the Muslim League successfully mobilized the Muslim masses of East Bengal into its fold, while the Congress party was further isolated from the Muslim masses and for all practical purposes became a Hindu party. After partition, most of the influential congress leaders left Pakistan. Even Kiran Shankar Roy, leader of the Opposition Congress Party in the Constituent Assembly, left Pakistan within eight months to take up a ministerial position in the West Bengal Cabinet.

The Congress party underwent a split in the middle of 1948 as a result of a controversy over the future strategy of the party. A group of Congress leaders was of the opinion that under the changed circumstances, the continuance of the Congress party as such would go against the interest of the minority community, and the Hindu leaders would further be isolated from the general Muslim public. Another section of the Congress
party believed that under the existing system of separate electorates, it would be wiser to continue the operation of the Congress, and to retain its previous name. They felt that because of the sentimental ties of the Hindus with the Congress, it would be able to continue to attract their votes.  

D.N. Dutta, deputy leader of the opposition in the East Bengal Legislative Assembly (EBLA) and a member of the CAP, and K.K. Dutta, another member of the EBLA, were the leaders of the former group. They convened a conference called the "Eastern Pakistan Political Convention" at Comilla on July 18, 1948. The Convention resolved to form a new party called the "Pakistan Gana Samity" (Pakistan People's Association) whose membership would be open to all, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. D.N. Dutta and his associates were of the view that "with the partition, the time had come when communalism should be fought by forging a programme mainly for economic upliftment of the masses regardless of any community distinctions." Immediately after the formation of the Gana Samity, D.N. Dutta launched a province-wide campaign for a joint electorate. His party also held the view that the activities of the Congress party should be confined to India. The economic platform of the party attracted the other existing minor Hindu parties to join hands with the Gana Samity. Later, it was joined by the socialist members of the Congress, a section of the Forward Bloc, and the Pakistan Socialist Party, headed by a legendary figure of the Indian independence movement, Trailakya Nath Chakravorty. The name of the party was changed to United Progressive Party (UPP) in 1954.
Shortly after the formation of the Gana Samity, those who did not agree with this dissenting group, reconstituted the Congress Party as the Pakistan National Congress at a conference of the rump Congressmen from all over East Bengal. It was decided that the Pakistan National Congress would keep no organizational link with the parent organization in India. A new 250-member body was formed, an eight-member committee was appointed to draft a party constitution, and the existing district and lower level committees were recognized as units of the party. This group of Hindu leaders argued that whether the Congress party remained as such or changed its name, Hindus would be subjected to intimidation in the prevailing communal atmosphere. Thus, they needed a party and leadership which could support their cause and help in keeping up their morale. Although the Gana Samity was formed with the novel objective to forge a political party having membership from both Hindus and Muslims, it failed to attract any Muslim support. It therefore maintained its existence as a Hindu party, and championed their causes. The two Hindu parties were separate entities on paper only, and the members of the Gana Samity retained their identity as the Congress Bloc in the CAP and the EBLA.

Members of the scheduled castes formed the largest Hindu group in East Bengal, and were economically and socially far behind the caste Hindus. The Congress party enjoyed the support of the scheduled castes. A section of the dissatisfied scheduled caste members formed the Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF) before partition. The SCF had long been in
alliance with the Muslim League and, as a result, was rewarded with a cabinet post in the Central Cabinet of Pakistan. J.N. Mandal, leader of the SCF, was appointed a Cabinet minister in the interim Cabinet of India in 1946 from the Muslim League quota. After independence, he became Minister for Law and Labour in the first Pakistan Central Cabinet. The SCF cooperated closely with the Muslim League after independence.

If we look at the working of the minority parties we find that their activities were limited to the four walls of the assemblies, and that they had little mass contact. Lahiry maintains that, "Though there was a party called Pakistan National Congress after independence in East Bengal, it could not launch any democratic movement. This was not possible for any Hindu-led political party." 24 "Whatever mass contact we had," he adds, "was in the form of articulating their grievances in the assembly." 25 Under the existing circumstances, though the Congress "was secular and democratic in its avowed creed, it had no other alternative but to concentrate more on protection of minorities." 26

Jinnah and the Minorities

The CAP was set up in pursuance of an announcement by the British government, dated June 3, 1947. Its total membership was 79, of which 41 were from East Bengal. There were 13 seats reserved for the Hindus of East Bengal and all but one belonged to the Congress party. Three other minority members were elected from West Pakistan. All Muslim members except two
belonged to the Muslim League. The members of the CAP were elected indirectly by the members of the provincial legislative assemblies.

The first session of the Constituent Assembly met in Karachi on August 10, 1947, under the able leadership of Jinnah. Mandal, the Scheduled Caste associate of the Muslim League, was elected temporary president of the inaugural session of the CAP. This was a gesture of goodwill to the minorities, although the motive behind it was probably to show the world that the newly born Muslim state of Pakistan had a place for the minorities. "Today, gentlemen," Mandal declared on the occasion of his election, "it gives me much pleasure to declare that the election as Chairman of a member from a minority community augurs very well with the creation of Pakistan, because Pakistan today is the result of persistent and legitimate demand of the minority community, namely, Muslims of India...People of minority communities in Pakistan may be assured, as they have been assured repeatedly by the Muslim League leaders, and particularly Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, that the people of minority communities would not only be treated justly and fairly but generously too."27

Jinnah was elected president of the CAP the next day. In his address of felicitation Kiran Shankar Roy, leader of the opposition Congress party outlined his party's policy: "As far as we are concerned, Sir, if the Pakistan which you have in your mind means a secular democratic State, a State which will make no difference between a citizen and a citizen, which will
deal fairly with all irrespective of caste, creed or community, I assure you that you shall have our utmost cooperation." He frankly admitted that the Congress party was not very happy because of the division of India, and the partitioning of Bengal. "But as this arrangement has been agreed upon by the two parties," he declared, "we accept it loyally, and shall work for it loyally. We accept the citizenship of Pakistan with all its implications." "And in turn," he continued, "we shall expect the rights and privileges of the minority guaranteed in the Constitution, guaranteed not only in the Constitution but actually respected in the day to day working of the government."

Jinnah, in his reply to the greetings, made several assurances to the minorities. In his speech, which was later described by Hindus as the "Charter of Minority Rights" in Pakistan, Jinnah declared: "I know there are people who do not quite agree with the division of India and the partition of Punjab and Bengal. Much has been said against it, but now it has been accepted, it is the duty of every one of us to loyally abide by it and honourably act according to the agreement which is now final and binding on all...If you change your past and work together in a spirit that everyone of you, no matter what community he belongs to, no matter what relations he had with you in the past, no matter what his colour, caste or creed, is first, second and last a citizen of this State with equal rights, privileges and obligations, there will be no end to the progress you will make."
He further declared, "you are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the State." And he concluded with these words: "In course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State."

Jinnah, as a pragmatic politician made this pronouncement because he knew that at that critical juncture of history it was not possible for Pakistan to survive without the minorities. They were dominant in the economic life of the country. It was already apparent that Hindus had been shifting their capital and business to what the press called "safe zones" in India. *Dawn*, the organ of the Muslim League, alleged that an estimated capital of 200 crores had been shifted to India by early July, 1947. This was termed "Hindu hostility" to Pakistan, "motivated by a desire to hit the Pakistan Exchequer by denying it a big source of revenue." If Hindus left Pakistan en masse it would also create insurmountable problems in the administrative field. East Bengal's administrative machinery, in particular, was largely manned by Hindus. Moreover, if there was a mass exodus from Pakistan, it would result in an influx of more refugees from India than Pakistan could accommodate. It would also be a heavy blow to the economy of Pakistan because while Hindu migrants were prosperous people, Muslim
refugees from India were mainly agriculturalists.\textsuperscript{35} Jinnah was even ready in 1947 to change the name and the character of the Muslim League Party. It was reported that a Pakistan National League would be formed which would replace the Muslim League, and be open to all citizens of Pakistan irrespective of religion, caste, or creed.\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Dawn}, in an editorial called "Political Readjustments", held that it would effectively remove any lingering doubts of the minorities as to their status.\textsuperscript{37} However, this proposal was not carried out when the Muslim League Council met in Karachi late in December, 1947 and the liquidation of the Party at that moment was deemed unwise by the leadership.\textsuperscript{38}

While Jinnah's aforementioned pronouncements in the CAP were hailed by the minorities, they caused some stir among the rigid and uncompromising advocates of an Islamic state. Some argued that Jinnah's statement amounted to the abandonment of the ideals of the Muslim League.\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Dawn} quickly attempted to correct this 'misinterpretation'. It pointed out that Jinnah merely meant the non-Muslims would not be debarred from participating in the administration of Pakistan and that they would not be discriminated against by its laws, or suffer economically.\textsuperscript{40}

This session of the CAP appointed a 15-member Committee on Fundamental Rights of Citizens of Pakistan and on Matters Relating to Minorities. The appointment of this committee was obviously made to assure the minorities that their rights and interests would be safeguarded in Pakistan. But the happy atmosphere of communal harmony began to wane with the onset of
the communal frenzy in both India and Pakistan, and tension between the two countries soon increased over the issue of the accession of princely states like Hyderabad and Kashmir.

Minorities as Champions of East Bengal Interest

The Hindu parliamentarians, in the absence of any other opposition parties, championed Bengali interests in the CAP and in the EBLA. They could read the growing dissatisfaction of Bengali Muslims against the central ruling elite. By voicing the demands of East Bengal, they hoped to forge greater unity with Bengali Muslims, thereby making their stay in East Bengal easier. When the first session of the CAP was convened on February 24, 1948, Professor Raj Kumar Chakraverty of the Congress party moved an amendment motion which sought to have a sitting of the CAP held in Dacca at least once a year. He suggested that he did not move the amendment from any sense of narrow provincialism, but from a high sense of duty to the people of Eastern Pakistan.

Two Bengali Muslims, Tamizuddin Khan and Begum Shaista Ikramullah, supported the motion. However, it was not carried because Liaquat Ali Khan, prime minister of Pakistan, pointed out that Dacca was facing serious problems of accommodation. Instead, the President was empowered to convene a session of the CAP outside Karachi. Thus, Dacca could be the place of assembly session at a later time.

The demand for Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan was also first voiced by the Hindu members. D.N. Dutta moved on February 25, 1948 an amendment which sought to make Bengali one of the official languages of the Constituent
Assembly. "The State language...," he demanded, "should be the language which is used by the majority of the people of the State, and for that, Sir, I consider that Bengali language is a lingua franca of our State."

He further claimed that he voiced "the sentiments of the vast millions" of the country. His amendment proposal was supported by other members of the Congress Party. The motion was opposed by Liaquat Ali Khan who alleged that the mover tried "to create misunderstanding between the different parts of Pakistan." He further declared, "Pakistan has been created because of the demand of a hundred million Muslims in the subcontinent and the language of a hundred million Muslims is Urdu and, therefore, it is wrong for him (Dutta) now to try and create the situation that as the majority of the people of Pakistan belongs to one part of Pakistan, therefore the language which is spoken there should become the State language of Pakistan. Pakistan is a Muslim State and it must have as its lingua franca the language of the Muslim nation."

Liaquat's pronouncement that Pakistan was a Muslim State was bitterly resented by the opposition Congress leader of the CAP, Sris Chandra Chattopadhyaya. He asserted, "So long my idea was that Pakistan is not a Muslim State but a people's state and it belongs to both Muslims as well as to non-Muslims. If today the statement of the Leader of the House is accepted, then it is a matter of serious consideration for the non-Muslims whether they have any right to take part in the framing of the Constitution as well. That is really very important because in
that case, Muslims only...should frame their own Constitution." Tamizuddin Khan, Deputy President of the Assembly, in his reply to the debate, maintained that Jinnah in his first speech to the Assembly had made it clear that all minorities had equal rights with the Muslims.

The language issue gathered velocity in East Bengal in early March, 1948, when the students of Dacca University launched a movement for the recognition of the Bengali language as one of the state languages. On March 11, 1948, they staged a strike which was followed by more student unrest in the province over the next few days. However, the Hindu leaders were not associated with the activities of the "Action Committee" which was formed by different student and youth groups of Dacca to lead the movement. The language disturbance compelled Khwaja Nazimuddin, premier of East Bengal, to sign an agreement with the students pledging the recognition of Bengali.

When the first session of the EBLA met on March 15, 1948, Manoranjan Dhar, Pratap Chandra Guha Roy, and Nellie Sen Gupta expressed their full support for the students and protested against their persecution by police. Nazimuddin moved a resolution on April 6, 1948, that Bengali should be adopted as the official language of the province rather than English. D.N. Dutta and other Hindu members put forward a number of amendments which recommended to the Constituent Assembly that Bengali be made one of the state languages of Pakistan.

Since the demand for Bengali was articulated in the CAP
and in the EBLA by Hindu members, the ruling party tried to create an impression in the public mind that the language movement had been inspired by the hostile Hindu leaders of India.\textsuperscript{56} Dawn even alleged that it was due to the machinations of fifth columnists, in other words, the Hindus.\textsuperscript{57} The language issue became insignificant for a few years after this event, only to take a serious turn in 1952 when the central ruling elite revived its attempt to impose Urdu as the sole state language of Pakistan. By that time the growing Muslim opposition in East Bengal was taking definite shape and political organizations like the Awami League and the Youth League were gaining momentum and support. The famous February movement, which compelled the government to recognize Bengali as one of the state languages, was led by these growing Muslim opposition groups, and the Hindu leaders had little connection with it. K.K. Dutta declared on the floor of the CAP that "the movement was nurtured by the Muslims and it was carried on by the Muslims alone unaided by anyone from outside."\textsuperscript{58}

Despite their non-involvement in the movement, Hindu members in the EBLA made fiery speeches and supported the cause inside the Assembly. Manoranjan Dhar asked for an explanation from the Premier about the police firing on the students. D.N. Dutta, B.K. Das, and Govinda Lal Banerjee also voiced the demands of the demonstrators for Bengali.\textsuperscript{59} Similarly, Hindu members of the CAP strongly supported the motion of Nur Ahmed, a Bengali Muslim, that Bengali along with Urdu should be made the state language of Pakistan.\textsuperscript{60} One possible explanation of
Hindu non-involvement in the language movement is that the Congress party had by that time become an insignificant force in terms of mass following. Another is that the growing Muslim opposition forces were hesitant to be seen as collaborating with the Hindus.

Struggle for Constitutional Safeguards

The 'first big step' in framing the constitution was taken with the adoption of the "Objectives Resolution" or the "Aims and Objects" of the future Constitution of Pakistan. On March 7, 1949, Liaquat Ali Khan moved the Objectives Resolution:

"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful;

WHEREAS sovereignty over the entire universe belongs to God Almighty alone and the authority which He has delegated to the State of Pakistan through its people for being exercised within the limit prescribed by Him is a sacred trust;

This Constituent Assembly representing the people of Pakistan resolves to frame a constitution for the sovereign independent State of Pakistan;

WHEREIN the State shall exercise its powers and authority through the chosen representatives of the people;

WHEREIN the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice, as enunciated by Islam, shall be fully observed;

WHEREIN the Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accord with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and the Sunna;

WHEREIN adequate provision shall be made for the minorities freely to profess and practise their religions and develop their cultures;

WHEREBY the territories now included in or in accession with Pakistan and such other territories as may hereafter be included in or accede to Pakistan shall form a Federation where the units will be
autonomous with such boundaries and limitations on their powers and authority as may be prescribed;

WHEREIN shall be guaranteed fundamental rights including equality of status, of opportunity and before law, social, economic and political justice, and freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship and association, subject to law and public morality.

WHEREIN adequate provisions shall be made to safeguard the legitimate interests of minorities and backward and depressed classes;

WHEREIN the independence of the judiciary shall be fully secured;

WHEREIN the integrity of the territories of the Federation, its independence and all its rights including its sovereign rights on land, sea and air shall be safeguarded;

So that the people of Pakistan may prosper and attain their rightful and honoured place amongst the nations of the World and make their full contribution towards international peace and progress and happiness of humanity."61

The Objectives Resolution, which clearly indicated that the future constitution of Pakistan was going to be based on "Islamic Principles", was attacked by the Hindu members. They argued that Pakistan was a country consisting of people professing various religions, and the framing of the constitution should not cause any apprehension or distrust among any section of the people.62 They particularly objected to the first two clauses of the Resolution.

The first clause of the Resolution was attacked by the Hindus because it wanted to make God the ultimate sovereign authority. B.K. Dutta and Raj Kumar Chakraverty in their amendments to this clause sought to make the people the sovereign authority in the State.63 Their anxiety was that if
sovereignty belonged to God, instead of the people, then Pakistan would not be a democratic state. They asked that religion be kept separate from politics. They were also very concerned about the growing influence of the Ulema (Islamic scholars) who advocated an Islamic Constitution for Pakistan. B.K. Dutta held that the acceptance of this resolution after the demise of Jinnah was to him symptomatic of the "rising tide" of communal politics.

K.K. Dutta also advanced arguments in favour of people's sovereignty. He argued that the basic fundamental principles of the constitution must be the democratic principles of government. He demanded, "a firm, bold, definite, unequivocal proclamation of the political, economic and social principles of the Constitution of Pakistan as a democratic state, with all the powers vested in the people..." He also expressed his fear that some Ulema were trying to interpret Islamic democracy as a theocracy where the minority could be treated as "dhimmies" (inferior citizens) who could not have any share in government and administration.

The fourth clause dealing with the principles of democracy, "as enunciated by Islam" was also vehemently opposed by the Hindus for it implied that democracy was subject to interpretation by Muslims according to their own religion. Hindus feared that this would mean that Pakistan would not be a complete democracy, but a democracy that was subject to interpretation by the majority community. "We shall resent it," B.K. Dutta declared, "for generations under this clause...you (have)
condemned us for ever to an inferior status and prevented for all time to come Pakistan from growing up into a country of well-knit, homogeneous people." He further claimed that under this clause the minorities would be without any legitimate right to share power."

The "enabling clause", the fifth of the Resolution, was also opposed by the Congress members, though it did not create as much furor as the above-mentioned two clauses. They opposed this clause because it amounted to making Islam the State religion of Pakistan, which would jeopardize the interest of non-Muslims. P.H. Barma demanded that similar provisions be made to enable non-Muslims to order their lives in accordance with the teachings and requirements of their own religions.

The Muslim League tried to convince the minority members that their legitimate interests would be fully protected under the future constitution. Sardar Nishtar, Central Cabinet minister, clarified the position of the Muslim League and asked the non-Muslims not to be misled by the propaganda of some so-called Ulema. Maulana Usmani, leader of the pro-Muslim League Ulema, also made it clear that non-Muslims were guaranteed all civic and religious rights in an Islamic state. However, S.C. Chattopadhyaya, leader of the opposition party, in his concluding remarks on the debate, stated his objections to the Islamic clauses and expressed his hope that the constitution would be framed in such a way that it would suit non-Muslims as well as Muslims. He hoped the time would come when political parties based on religious lines would cease to exist,
so that there would not be any provision in the constitution which might debar a non-Muslim from becoming the Head of the State. Liaquat assured the minorities that "A non-Muslim can be the head of administration under a constitutional government..." He also asked them not to be misled by the propaganda of the "so-called Ulema who were actually the 'enemies of Islam'." 

Although Liaquat declared that the non-Muslims were equal in every respect in an Islamic state, he made it abundantly clear that Pakistan was founded to fashion the lives of Muslims in accordance with the teaching and traditions of Islam. The adoption of the resolution was opposed tooth and nail by the opposition. They fought to make the constitution democratic and secular. However, all of their eighteen amendments were brushed aside. The debate ended with a solemn assurance from Liaquat that the interests of the minorities would be fully protected. The resolution was adopted on March 12, 1949. On the same day, a twenty-five member Basic Principles Committee (BPC) was set up to draft the Constitution.

By the beginning of the 1950s several important changes had taken place in the politics of Pakistan. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was dead, and the rivalry between East Bengal and the Punjab took a serious turn. Khwaja Nazimuddin was the Governor-General, but his powers were greatly curtailed by the passing of the Government of India (Second Amendment) Act of 1950. Under such circumstances, Liaquat Ali Khan presented the Interim Report of the BPC on September 28, 1950. The Interim
Report aroused mass protests all over East Bengal because of its undemocratic and anti-East Bengal nature. Even the East Bengal Muslim League protested against it. Opposition political forces convened a "Grand National Convention" on the Constitution in Dacca in early November, 1950. The Convention resolved that a democratic, federal Republic of Pakistan be established, and a draft Constitution for Pakistan was also proposed. However, the Congress Party had no involvement in this anti-BPC movement in East Bengal. Perhaps after the 1950 riots the Hindu community was more cautious not to offend the ruling party, and they kept themselves aloof from agitational politics. Besides, although the Interim Report was thoroughly undemocratic, it did not contain any provisions for an Islamic nomenclature of the State, or any religious qualification of head of state. Thus the BPC Report did not concern them greatly. Moreover, the rising Muslim opposition was also alert not to be called 'enemy agents' for aligning itself with the Hindus. The consideration of the BPC Report was postponed in the face of rising opposition from East Bengal.

Liaquat moved the Interim Report of the Committee on Fundamental Rights and on Matters Relating to Minorities on October 4, 1950. But it contained only the Report of the Subcommittee on Fundamental Rights, so the Hindus opposed its consideration without the Report of the Minority Subcommittee. They pointed out that they were anxious for their political safeguards, and without these safeguards specified in the Minority Subcommittee Report, the Report of the Fundamental
Rights Subcommittee could not be considered. Their opposition was set aside on the plea that it would delay the constitution-making process. Three Muslim independent members from West Pakistan voted with the Opposition on the adoption of the Report. On the whole, the minority representatives were happy with the adoption of the report on fundamental rights. "I am happy to note," declared Professor Chakraverty, "that all citizens have been declared equal before law...I am happy to note that there shall be no discrimination on grounds of religion, caste, sex...I am happy further to note that freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practise and propagate religion has been guaranteed..."

The Electorate Issue: Separate of Joint?

During the entire period of constitution-making in Pakistan, the electorate issue received the most attention from the Hindus. The Congress party had always been opposed to the separate electorate system in undivided India. They believed that the separate electorate system had ultimately been responsible for the rise of the 'two-nation' theory, and the birth of Pakistan. After independence, when they were thrown into the minority position, they did not change their previous ideological stand on the electorate issue. S.C. Chattopadhyaya reiterated the Congress policy when he declared that, "We, the Congress people, still stick to our one-nation theory and we believe that the people of Pakistan, Muslims and non-Muslims, consist of one nation and they are all Pakistanis." The issue of joint versus separate electorate was zealously debated by Hindu
members of the CAP in April, 1952 when the existing electoral law was amended by the Government of India (Third Amendment) Bill to provide a separate electorate for Scheduled Castes. The Congress Party members protested against this 'vivisection' of the Hindu community. They claimed that all the Hindus in East Bengal were in favour of a joint electorate and referred to the resolution of the Minority Conference in March, 1952. They were opposed to separate electorates because they knew that under that system they would become "a perpetual minority" having no share in the administration of the country. A communally divided electoral system would keep the minorities away from effective political participation under the existing political alignments, so they were eager to have a joint electorate even though the chances of Hindus to be elected to assemblies would diminish to a great extent. But they were hopeful that the joint electorate system would make the Muslim leaders responsive to Hindu demands. They hoped for the formation of secular parties in East Bengal where they would be able to play significant political roles. The issue of the electorate was one of the most delicate issues for the Hindus, and was a recurrent theme in the political controversy of Pakistan. This issue will be dealt with in greater detail in the following chapter.

Adoption of the BPC Report

Khwaja Nazimuddin, who stepped into the position of Prime Minister at the death of Liaquat Ali Khan, presented the Report of the BPC on December 22, 1952. Nazimuddin's Report led to
protests in West Pakistan, particularly in Punjab. The consideration of the report was postponed in the face of Punjab opposition to it. Meanwhile, Ghulam Muhammed, who was both Governor-General and the main representative of Punjabi interests, dismissed Nazimuddin on April 17, 1953, using the Anti-Ahmadi Disturbances as a pretext. After his dismissal, Mohammad Ali of Bogra was installed as the prime minister. He moved a next BPC Report for consideration on October 7, 1953.

Bogra came with a parity of representation formula in this BPC Report which satisfied the Punjabi interests. The Hindu members opposed the Islamic emphasis of the new BPC Report. They strongly opposed the provision that no law would be enacted which was repugnant to the Quran and Sunna. They asked to keep the personal laws of Hindus free from the purview of such a provision. They also resented the provision for the establishment of a government organization to propagate Islamic teaching. They sharply criticized the nomenclature of the state and the religious qualification of the head of state.

When their objections to the proposed constitution were not heeded, Hindu members of the CAP walked out and absented themselves from further deliberations on the Constitution. S.C. Chattopadhyaya, leader of the Congress Party made a statement before walking out. "We, the Hindus," he stated, "form about 14 per cent of the population. We are citizens of the State of Pakistan and always anxious to make Pakistan a prosperous democratic, modern State. We, in our humble way have
been working in the Assembly and its Committees, to make a suitable Constitution, but the recent trend and proceeding of this House have been a disappointment to all of us...from the trends of the proceedings hitherto, we feel that any further participation by us, the representatives of the Hindu minority, in the Constitution-making, will be of no efficacy. So the members of my Party have resolved not to take part in the discussion of the Report of the Basic Principles Committee in the present context of things... The two Scheduled Caste members who were Muslim League associates also followed the Congress Party. However, the Congress Party came back to the CAP at the final stage of the adoption of the Report in September, 1954. Professor Chakraverty made it clear in his speech that they came back at that stage only to lodge their protest "more strongly and critically," and to make it known that they were not a party to the Constitution.

The Hindus and the Abolition of the Zamindari System

While the Hindu members of the CAP were fighting for a secular democratic constitution, their counterparts in the EBLA were engaged in safeguarding Hindu interests and voicing the grievances of the minorities in the day-to-day life of the province.

Before independence, land ownership in East Bengal was monopolized by Hindus. Nearly 75 per cent of the land holdings, including all of the biggest zamindari holdings belonged to them. While the zamindars were Hindus, the majority of the tenants were Muslims. There were rising tides of movements for
the abolition of the zamindari system before independence. Though the Bengal Muslim League was dominated by big Muslim landlords, it championed the abolition of the system without any compensation for the landlords.\textsuperscript{94} A Bill to this effect was moved by the Muslim League government in the Bengal Legislative Assembly before partition.\textsuperscript{95} Since the Congress Party of Bengal was controlled by the Hindus, it opposed the abolition of the zamindari system.\textsuperscript{96} It also opposed the Bengal Tenancy (Amendment) Act of 1928, and the Money Lenders Bill.\textsuperscript{97} After partition, they continued their opposition to land reform and strove to maintain their landed interest.

The East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Bill was moved by the Muslim League in the very first session of the EBLA on April 7, 1948. The mover of the Bill claimed that it would bring about "a veritable revolution" in the socio-economic structure by making the tiller of the soil the owner of the land he cultivated.\textsuperscript{98} The Bill provided that at the time of acquisition of the zamindaris, no person would be entitled to retain any land in his possession in excess of 200 standard bighas or a quantity of ten standard bighas per person of his family, whichever was greater. It also sought to give six to fifteen times the net income of the rent receiver as compensation. Although Muslim League leaders were committed to the abolition of the zamindari system without any compensation, they made provision for it because, first, the party leadership in the province was now firmly in the hands of Muslim landlords, and second, jotedar (minor landlords) were
predominantly Muslims. The growing influence of the jotedars can be discerned from the fact that in its second draft the Bill provided for 200 bighas per family while in the original Bill, immediately before independence, each family was provided with 100 bighas. However, the mover of the Bill argued that the wholesale appropriation without any compensation would create great insecurity everywhere which was bound to stifle all private enterprise and cause disastrous consequences in the economic development of the new state.  

It is interesting to note that class interests prevailed over party policy while the Bill was under consideration. In this respect, both the Muslim League and the Congress leaders approached the whole question according to their own class interests. Muslim League leaders such as A.T. Mazhurul Huque, Abdus Salam, Shamsuddin Ahmed, and Majibur Rahman opposed any kind of compensation for the zamindars. Huque even complained that compensation had been advocated by those who had some interests in the zamindari system. Rahman directly attacked the mover of the Bill (himself a Zamindar) for failing to safeguard the interests of the tenants. Meanwhile, two ministers advocated compensation for zamindars. The mover proposed to send the Bill for scrutiny to a Special Committee consisting of forty-five members. Two Muslim members, Abdus Salam and Madar Bux, opposed sending the Bill to a Special Committee of which about half of the members were themselves zamindars. On the other hand, B.K. Das, leader of the Congress party supported the motion to send the Bill to
The Report of the Special Committee was taken up for consideration by the EBLA on November 15, 1949. The Report recommended two significant changes in the Bill. These would reduce the maximum landholdings to 100 bighas, and lower the compensation from two to ten times the annual income as compared to the six to fifteen times of the original Bill. Along with the Hindus, three big Muslim landlords appended their notes of dissent from the Report. Some members of the Committee revealed that they did not stick to any party principles while they sat on the committee. On several occasions, some members of both parties opposed their own party members. When the Bill was considered in the Assembly, heated debate took place on the question of compensation and the ceiling of landholdings. A Congress member, A.C. Adhikary, demanded that the Bill be sent to the Special Committee for reconsideration because some "fundamental" changes had been made in it. Manoranjan Dhar, and other Congress leaders supported him. Congress leaders like S.K. Achariya, Dhar, D.N. Dutta and others demanded more and "fair" compensation for the zamindars. They also criticized the ceiling on landholding per family. Muslim Leaguer Khairat Hossain and others asked for acquisition without any compensation. However, all the amendments to the Bill were defeated and the Bill was passed in December, 1950.

**Articulation of Minority Grievances**

With the establishment of new political authority in East
Bengal in 1947, the minorities were tossed into a hostile situation. They had to face serious obstacles in their day-to-day life. After the establishment of the new provincial capital in Dacca, the government faced acute housing problems for government offices and for government servants. Before independence, a majority of the houses in Dacca belonged to Hindus. Since a large number of the Hindus left Pakistan after partition, the provincial government found an opportunity to requisition Hindu houses for the aforementioned purposes. This "ruthless requisition" was the greatest complaint in other areas too. Congress members such as G.C. Bhattarcherjee, P.C. Lahiry, and J.N. Bhadra made complaints against requisitioning and other minority grievances in the first session of EBLA in 1948. Their other complaints were against the seizure of firearms from the minority communities, illegal harassment by the Muslim National Guards, extraction of large sums for the Quaid-i-Azam Relief Fund, and arbitrary arrests of minority leaders. Similar complaints by the Hindu members were lodged in the CAP. They also voiced minority grievances in almost every session of the EBLA and the CAP. They also protested the central government's discriminatory policy against the Hindus in the granting of export and import licenses. They suspected that this was done deliberately to patronize rising Muslim businessmen. Besides voicing their grievances inside assemblies, they resorted to submitting memoranda to the provincial and central governments to redress their grievances.
When Hindu leaders tried to voice the grievances of the minority, they were often attacked by the ruling party and the press for their alleged "divided loyalty" or disloyalty to Pakistan. *Dawn* made a number of editorial comments against them as "deliberate recalcitrants." These allegations were based on the fact that in most cases the minority leaders had a portion of their family living in India. Some of them even took active interest in West Bengal politics. A critical Hindu writer also admitted that of the thirteen Hindu members of the CAP, six lived permanently in Calcutta, India. Similarly, only a few Hindu members of the EBLA resided in East Bengal permanently. These Calcutta-based members used to go to Dacca and Karachi at the time of assembly sessions, and their loyalty was questioned on the floors of the assemblies.

During the Budget Session of the CAP (Legislature) in 1950, B.K. Dutta's speech was interpreted by ruling party leaders as disloyal, and the Congress party decided not to take part in the rest of the deliberation of the Session. Moreover, the Congress party had no newspaper in East Bengal, so its members had to depend on the newspapers of West Bengal to publish their views—which reinforced government attacks on their disloyalty. Khwaja Nazimuddin declared on June 8, 1948 that those who supported the West Bengal papers had "no right to live in Pakistan."

While the minority leaders were not very effective in safeguarding the interests of the minorities, the Governments of India and Pakistan did play an important role in doing so.
On April 19, 1948 the Neogy-Ghulam Muhammed agreement between India and Pakistan was concluded to protect the interests of the minorities in both countries. In February, 1950, there was again a communal flare-up in which thousands of Hindus were killed, followed by an unprecedented level of Hindu migration from East Bengal. In early March of that year, the Prime Minister of India asked Pakistan to stop the communal disturbances, otherwise he would take "other steps." This warning produced good results. The Prime Minister of Pakistan immediately visited India, and the famous "Delhi Pact" was signed on April 8, 1950 which eased communal tension in both countries.

From the above discussion it is evident that the Hindu minority had little effect on the political process of Pakistan in the first few years of its existence. Minority members made complaints about their ineffectiveness on several occasions. Even the Scheduled Caste members who collaborated with the Muslim League could hardly exert any influence on government policy, except in some cases of permits and scholarships for their community. J.N. Mandal, long time associate of the Muslim League and a central cabinet minister until his exit to India, left Pakistan in disgust without even tendering his resignation after the riots of 1950. During this period, the Hindu leadership concentrated its efforts on voicing the grievances of the community in the assemblies, and struggled to make the constitution more secular and democratic. Controversy over the political strategy was responsible for a split in the
Congress party. A section of the Congress party, which in 1948 formed the Gana Samity, was more pragmatic in realizing the changed political context and in outlining the strategy of the Hindu community thereby.

During this period, the entire Hindu community was under attack from the dominant community. As a result, the previous hostility and differences of opinion between the Caste Hindu and Scheduled Caste politicians were removed to a large extent. The SCF was increasingly drifting away from its former ally, the ruling Muslim League, and making political alliances with the Congress and Gana Samity. The resulting united effort on the part of the Caste Hindus and Scheduled Caste leaders can be seen from the Minority Conferences of 1948 and 1952, and also in their various joint statements articulating minority demands.

The undercurrents of the political process in Pakistan were rapidly changing. In the provincial election of East Bengal in early 1954, the ruling Muslim League was entirely routed, opening a series of possibilities for both the nationalist Bengali Muslims and the Hindus. The ruling elite of Pakistan was overwhelmed with a crisis which led to the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly when it was on the point of adopting the new constitution in October, 1954. With the dissolution began a new chapter in the politics of Pakistan, one in which the minority Hindus began to play a more effective role.
NOTES - Chapter II


2. Ibid., p.33.


7. Franda, op.cit., p.236.


9. Ibid., p.68.

10. Ibid., p.55.


19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Scheduled Caste support for the Congress party can be seen from the 1946 election results. In this election the Scheduled Caste Federation won only 12 per cent of the Scheduled Caste votes, whereas the Congress won almost all Hindu seats in Bengal. Government of India, *1945-1946 Election Results* (published in 1948), pp.24, 71.
25. Ibid., p.172.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., p.19.
32. Ibid., p.20.
33. Ibid.
37. Ibid., November 27, 1947.
38. Ibid., December 17, 1947.
52


42. Ibid., pp.6-7.


44. Ibid.

45. Ibid., see the speeches of P.H. Barma, B.K. Dutta, and S.C. Chattopadhyaya.

46. Ibid., p.17.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid., p.20.

49. Ibid., p.22.


52. Ibid., pp.77-82.


55. Ibid., pp.134-161, April 8, 1948.


62. Ibid., p.8.

64. Ibid., B.K. Dutta, pp.13-17.

65. For a detailed discussion of the influence of the Ulema in the constitution-making process, see Leonard Binder, Religion and Politics in Pakistan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961) and also Freeland Abbot, Islam and Pakistan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968).


67. Ibid., K.K. Dutta, p.22.

68. Ibid., pp.22-23.


70. Ibid., p.28.

71. Ibid., pp.32-33.


75. Ibid., p.95.

76. Ibid., p.94.


79. Ibid., pp.390-404.


82. Ibid., p.66.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid., p.117.


89. J.K. Ray, Democracy and Nationalism on Trial, pp.63-76.

90. CAP, Debates, Vol.15 (3-20), October 8-November 2, 1953.


94. Ahmad, op.cit., p.249.


96. Ibid., p.123.


99. Ibid., p.94.

100. For a detailed analysis of the class politics of the abolition of the zamindari system, see Badruddin Umar, Purbo Banglar Bhasa Andolan..., Vol.2, pp.127-183.


102. Ibid., p.98.

103. Ibid., pp.101-102.

104. Ibid., pp.102-103, 118-119.

105. Ibid., pp.99, 111-112.


108. Ibid., p.87.

109. Ibid., pp.56-84.

110. Ibid., pp.56-84.


118 Lahiry, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

119 Guha, *op. cit.*, p. 29.


CHAPTER III

MAXIMIZATION OF THE HINDU POSITION:
THE SECOND PHASE OF MINORITY POLITICS, 1954-1958

The year 1954 was a turning point in the political life of East Bengal in that it marked the historic victory of the United Front (UF) in the provincial elections. The victory ushered in a new opportunity for the Hindu minority to play an effective role in the political process. The resulting change in Pakistani politics made it possible for the Hindus not only to safeguard effectively, but to maximize their interest. The schism in the majority community placed them in position, unthinkable after partition, to become an important component of the ruling coalition governments both at the centre and in East Bengal. They now took part in the constitution-making process not as members of the opposition, but as an influential partner of the ruling coalition government. But their membership of the ruling coalition party was not obtained without paying a price. They had to make compromises on a number of different issues. This chapter will deal with the changing position of the Hindu minority.

Growing Secularism and the Rise of the Bengali Opposition Groups

During the first few years of Pakistan, the people of East Bengal were disillusioned with the misrule of the Muslim League, and the slogans of 'Islam' and 'Muslim nationhood' lost their appeal. Bengali Muslims became frustrated by the sheer neglect of their province by their fellow Muslim brothers of
West Pakistan. They were becoming more anxious about the slow development of their own province, in contrast to the rapid development of West Pakistan under the patronage of the central ruling elite of the Muslim League. They also found that the opportunities created in the services, professions, and business by the migration of Hindus, were quickly absorbed by West Pakistanis and non-Bengali Muslim refugees. The economic and political chagrin of the Bengali Muslims led to the formation of the Awami Muslim League (AML) in early 1949 by the 'vernacular elite'.

The AML quickly seized all available opportunities to expand its support base. The language movement of 1952 supplied it with a universally popular issue which was crucial to its development. By the beginning of 1953, the AML had become the most organized political force in the province. The main planks of the 44-point programme of the AML were full provincial autonomy for East Bengal and the recognition of Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan. The language movement had a far-reaching impact on the political orientation of the Bengali Muslim masses who had only a few years back enthusiastically backed the Pakistan movement. As they began to review their relationship with West Pakistan, Bengali nationalism was fostered; a phenomenon which has been rightly described by Badruddin Umar as "Musalmaner Swadesh Prattabartan"((Bengali) Muslim's Return Home). The AML became the avant-garde of rising Bengali nationalism.

With growing estrangement between East and West Pakistan,
the salience of religious identity on the part of the Bengali Muslims receded. Along with the banishment of upper class Hindus, went the competition with the Bengali Muslims. On the other hand, Bengali Muslims found that a mutuality of interest developed between them and the Hindus against their common enemy, i.e. the West Pakistani ruling elite. As a result, communalism began to lose its appeal among Bengali Muslims. The process was helped by the anti-BPC movement of 1950, and the language movement of 1952. With the gradual decline of communalism, secular political groups now opened the membership of their organizations to Hindus, and were ready to launch joint struggles with the Hindus which were quite unthinkable after partition. The decision on the part of the dissident Bengali Muslims to forge political unity with the Hindus was a radical step towards a newer political orientation in East Bengal.

The first political organization to open membership to all communities was the Youth League. It was formed in 1951 by the Communists to mobilize all sections of East Bengal's population on a minimum programme of secularism, anti-feudalism, and unfettered democracy. The Youth League countered the communal cultural policy of the Muslim League and played a very important role in the language movement. In April 1952, it organized a student front called the East Pakistan Students Union. This union, whose main planks were non-communalism and anti-imperialism, gradually became one of the most powerful student organizations of the province.
In terms of membership and leadership, the Communist Party of East Pakistan (EPCP) was predominantly a Hindu party. Thus it was easy for the government to repress the EPCP by branding them "enemy (Indian) agents". As a result, it decided to penetrate other popular parties in an attempt to incorporate non-communal, anti-feudal, and anti-imperialist planks in their platforms. In 1951, it resolved to work through the AML. However, Haji Danesh (a former member of the Communist Party of India) and some of his associates, defied this official decision and formed the Ganatantri Dal (Democratic Party) in early 1953. In fact, the Ganatantri Dal was the first secular party in East Bengal, and opened its door to the Hindus. It was successful in drawing support from both Hindus and Muslims, but its leadership remained predominantly Muslim.

In 1953, A.K. Fazlul Huq who had suffered in the political wilderness since the defeat of his party in the 1946 elections, organized the Krishak Sramik Party (KSP - Peasants and Workers party) to fight the forthcoming election. The KSP was composed mainly of his followers and friends. It lacked any definite programme and its main capital was the popularity of its leader.

The 1954 Elections

In March 1954, historic provincial elections were held in East Bengal. The minority parties fought for the 72 seats reserved for them. The most prominent minority parties on the electoral scene were the Congress, the United Progressive Party (formerly the Gana Samity), and the Scheduled Caste Federation. The first two parties were the major contenders
for caste Hindu seats. The minority leaders attempted to form an alliance on the eve of the election, but due to the earlier split between the Congress and the UPP, they failed to do so. The UPP tried unsuccessfully to form an electoral alliance with the SCF and to fight the election under the banner of the Minority United Front. The leaders of the SCF, for tactical reasons, decided to fight the election on their own. They thought that by contesting the election under their own party banner, they would be able to attract more scheduled caste votes. They were also motivated by the fact that another group of the SCF, under the leadership of D.N. Barori (a Muslim League associate and a provincial minister until the elections) was in the field. They thought that if they did not fight the election under their own party banner, another group of the SCF might get an opportunity to attract more scheduled caste votes. The latter group of the SCF was in favour of a separate electorate and failed to win a single seat, while the former group gained twenty-seven out of thirty-eight scheduled caste seats.

On the eve of the election, all the anti-Muslim League forces realized the opportunity to be gained by forming a united front against the governing Muslim League. The resultant United Front (UF) was composed of the AML, the KSP, the Nezam-i-Islam (a minor party of Muslim Ulema opposed to the Muslim League and for all practical purposes, an ally of Huq), and the Ganatantri Dal. The UF drew up a 21-point manifesto which included all the popular demands of East Bengal. The two most important demands of the 21-point program were full
regional autonomy for East Bengal (excluding defence, foreign affairs, and currency) and the recognition of Bengali as one of the state languages. However, the above-mentioned programme was full of conflicting goals. The UF, a conglomeration of various antagonistic parties, was united mainly for the purpose of opposition to the ruling party rather than because of any positive policy, and factionalism was present from the very beginning. 9

The UF coalition won a landslide victory in the election. It captured 223 out of 237 Muslim seats in a House of 309, while the Muslim League barely managed to survive by winning only 10 seats. All the important leaders of the League, including the ministers of the provincial cabinet, were defeated. The UF obtained 97 1/2 per cent of the Muslim votes, and was later joined by three independent and one Khilafat-i-Rabbani party members.

The party strength in the East Bengal provincial assembly in April 1954 was as follows: 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Muslim Seats</th>
<th>Minority Seats</th>
<th>United Front</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Front</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>Awami League 143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim League</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>KSP 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Nezam-i-Islam 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Caste Federation</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Ganatnatri Dal 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Progressive Party</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Khilafat-i-Rabbani 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganatnatri Dal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Party</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

237 72 227

The victory of the UF in the East Bengal elections set the stage for the minorities to play a crucial role in the subsequent political development of Pakistan, particularly in East Bengal.
The victory threw the central ruling elite of Pakistan into an uneasy predicament because its Bengali leaders had lost their credibility. Immediately after the electoral victory, the UF leaders appealed to the Bengali members of the CAP to resign and to "respect the wishes of the people." Later, the rivalry between the Punjabi Governor-General, Ghulam Muhammed, and the Bengali group of the CAP reached its climax when the latter tried to curtail the power of the former by passing a number of bills in the CAP by its numerical strength and by forming an alliance with the Sindhi group. The period between 1954 and 1958 was characterized by extreme instability and political intrigues. In this brief period there were five governments at the centre. East Bengal had three governments and was under governor's rule for nearly two years. This situation gave the minorities a unique chance to "fish in troubled waters" and to maximize their interest.

**Dismissal of the UF Government and the Dissolution of the CAP**

In early April 1954, the UF formed its government with Fazlul Huq as the chief minister, but the seeds of disunity in the UF were present from the very start. The two major parties, the KSP and AML could not agree on the selection of ministers, and Fazlul Huq formed a four-member cabinet, three belonging to his party, and a fourth drawn from his allied party, Nezam-i-Islam. However, he enlarged the cabinet on May 15, 1954, and the AML was included in it. At this point the Hindu members were not part of the UF government, though they extended their full support to the new government. The
central ruling elite of Pakistan could not accept the UF victory, and the UF ministry was dismissed by the central government within two months of its assumption of power by invoking Article 92A.\textsuperscript{15} The central government accused the UF government of "bringing about the disintegration" of Pakistan and called Huq a self-confessed traitor.\textsuperscript{16}

After the dismissal of the UF ministry, there followed a dramatic period of alliance formation among the different political forces in the country. The re-alignment of political forces was quickened when the Governor-General, Ghulam Muhammed, dissolved the first CAP in October, 1954. He charged that the existing CAP had failed to produce a constitution for the country over the previous seven years and that it had lost its legitimacy. So he "magnanimously" accepted the popular demand and ordered its dissolution.\textsuperscript{17} However, it is clear that he dissolved it not because it had failed to produce a constitution but rather because it had produced a constitution which was not acceptable to him and the Punjabi group.\textsuperscript{18} The act of the Governor-General was precipitated by the "surprising aggressiveness" of the Bengali group in the last few weeks of the first CAP.\textsuperscript{19} The UF leaders hailed the dissolution because it opened a new possibility for the UF to take part in the central government. The Congress party also welcomed the dissolution, and its leader, S.C. Chattopadhyaya declared: "The Muslim League will not be able to thrust on the minority a constitution which they rejected wholesale."\textsuperscript{20}
After the dissolution of the CAP, Ghulam Muhammed nominated a so-called "ministry of talents". There was no central legislature and Ghulam Muhammed began to rule the country be decree. His "controlled democracy" lasted for about one year, during which period he made a number of manoeuvers in order to win the support of one of the Bengali groups and provide legitimacy to his rule. As the UF was already a divided house and its two leaders, H.S. Suhrawardy and Fazlul Huq had been arch rivals for a long time, Ghulam Muhammed had the opportunity to play one against the other. Moreover, the UF leaders had suffered political oblivion since the establishment of Pakistan, and they found it irresistible to come to terms with a Governor-General who could re-install a government in East Bengal. Under such circumstances, H.S. Suhrawardy joined the central cabinet in December 1954. He was given an understanding by the Governor-General that he would be made Prime Minister immediately after joining the cabinet, and he would be entrusted with the task of constitution-making. Furthermore, the next election would be held within one year. To their surprise, the AML leaders found that a nominee of Fazlul Huq, Abu Hossain Sarkar, was also appointed a minister along with Suhrawardy. This clearly indicated that the Governor-General was playing with both groups separately, a tactic which contributed to the disintegration of the UF.

With the prospect of restoration of parliamentary government in East Bengal, inter-party conflict in the UF reached the
point of no return in early 1955. The AML, being the majority party of the UF, made no secret of the fact that it wanted the chief ministership and control over the ministry as a whole. Accordingly, the AML passed a vote of no confidence in Fazlul Huq as the leader of the UF on February 17, 1955. This no confidence resolution brought the final split in the UF. The AML and KSP were now vying with each other for the favour of the central government in order to return to power in East Bengal.

Meanwhile, the Governor-General was trying to convene a constitutional convention in order to pass a constitution according to his terms. He issued an ordinance to that effect in April 1955 with Suhrawardy's backing. The KSP, the Congress, and the Muslim League in East Bengal vehemently opposed this proposal on the grounds that the proposed convention was unconstitutional. They also demanded a new constituent assembly. They were prompted by the fear that in such a convention the powerful Governor-General would be able to impose a constitution which would serve Punjabi interests. However, the Governor-General's intentions were frustrated by a decision of the Federal Court of Pakistan on April 10, 1955. The court ruled against the summoning of a constitutional convention and asked the Governor-General instead to call a new constituent assembly.

The ruling of the Federal Court stirred new action on the part of the Pakistani central ruling elite. Prime Minister Bogra, who was completely at the mercy of the Governor-General
after the dissolution of the CAP, felt renewed hope in the prospect of a future assembly where he could establish himself as the leader of the House, with the help of the Bengali members. Since H.S. Suhrawardy himself was a possible candidate for the future prime ministership, Bogra opted for the KSP in his alliance-making. In a bid to gain KSP support, he restored it to government in East Bengal in June 1955, when the Governor-General was out of the country. Abu Hossain Sarkar, the nominee of Huq, formed the new UF government. Of the original UF, the Sarkar ministry enjoyed the support of the KSP, a splinter group of the AML of 20 members, the Nezam-i-Islam, and the Ganatantri Dal. Another 19 members of the AML joined the KSP at the time of the formation of the new government.

The Hindu members played a crucial part in the formation of the Sarkar ministry. In spite of the support of the other groups of the UF, it would not have been possible for the KSP to form a government without the solid support of the minority bloc of 72 members. As a reward, three minority members were accommodated in the ministry, two of whom belonged to the Congress, and the third to the SCF. B.K. Das, leader of the Congress party, was given charge of the important Finance portfolio. All the minority groups were unanimous in their support of the new government. The reasons for minority support have been analyzed by J.K. Ray. He maintains that the minorities "refused to side with Suhrawardy, the author of the ghastly Calcutta riots of 1946, in the AML-KSP tussle. Fuzlul
Hug, moreover, assured them that he would fight for a secular democratic Constitution, including a joint electorate system, in the new Constituent Assembly which, in accordance with the decision of the Federal Court, had to be convened soon by the Governor-General."^25

After the realignment of forces, the strength of different parties of the UF was estimated as follows:^26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>April 1954</th>
<th>April 1955</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AML</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AML (splinter group)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSP</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nezam-i-Islam</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganatantri Dal</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khilafat-i-Rabbani</td>
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<td>Hindu groups</td>
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The AML soon realized the importance of the Hindu support in the existing political situation. In a bid to woo the Hindu leaders to support the AML, it dropped the word 'Muslim' from its nomenclature and adopted the new name Awami League (AL) a few months later. The AL leadership was aware that the Hindus had psychological reservations about working in cooperation with a party having communal nomenclature and membership restricted to the Muslims only. The AL now opened its door to non-Muslims as well. However, it would be unfair to say that the AL was solely motivated by the desire to woo the Hindus. The leftist elements, including the party chairman, Maulana Bhasani, had long been trying to make the AML a secular party.
The second Constituent Assembly of Pakistan (CAP) was summoned to meet on July 7, 1955. The members of the new CAP were elected indirectly by the members of the provincial assemblies. The party composition of the CAP was as follows:

- Muslim League 26
- United Front (KSP) 16
- Awami League 13
- Congress 4
- Scheduled Caste Federation 3
- United Progressive Party 2
- Others 16

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The new CAP had an equal number of representatives from both wings of Pakistan. Its composition was different from the first CAP in that the Muslim League was no longer the majority party. While it was the majority party in West Pakistan, it had no footing in East Bengal. On the other hand, the East Bengal parties had no representation in the CAP from West Pakistan. This situation compelled the major parties of the two wings to compromise, and a compromise formula was agreed upon by the Muslim League, AL, and KSP. The Murree Pact was signed when the second CAP met for the first time on July 7, 1955. The five-point agreement was as follows:

1. One unit in West Pakistan
2. Full regional autonomy for East Bengal
3. Parity in all spheres
4. Joint electorate
5. Bengali and Urdu - two state languages
By signing this Pact, the Bengalis surrendered their numerical majority and also limited their ability to form anti-Punjabi coalitions with politicians from the smaller provinces of West Pakistan. On the other hand, West Pakistan gave in to the East Pakistani demands for the recognition of Bengali, full provincial autonomy, the joint electorate, and parity in parliamentary representation, civil service recruitment, and developmental resource allocation.

**Muslim League-UF Government at the Centre and the 1956 Constitution**

After the conclusion of the Pact, the question arose of electing a new prime minister of Pakistan. The Muslim League and the AL decided to form a coalition government, and as a part of the Muslim League-AL agreement it was understood that H.S. Suhrawardy would head the new government. However, Fazlul Huq decided to block the prime ministership of his arch-rival and made negotiations with the Muslim League at the eleventh hour. Although both Fazlul Huq and H.S. Suhrawardy demanded full regional autonomy, a joint electorate, and the adoption of Bengali as one of the state languages, Fazlul Huq's bid to form the ministry seemed more acceptable to the Muslim League. Huq represented the majority of the Bengali members including the minorities, and he did not demand the prime ministership. As a result, the Muslim League-UF coalition government was installed on August 12, 1955 with Choudhury Mohammad Ali as the prime minister.

The nine minority members of East Bengal in the CAP played
an important role in the rapid ministry-making drama that was taking place in the central capital. B.K. Das, leader of the Congress, described later in the CAP how they made it possible to bring the coalition to power. Without the support of the minorities the AL and KSP were equally balanced in the CAP, so their support was very crucial. The basis of the minorities' support was an understanding on the joint electorate. "It was," B.K. Das revealed, "on the basis of an undertaking given in writing that we joined the United Front Party and the undertaking was about providing joint electorate system in the Constitution." The minority members were immediately rewarded for their support with ministerial positions. K.K. Dutta (UPP) and A.K. Das (SCF) were included in the central cabinet. It should be noted that all of the Hindu parties were accommodated in the central and provincial cabinets. The Congress had already been given cabinet posts in East Bengal, so the UPP was accommodated in the central cabinet. The SCF, being the largest Hindu group, was given ministerial rewards both at the centre and in East Bengal.

The first thing the coalition government did was to pass the One Unit Bill in the CAP in September 1955. The CAP began deliberations on the constitution on January 9, 1956. With the reopening of the constitutional debate, the Hindu members were again vocal in asserting their demand. They concentrated their efforts mainly on three issues, namely: the Islamic nomenclature of the republic, the reservation of the head of the state for Muslims, and the joint electorate.
Although the Hindu members were part of the coalition party, they vehemently opposed the clauses concerning the above-mentioned issues. The Hindu members' opposition to the Islamic nomenclature of the state stemmed from the obvious reason that it meant a subordinate position for non-Muslims in Pakistan. Dr. S.K. Sen (UPP), in the course of debate, concluded: "Now, by giving this name "Islamic", what do we find—non-Muslims, if they want to stay here, I am pained to say because it is shocking, they must accept a subordinate position. It means that in an Islamic state they have to embrace that religion if they want to rise to full stature; otherwise they will have to leave the country. You will have to bow to a position of inferiority." He also mentioned the Hindu members' dissociation from the coalition party meeting when the nomenclature was discussed there. They argued that the Islamic nomenclature would help create mischief by the Ulema and other fanatic elements. Furthermore, it would result in a greater exodus of Hindus to India. They noted that, when Liaquat Ali Khan was alive, there was no place for such nomenclature or limitation of the qualification of the head of the state in the Basic Principles Committee Report. The AL was against the provision of an Islamic state, and on a division on this clause the opposition marshalled the highest number of votes (22 opposed as against 47 in favour). The Hindu members, including the two central ministers and a provincial minister (who was also a member of the CAP), voted with the opposition. They also suggested that strict party
discipline should not be imposed at the time of framing the constitution.  

The minority members vigorously opposed Article 32 (2) which provided for a Muslim head of state. They put forward the same argument that the clause was derogatory to the rights guaranteed to the minorities in the chapter on fundamental rights, and to the clauses which provided for equal opportunities and equal rights for all citizens of Pakistan. They also added that Article 32 (2) relegated non-Muslims to the status of second-class citizens. Hindu members, including the two central ministers, moved amendments to this clause and on a division on this clause, voted with the opposition.

However, the minority members were not as critical about these two provisions as they were about the separate electorate system. Mahfuzul Huq noted: "But this time, the Hindu representatives took a (more) moderate attitude towards the Islamic provisions than they had taken in the first Assembly. This was mainly due to the fact that in the second Assembly they were not in the Opposition but rather an important component of the ruling coalition party."

However, I cannot agree with Huq that the Hindus toned down their opposition to these Islamic provisions only because they were an important partner of the ruling coalition. They were interested in getting a democratic constitution which would treat all citizens equally, irrespective of religion. The draft constitution was discussed in the meetings of the coalition party for about two months and all the provisions
excepting three—the Islamic nomenclature of the republic, the reservation of the office of the head of state for Muslims, and the joint electorate system—were unanimously adopted. The Hindus, one might conclude, were happy with the rest of the constitution. As for the nomenclature issue, they knew that given a democratic constitution with equal rights for every citizen, the name of the republic really mattered little. As A.K. Dutta admitted, "An intelligent Hindu...will not be afraid of this nomenclature in the least; he will understand that there is nothing in it. He will look to the Constitution itself and the Constitution will show that it is a democratic state of high standard. There is nothing to be afraid of..." Furthermore, in a parliamentary democracy the head of state is a figurehead only. The constitution provided for a cabinet form of government with a prime minister as its head. There was no disqualifying provision for Hindus becoming prime minister. The following comments by K.K. Dutta confirms this interpretation of Hindu attitudes. He observed, "I must admit that in the body of the Constitution there has been no discrimination in the rights between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. The Constitution has been quite fair and provisions have been made giving equal rights to the Muslims and non-Muslims."

The Fight for a Joint Electorate

Although the Hindus seemed ready to compromise on the Islamic nomenclature of the republic and the reservation of the office of the head of state for Muslim issues, they were not ready to forgo their 'irreducible minimum' demand for a joint
electorate. They had been opposed to separate electorates in divided India, just as they had been opposed to the "two-nation" theory. To them, the acceptance of separate electorates meant the acceptance of the "two-nation" theory. After independence, they continued their rejection of the separate electorates system. The minority groups passed resolutions in favour of a joint electorate in their party meetings as early as 1948. The Hindu opposition to separate electorates in the CAP can be traced back to early 1952 when the CAP amended the Government of India Act, 1935 to provide separate electorates for the scheduled castes. The Hindus also opposed the Government of India Act (Amendment: 5th and 6th schedule) Bill, 1951 which sought to perpetuate separate electorates in Sind. They demanded that the passage of the bill would not affect the electoral rules of East Bengal. The ruling party gave them an assurance in that regard.

The clause pertaining to the electoral system was debated in the CAP on February 21, 1956, only nine days before the final adoption of the constitution. Both the AL and Hindu members opposed the government proposal. B.K. Das, S.K. Sen, Gour Chandra Bala, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and Mahmud Ali moved amendments seeking a joint electorate. The arguments of the Hindu members were the same as they were before. They maintained that a separate electorates system would relegate them to a position of eternal subordination, and they would be dependent on the majority community for a "crumb of favour." The prevailing separate electorates system, instead of safe-
guarding minority interests, would leave them permanently vulnerable. They would not be effective in the political process of the country, for Muslim leaders would not have to be responsive to the Hindu population. The Hindu leaders thought that if a joint electorate were accepted, the attitude of the Muslim leaders would be changed. D.N. Dutta showed the Hindu logic in his speech on the electorate issue. He maintained, "We will be able to elect 72 members out of 309 (of East Bengal Assembly), which means, Sir, that 237 members, who will form the administration of the country, will not be responsible to the Hindus... I am prepared to be ruled by Muslims if as a matter of fact I have got the right of electing them to the Assembly so that they will be my chosen representatives,... they will be responsible to us, and we shall feel, Sir, that we have got a share in the administration of the country." 46

They were also opposed to separate electorates because they might aggravate communal tension and lead to periodic communal riots. 47 One of the biggest problems of the minority community in the first few years of independence was the achievement of communal peace and security. Thus they advocated a joint electorate in the hope that it would create a more congenial atmosphere for the Hindus to continue to live in East Bengal.

They were also motivated by the hope that a joint electorate system would lead to the emergence of secular political parties in East Bengal. They thought that they would be able to play a significant role in those political
parties and thus be able to safeguard their interests more effectively. Their belief was strengthened by the emergence of secular political parties like the AL and Ganatantri Dal which pursued non-communal policies.

However, it was obvious that the acceptance of a joint electorate would reduce the number of minority representatives in both legislatures. It seems that they were fully aware of their potential loss, but they were hopeful of future gains. As pointed out by Professor Raj Kumar Chakraverty as early as 1952, during the Constituent Assembly debates: "Sir, we know that if the system of joint electorate is accepted, none of us sitting on this side of the House has a chance of being returned to the legislature but, Sir, we are prepared for that contingency. We know that risk. We are ready to go into political oblivion. We are ready to efface ourselves, but we are sure and we are convinced that the system of joint electorate will help the building up of a strong and united country based on peace, goodwill and contentment of all sections of the people."  

As mentioned earlier, the Muslim League-United Front government at the centre was formed on the understanding that a joint electorate would be provided in the constitution. At the time of actual constitution-making, West Pakistan Muslim League leaders pressed for separate electorates. As a result, the ruling coalition could not come to a consensus about the electorate system and the issue was shelved until the last moment. The minority members were hopeful that they would be
able to influence the decision of the coalition party, so they did not quit the coalition government when provisions regarding the nomenclature and Muslim head of state were passed. They expected that their coalition partners would respect the earlier agreement on a joint electorate. Since the UF government in East Bengal was heavily dependent on minority support, the ruling coalition at the centre had to devise a compromise formula in order to retain minority support.

The resulting compromise was Article 145 of the Constitution which provided that parliament, after ascertaining the views of the provincial assemblies, would pass an Act on the electorate issue. However, Hindu members demanded that the issue should be settled in the Constitution Assembly because it was an important matter to them. If there were a clear provision in the Constitution, it could not be amended easily, so they opposed the idea of postponing the issue for parliament to decide.\textsuperscript{49} When Article 145 was put to a vote, all of the Hindu members, excepting the two central ministers, voted with the opposition.\textsuperscript{50}

The decision to postpone the electorate issue was nonetheless a victory on the part of the minorities in the sense that it was definitely one step ahead of the BPC Report of 1952. The BPC Report had clearly recommended separate electorates for Pakistan. Moreover, it was almost certain that the East Bengal Assembly would recommend a joint electorate, because both the AL and KSP were committed to it. The Hindu members were given a definite assurance in that respect. As B.K. Das later
disclosed, "My esteemed friends Mr. Abu Hossain Sarkar and Mr. Hashimuddin rang me from here (Dacca)....They all said, "Well, do not try to have the matter decided in the Constituent Assembly. Bring it down to the Province and we shall give you Joint Electorate." Not only that, along with Mr. Sarkar, my esteemed friends Messrs. Ashrafuddin Choudhury and Abdus Salam went to Karachi, requested me to agree to the said proposal."  

In spite of their unsuccessful bid to get a joint electorate, the Hindu members were successful in having two amendments added to the draft constitution. One proposed by K.K. Dutta dealt with the right of the religious communities to establish and maintain their own educational institutions. The second, moved by Rasa Raj Mandal, sought guarantees that the State would safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of minorities, including their due representation in the federal and provincial services.

Being frustrated at not getting the joint electorate system incorporated into the constitution, the Hindu groups withdrew their support from the UF-Muslim League coalition government at the centre and in East Bengal. However, the withdrawal of their support did not affect the continuation of the central ruling coalition because it had a majority without the Hindu members. The Hindu members (except for K.K. Dutta and A.K. Das) along with the AL and the Ganatantri Dal members walked out of the Constituent Assembly on the day of the adoption of the Constitution. They termed the constitution "an unfortunate piece of document." However, K.K. Dutta
appealed to the minorities to judge the constitution on the basis of its working. He asked them to work hand in hand with the Muslims, because non-cooperation would be suicidal for them.  

After the adoption of the constitution, the political scene began to change very rapidly. In East Bengal (now named East Pakistan after the adoption of the constitution), the Sarkar ministry was in a shaky position because of the withdrawal of the Hindu groups and the Ganatantri Dal. It no longer commanded the majority support in the East Pakistan Assembly, so it was afraid to face the Assembly. "During the whole 15 months of its power," G.W. Choudhury noted, "it showed little respect to parliamentary practices." Abu Hossain Sarkar was trying hard to bring back the minority members in order that his coalition government might survive. He lured them with ministerial positions and ambassadorial appointments. He was successful in winning a section of the UPP led by Pravash Chandra Lahiry. Lahiry was given the portfolio of finance in the Sarkar ministry. His acceptance of a ministerial position resulted in a split in the UPP. J. Sen Gupta maintains that Lahiry could not resist the temptation of becoming a minister, superseding his party leader D.N. Dutta. However, Lahiry explained that he and his other friends could not align with the AL, because the AL was led by Suhrawardy, "the father of the Calcutta riots." It is notable that with a relatively better political position, the Hindu groups weakened in their solidarity. The decrease of Hindu unity
stemmed from the fact that they were no longer intimidated by the Muslims, but were treated with more respect. When the Hindu groups withdrew their support from the UF-Muslim League coalition, they asked the ministers of their respective parties to resign. But K.K. Dutta, A.K. Das, and Madhusudan Sarkar defied the decisions of their parties. As a result, they were expelled from their parties. During the subsequent ministry-making drama, some Hindu members showed an opportunistic tendency by disrespecting their party decisions and by aligning with one Muslim party or another.

Since the Sarkar ministry lost the support of the majority of the minorities, the AL was making every effort to align with them and come to power in East Pakistan. The AL leaders were often seen driving to the Congress office at Sutrapur in Dacca. They were also negotiating with the D.N. Dutta group of the UPP. The AL and the Congress came to an agreement on the basis of a five-point programme. The agreement included a firm commitment by the AL to fight for a joint electorate and (in the event of its coming to power at the centre) to amend the Constitution to make it secular and democratic. The AL also gave an assurance that a 23 per cent quota of services for the minorities would be implemented. As a result of the AL-Congress alignment, the Sarkar ministry lost its majority. The Assembly was summoned to meet on August 13, 1956. It was prorogued only four hours before its meeting when the incumbent ministry discovered that it was going to be defeated in a vote of no confidence. The Sarkar ministry finally resigned on August 30, 1956. On September 6, the
AL-Congress coalition government came to power with the support of the UPP (Dutta group), the SCF, and the Ganatantri Dal. The cabinet, headed by Ataur Rahman Khan, had four Hindu members.

The new coalition government, out of necessity, had not only to accede to the Hindus more than their due share of the cabinet, but had to make immediate provision for the joint electorate system. Immediately after the assumption of power, the Ataur ministry passed a resolution in the provincial assembly that a joint electorate be provided for election to the national and provincial assemblies. The resolution was passed by a vote of 159 for, and 1 against. This was a great victory of the minority parties.

In the meantime, the political situation in West Pakistan was also rapidly changing. A new political party, the Republican Party, was formed which included a section of the sitting Muslim League legislators. The Republican Party aligned with the AL, and an AL-Republican coalition government headed by H.S. Suhrawardy came to power at the centre with the support of the minorities on September 12, 1956. Rasa Raj Mandal, a Scheduled Caste member, was included in the cabinet. When the first session of the National Assembly met in Dacca, Suhrawardy introduced the Electorate Bill, 1956, on October 10. The Electorate Bill provided for a joint electorate for East Pakistan and separate electorates for West Pakistan. It was a compromise formula to suit the major parties of the coalition government. The Muslim League and the KSP opposed the Bill.
The Bill was passed by 48 to 19 votes. The Bill was passed in a hurry, and the session of the Assembly continued from eight in the morning to the small hours of the next morning. Suhrawardy wanted to get the Bill passed before his scheduled departure for China on October 15. The haste in which the Bill was passed reveals the urgent desire of the coalition government to fulfill the demands of the Hindus and the effectiveness of the Hindu groups. Eventually, the Electorate Bill was further amended by the Electorate (Amendment) Bill, 1957, to provide for a joint electorate in both wings of Pakistan. Thus the minorities won their battle for a joint electorate ten years after the independence of Pakistan.

Political Chaos, Unstable Ministries, and the Hindus

Once the Constitution was adopted, the political kaleidoscope of Pakistan, and of East Pakistan in particular, was taking rapid turns almost every day. There were three governments at the centre and three (including one lasting only 24 hours) in East Pakistan during the period 1956-1958. The different Muslim political groups were vying with each other for power, and major political parties like the Muslim League, AL, and the KSP underwent splits. Thanks to the extremely chaotic state of the Muslim political parties, the Hindus were often able to get their demands met.

In July 1957, the AL underwent a split over the issues of full regional autonomy for East Pakistan and foreign policy. The dissenting leftists, together with the party chairman, Maulana Bhasani, formed the National Awami Party (NAP). The
formation of the NAP had serious consequences for the stability of the AL-coalition government in East Pakistan. The NAP commanded the support of 25 members in the provincial assembly who previously were supporters of the coalition party. The Ataur ministry was thus in a very shaky position. The AL tried in vain to counterbalance the strength of the NAP by bringing a section of the KSP (Azizul Huq group) in the coalition government. As a result, the dependence of the ministry on the Hindu members was increased more than ever. As noted by G.W. Choudhury: "The ministry is now at the complete mercy of the Hindu members, even though they represent only 12 per cent of the population. The exploited Muslim peasants of East Pakistan supported the movement for Pakistan in the hope that domination by the Hindu minority would come to an end, but today political instability in East Pakistan has given the Hindu members undue predominance in the Province's affairs."

At the centre, the Republican Party withdrew its support from the coalition government in October 1957, because of Suhrawardy's opposition to the Republican demand to dismantle one unit in West Pakistan. A new coalition was formed by the Muslim League, the Republican Party and a section of the KSP (Hamidul Huq group). The Hindu groups were not part of this new coalition government. The coalition government was headed by I.I. Chundrigar of the Muslim League. The Muslim League had always been opposed to a joint electorate because, to them, the acceptance of the joint electorate meant the negation of the "two-nation" theory and the ideology of Pakistan. The
only condition of the Muslim League-Republican alliance was that the joint electorate system would be repealed. Chundrigar declared on the day of his assumption of power that, "the Republican Party has in the national interest come to the conclusion that they would support the immediate substitution of separate electorates for joint electorates." However, the Muslim League and the Republican Party were arch enemies and their uneasy alliance ended in less than two months when the latter changed its policy regarding the electorate again. The Republican Party finally came to a decision not to re-open the electorate issue. This led to the resignation of Chundrigar on December 11, 1957. On December 16, 1957, the Republican Party formed another government with the support of the AL and Hindu members. They (AL-Hindus) decided to support the government without accepting any cabinet positions. The only condition of their support was that the coalition government would stick to the joint electorate system and arrange an early general election in the country. The Hindus were eager to preserve their victory on the electorate issue, even if it meant sacrificing ministerial positions. The new cabinet had two Hindu members but neither of them represented any minority party. After their expulsion from their respective parties, K.K. Dutta was now a member of the Republican Party, and A.K. Das was an independent scheduled caste member.

By the end of 1957, East Pakistan was facing a grave economic crisis. Smuggling across the border to India took an alarming turn, causing a shortage of essential foodgrains and
other commodities. As a result, the value of Pakistan currency dropped. In December 1957, the Ataur Ministry of East Pakistan, with the help of the military, launched "Operation Close Door" (OCD) to prevent smuggling across the Indo-Pakistan border. Some Hindu businessmen were secretly engaged in smuggling and were being chased by the army. In fact, the Hindus were the hardest hit by the operation, and the Hindu members of the EBLA protested the general harassment of their community. Chitta Ranjan Sutar (a scheduled caste member) of the NAP moved an adjournment motion to discuss OCD on March 13, 1958. His motion was supported by the Hindu members and the NAP members. But Ataur dismissed the critics of the OCD and alleged that "Mr. Sutar has disgraced our Army and by disgracing our Army he has disgraced Pakistan." 72

Ataur's stand on the OCD spelled the doom of his ministry. The dismissal of the adjournment motion created serious repercussions in the Congress party. A section of the Congress leaders under the leadership of B.K. Das, gave their ultimatum to Ataur Rahman Khan to withdraw the army immediately. Otherwise they would withdraw their support from the coalition ministry. When Ataur failed to act accordingly, they withdrew their support. 73 Although the Hindus failed to compel Ataur to withdraw the army, they were successful in pressurizing the Noon government at the centre to withdraw the Prevention of Smuggling (Special Powers) Ordinance in early 1958. "Thus the edge of the anti-smuggling operations," noted Talukder Maniruzzaman, was blunted to satisfy the interests of the minority community." 74
After the withdrawal of the minority support, the Ataur ministry on March 22, 1958, was at the point of collapse because of a division on a government motion. However, its collapse was avoided when the NAP decided to abstain from voting. On March 31, 1958, Governor Fazlul Huq dismissed the Ataur ministry and installed a new cabinet (with Abu Hossain Sarkar as the chief minister) on the grounds that the Ataur ministry had lost majority support. However, the AL with the support of the central government, managed to oust the governor and the new cabinet within 24 hours.

The sinking Ataur ministry finally suffered a vote of no-confidence on June 18, 1958 when more minority members defected and the NAP decided to withdraw its support. Again Abu Hossain Sarkar formed a cabinet with the help of the Lahiry group and the UPP and a section of the SCF on June 20. Finally, Sarkar confronted a vote of non-confidence and lost the ministry on June 25. The provincial assembly was suspended on June 25. However, the AL pressurizing the central government managed to come back to power on August 25, 1958. But the political crisis of the country was taking dramatic turns every day. In the provincial legislature, no clear majority could be formed among any of the contesting groups and the deputy speaker of the East Pakistan Assembly was seriously injured when a fight broke out between the government and opposition parties on September 23. The deputy speaker later died in hospital. After fifteen days of this chaotic episode, martial law was proclaimed in the whole country. The imposition of martial law on October 8, 1958 marked the collapse of
parliamentary democracy in Pakistan.

During the period 1954 to 1958, the Hindu minority achieved a significant advance toward securing its interests. The situation was completely different from the initial years of Pakistan, when the Hindus could not play an effective role in the politics of the country. They were not successful in achieving a totally secular constitution, but they definitely exerted influence in making the constitution more liberal-democratic, thereby safeguarding the minority interests. Their greatest success was the incorporation of the joint electorate system in the constitution. From 1955 to 1958 they shared power with the Muslims both at the centre and in East Pakistan, with the exception of the two-month Chundrigar ministry in 1957. They received ministerial rewards disproportionate to their size. The Sarkar ministry had three Hindu members. The Ataur ministry had four Hindu representatives in a cabinet of ten. They were also successful in implementing the 23 per cent service quota for the Hindus. Most importantly, Hindu collaboration with the coalition governments resulted in a sense of security among ordinary Hindus. They shed their fear, and their migration to India dropped considerably. Thus, this period has been described by Hindu leaders as the time when the Hindu minority lived most happily in East Pakistan.  

During this period, the Hindus were more compromising than before. When they were coalition partners, they did not insist on amending the constitution to drop the Islamic nomenclature of the republic or the disqualification of non-
Muslims to the office of the head of state. It is notable that they started playing an effective role only when the Muslim political groups of the UF lost cohesion in 1955. The nearly balanced strength of the two Muslim political parties made it possible for the Hindus to play a crucial role during this period, in the sense that their support could now determine the rise and fall of ministries.
NOTES – Chapter III

1. Rounaq Jahan uses the term "vernacular elite" to denote the excluded section of the Muslim League who were mobilizing strength with the decrease in popularity of the Muslim League. For an account of the rise of the Awami League, see Rounaq Jahan, Pakistan: Failure in National Integration (Dacca: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp.38-49; and also Abul Mansur Ahmad, Rajnitir Panchasa Bachara, pp.310-343. Ahmad was a top leader of the AL and a trusted friend of Suhrawardy.


4. Ibid., p.229.

5. See next chapter, section on the leftist movement.


10. These figures are taken from Ahmad op.cit., p.333, and Lahiry op.cit., p.379. However, there are some minor variations on these figures in Callard, op.cit., p.59; and Mahfuzul Huq, Electoral Problems in Pakistan (Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1966), p.81. While Callard uses the Karachi newspapers for his data, Huq does not mention his source. Since both Ahmad and Lahiry were important leaders of the assembly, I consider their figures more accurate.


13. For a full account of this period, see Ahmad, op.cit.

14. However, this disagreement did not bring about any split in the UF at that moment because Fazlul Huq was the most popular leader of the UF. It was already decided before the election that he would become the chief minister of the province, while Suhrawardy would go to the centre. After the electoral victory, a section of the AML demanded the chief ministership in recognition of the fact that the AML was the largest party in the coalition. Suhrawardy, who was more eager to capture power at the centre, did not want to displease Fazlul Huq. So he dismissed the AML's claim to the chief ministership. Ahmad, op.cit., pp.335-337.


22. Ibid., p.355.

23. Ibid.

24. Tamizuddin Khan, a Bengali and the speaker of the CAP until its dissolution in October 1954, appealed to the Sind High Court against the unconstitutional act of the Governor-General. The Sind Court upheld his views. So the Governor-General appealed to the Federal Court whose decision went in favour of the legality of the Governor-General's power to dissolve a Constituent Assembly. However, the court also declared that he had to convene a new Constituent Assembly.

26. Ahmad, op. cit., p. 357.

27. Keith Callard, op. cit., p. 64. The "Others" category consisted of the Firoz Khan Noon group (3 members), Fazlur Rahman (Independent Muslim League), Dr. Khan Saheb, Mian Iftikharuddin (Azad Pakistan Party), Fazlul Karim (Communist), three Muslim associates (Gibbon, Abdul Bari, S. Kirpaldas), and six state and tribal leaders.


29. Ibid., pp. 368-384.


37. Huq, op. cit., p. 86.


40. Ibid., p. 3411.


42. See Chapter II, pp. 39-40.


46. Ibid., p.75.
47. Ibid., Vol.1 (76), p.3455, speech of Rasa Raj Mandal, February 21, 1956.
49. Ibid., speech of B.K. Das, p.3447.
50. Ibid., p.3468.
54. Ibid., p.3680.
55. Ibid., p.3700, speech of S.K. Sen.
56. Ibid., pp.3709-3710.
57. For a discussion of East Pakistan political situation at that time, see Choudhury, "The East Pakistan Political Scene, 1955-1957", pp.312-320.
58. Ibid., pp.315-320.
60. J. Sen Gupta, Eclipse of East Pakistan, p.251.
69. Huq, op. cit., p.140.
75. Ray, op. cit., p.145.
CHAPTER IV

RETREAT AND REGROUPING:
THE THIRD PHASE OF MINORITY POLITICS, 1958-1971

The coup d'état in October 1958 by General Ayub Khan marked the collapse of parliamentary democracy and the beginning of a new period in Pakistan politics entirely different from any preceding one.¹ The imposition of martial law was accompanied by a total suspension of political activities for about four years. All the political parties were banned, the national and provincial assemblies were dissolved, and the Constitution was abrogated. The central and provincial governments were dismissed, and the rule of the military was established. Freedom of the press and association were taken away from the people, and heavy censorship was imposed on the press. Tens of thousands of political leaders and workers, particularly in East Pakistan, were thrown into jail. Prominent Bengali politicians, including Maulana Bhasani, H.S. Suhrawardy, and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were arrested. Of all regimes in Pakistan, it was Ayub's martial law regime which was most resented by the minority community.² During the Ayub regime, the Hindus, along with the Bengali Muslims, were on the retreat, and were almost wiped out politically. Later, they regrouped with the Bengali nationalists in their struggle against the common enemy, the Pakistan central ruling elite.
The Martial Law Regime and the Hindus

In order to legitimize its seizure of power, the new regime blamed the politicians for bringing Pakistan to the brink of disaster. Charges of corruption and misconduct were levelled by the regime against former ministers and politicians. In East Pakistan, the Awami League, KSP, and NAP party members and Hindu politicians were the primary targets of the regime. Muslim Leaguers were not affected by the regime's reprisals, and this created suspicion among the minorities that the military government was pro-Muslim League and anti-Hindu. Along with Bengali political Muslim leaders, prominent Hindu leaders including Manoranjan Dhar, General Secretary of the Pakistan National Congress until it was banned, were arrested.

The martial law regime in its attempt to put further curbs on political leaders, issued the Elective Bodies (Disqualification) Order (EBDO), 1959. The Order was used not only against so-called corrupt politicians, but against popular leaders who were a potential threat to the regime. The term "misconduct" defined by the order was wide enough in its scope to include subversive activities, jobbery, and corruption. Six prominent Hindu leaders were disqualified from political participation under EBDO. They were: Suresh Chandra Das Gupta, former president of Pakistan National Congress and ex-MLA; Basanta Kumar Das, former leader of the Congress assembly party and ex-minister of central and provincial governments; D.N. Dutta, ex-MCA and provincial minister; Pravash Chandra Lahiry, former provincial minister; Trailakya Nath Chakravorty,
The EBDO trials were often farcical and the tribunals constituted for the purpose often did not even examine any witnesses. The charges against Hindu politicians invariably included subversive activities and their alleged association with anti-Pakistani organizations and elements.

At the initial stage of martial law rule those Hindu leaders who were not put in prison cells were subjected to considerable harassment. The houses of prominent Hindu leaders were often watched and surrounded by intelligence people, thus restricting their movement. This had a very negative effect on ordinary Hindus, as they were now separated from their leaders. The Hindus had always looked to their leaders to articulate their grievances in and out of parliament. Now that their leaders were living in isolation, the morale of common Hindus deteriorated. Moreover, in order to enhance its public image, the regime launched a fresh attack on smuggling across the border. Under martial law, the seizure of goods in a period of one month amounted to nearly the total of goods seized in the preceding eleven years. We have seen in the preceding chapter how Hindus were affected by anti-smuggling measures under the Operation Close Door. The anti-smuggling operations were carried out by the army, and the Pakistan army being predominantly a West Pakistani institution, had anti-India and anti-Hindu overtones. Thus, the new anti-smuggling operations hit Hindus the hardest.

The economic opportunities of the minorities were
squeezed greatly during the Ayub regime. They were discriminated against in the matter of granting import-export licences. The existing Hindu enterprises also faced difficulty when the question of renewal of government sanction arose. Some Hindu concerns, including the Chitta Ranjan Cotton Mills, were taken over by the government for alleged mismanagement which "if allowed to continue would result in a loss of production of essential commodities." The policies of the regime caused a fresh wave of migration to India. However, migration was extremely difficult because the border was tightly sealed.

During the rule of Ayub Khan, the Hindu community suffered from a lack of effective leadership because their leaders were not available to articulate their demands and grievances. Four definite patterns in the Hindu leadership are found during this period. One group of Hindu leaders, including Manoranjan Dhar, D.N. Dutta, and Phani Mazumdar, served terms in prison at different times. The EBDO and the absence of any hope of future political participation during the Ayub regime led a second group to leave the country in despair. Among prominent leaders, B.K. Dutta and P.C. Lahiry left the country after the imposition of martial law. Sris Chandra Chattopadhyaya, former leader of the Congress party in the first CAP, had already been living in India. Not only politicians, but some highly placed Hindu officials (including a High Court justice and a CSP officer) left the country and settled down in West Bengal after the imposition of martial law. A third group, in the absence of any constitutional and parliamentary politics,
kept their distance from active involvement in any politics. This group included lawyers, doctors, and teachers. The Hindu leadership in East Bengal was relatively old. The fourth group consisted of the older leaders, most of whom gradually retired and then died. This group included such prominent leaders as Suresh Chandra Das Gupta, K.K. Dutta, Haran Ghosh Choudhury and Khitish Chandra Biswas.

The Basic Democracy System

President Ayub's martial law regime lacked legitimacy. In his attempt to create legitimacy for the regime and to begin institution-building at the local level, Ayub introduced a new system of local government in October 1959 known as the Basic Democracies. Under the new system, 8,126 union councils were created, each representing an average population of 10,000. Each union council consisted of an average of ten members, called Basic Democrats, elected directly by universal adult franchise, each representing roughly a population of one thousand. The Basic Democracies were entrusted with multiple functions: administrative, developmental, local self government, and constitutional. Their most important function after Ayub promulgated a constitution in 1962, was to serve as the electoral college for the election of the president and the national and provincial assemblies. Universal adult franchise was replaced by the electoral college consisting of 80,000 Basic Democrats, 40,000 from each wing.

Hindu representation in the Basic Democracies was minimal. In the first Basic Democracies election in 1959,
only 4,965 Hindus were elected. During the rule of Ayub the system of Basic Democracies was further strengthened in an attempt to create a permanent base of political support for the regime. The regime needed the support of the Basic Democrats to get its presidential and assembly candidates elected. The regime injected millions of rupees into the rural areas in the name of the "Works Programme". This works programme was supported by American aid under the PL 480 programme. The Basic Democrats were entrusted with the implementation of the works programme, and the expenditures were never audited by government agencies. As a result, they were provided with the opportunity to make fortunes just by appropriating a substantial portion of the works programme money. Thus, during the Ayub rule, the Basic Democrats emerged as a "nouveau riche" class in the rural areas. As noted by Rehman Sobhan, "...the Basic Democracies system (had) by 1964 become the monopoly of a clearly identifiable socio-economic class." The growth of this new Muslim kulak class in the rural areas was buttressed by the regime's decision to increase the maximum size of landholdings from 100 to 350 standard bighas (125 acres) in 1961. By this time, in the absence of Hindu landlords, the rising Muslim surplus peasants and jotedars had already consolidated their positions. The Basic Democracies system resulted in the concentration of economic and political power in the same hands in the rural areas. This fact is substantiated if we look at the socio-economic backgrounds of the Basic Democrats. They came from the top ten to fifteen per cent of the rural popula-
tion, and the majority of them were below forty-five years of age. When President Ayub formed his political party, the Convention Muslim League, in 1963, they became its primary members.

The Anti-Ayub Democratic Movement

By the beginning of 1962 student unrest against the martial law regime began to increase. Students of Dacca University and of other cities demonstrated in the streets for the restoration of democracy and for the end of martial law. President Ayub tried to dismiss the students' demonstrations by alleging that communists from Calcutta and Agartala were responsible for the East Pakistan unrest. Increasing popular dissatisfaction with martial law made Ayub promulgate a constitution for Pakistan on March 1, 1962. It came into effect on June 8 of the same year with the withdrawal of martial law after forty-four months. The Ayub Constitution of 1962 provided for a presidential form of government, with great concentration of power in the hands of the president. It also provided for national and provincial assemblies with limited authority. This constitution, like its predecessor, reserved the office of the head of the state only for Muslims. The president and the members of the national and provincial assemblies were to be elected by the Basic Democrats. Ayub ruled another seven years till the collapse of the regime in the 1968-1969 mass upsurge. This period has been described as the period of 'constitutional autocracy' by a prominent student of Pakistan politics.

After lifting martial law a number of political prisoners
including some Hindus who had been held since 1958 were freed.\textsuperscript{30} Dacca and other cities witnessed fresh political activities by the old parliamentary politicians. On June 25, 1962, nine leading Bengali leaders of the defunct AL, the KSP, and the Muslim League made a statement demanding the framing of a new constitution based on parliamentary democracy and universal adult franchise.\textsuperscript{31} This famous statement by the nine leaders was followed by province-wide agitation for the restoration of full democracy and the subsequent formulation of the National Democratic Front (NDF) comprising the major political groups in East Pakistan under the leadership of Suhrawardy.\textsuperscript{32}

The striking feature is that no Hindu leaders were included among the nine leaders nor were they associated with the formation of the NDF. The Hindu absence from the political scene can be explained by the fact that the community had suffered the loss of many of its prominent leaders either by death or by migration. The remaining Hindu leaders might have thought it wise to wait and not enter into the bad books of their already hostile rulers. Moreover, all the prominent Hindu politicians were based in district towns outside of Dacca, so they were not readily available for any joint effort taking place in Dacca. The diminishing role of the Hindus during the Ayub regime can be discerned by the 1962 and 1965 national and provincial assemblies election results. In both national assemblies the Hindu representation was nil, and in both provincial assemblies there were only
four non-Muslim members, including one Buddhist, in each assembly.  

Ayub envisaged a partyless political system when he introduced his constitution, and political parties remained banned even after the 1962 election to the national and provincial assemblies. However, the introduction of the Constitution and the formation of the assemblies made it necessary for him to create political support for the regime. Out of this necessity the regime passed the Political Parties Bill, 1962 which provided for the revival of political parties under severe restraints. EBDOed politicians were debarred from joining or forming a political party. Similarly, the ban on the Communist Party was not lifted. The formation of any political party working against the "integrity" or "security" of Pakistan was also prohibited.  

Ayub received the support of a section of the old Muslim League which he revived, and subsequently became its president. In East Pakistan an attempt was made by opposition groups not to revive the former political parties and to struggle for the restoration of full democracy under the leadership of the NDF. After the death of Suhrawardy in December 1963, the NDF was hopelessly divided and by the first quarter of 1964, all of the major political parties in East Pakistan had re-emerged.

None of the Hindu parties, however, was revived after the withdrawal of the ban on political parties. The reason for this is probably that except for Manoranjan Dhar, all other important Hindu leaders were either EBDOed, migrated to India,
or dead. Moreover, they thought that in the existing context, when east-west hostility had intensified, it was possible to work with secular Bengali parties like the Awami League, NAP, and NDF. This was particularly true of the younger generation of the Hindu leadership who had fewer emotional ties with the nationalist movement of the Indian National Congress of the pre-independence era.

Although the Hindus did not revive their political parties, they did not remain totally inactive. In late 1963, a dozen Hindu leaders met at the residence of D.N. Dutta at Comilla and held closed door discussions about the future course of action of the community. It was resolved in this meeting that a general conference of the minority would be held in Dacca in January 1964. D.N. Dutta was elected chairman of the proposed conference, while a reception committee with Trailakya Nath Chakravorty as chairman was formed. However, this conference could not be held owing to the outbreak of communal violence in Dacca and other places in January of that year. Later, in June, a 22-member Hindu delegation under the leadership of D.N. Dutta met the provincial governor and submitted a memorandum. The memorandum voiced the grievances of the minority community including the lack of security, meagre representation in the assemblies and in the superior civil services, and the absence of a secular constitution.36

In early January 1964 communal violence broke out in Dacca, Khulna, and some other places in the province over the issue of the missing sacred hair of Prophet Muhammad, kept in
the Hazratbal mosque in the Indian part of Kashmir. The 1964 riot was the most serious instance of communal strife since 1950. However, the difference between the 1950 and 1964 riots is that the attitude of Bengali Muslims was totally different this time. The riots broke out this time at the instigation of some of the leaders of Ayub's Convention Muslim League, and mainly participated in by non-Bengali Muslims. The casualities were not great because most Bengali Muslims actively resisted communal instigation. Leading political leaders including Maulana Bhasani, Sheikh Mujib, and Ataur Rahman Khan made public appeals for communal peace. Dacca University student leaders condemned the rioting incidents and alleged that they were instigated by interested elements in an attempt to divert people from the anti-Ayub democratic movement. The leading newspapers of Dacca also launched anti-riots propaganda, and seven editors of the popular Dacca newspapers in joint statements made repeated appeals for communal peace. An all-party committee representing different political parties, student organizations, and trade unions was formed. The committee made a statement entitled "East Bengal Stands Against Communal Riots." Thousands of copies of this statement were distributed, and the committee brought out peace processions in different cities in East Pakistan. As a result, the communal violence came to a halt immediately.

It has been observed that the fate of the Hindu minority was often determined by Indo-Pakistani relations. If the relations between the two countries deteriorated, the Hindu
minority would almost certainly suffer. When the Indo-Pakistani war broke out over Kashmir in September 1965, important leaders of the Hindu community including Trailakya Nath Chakravorty and Phani Mazumdar were arrested. Most of them were not released before the middle of 1966, though the hostility between the belligerents ceased after the 17-day war. The 1964 riot and the 1965 war caused another wave of Hindu migration to India. In these two years the number of refugees registered in West Bengal was far greater than all those of the preceding seven years.

The Leftist Movement and the Hindus

The communist movement in undivided Bengal had been dominated by Hindus, though initially the Communist Party was founded in 1920 by three Muslim communists, Muzaffar Ahmad, Abdur Razzak, and Abdul Hamim. The leadership of the Communist Party was largely drawn from the Bengali bhadralok. When Bengal was partitioned, more than 10,000 communists decided to stay on in Pakistan. The Communist Party was subjected to intensive repression by the Pakistan government when it adopted the Zhdanov line advocating a bloody socialist revolution in South Asia in the early years of independence. The party attempted to foment peasant revolt in some parts of East Pakistan, but was immediately suppressed by the Government. As a result, a large number of the party members were either imprisoned or went underground. The Communist Party suffered a great loss after the 1950 riots, when two-thirds of its members migrated to India. Even after this migration, the
vast majority of the remaining East Pakistan Communist Party (EPCP) members were Hindus.48

The EPCP was outlawed in 1954. After that, the party worked both underground and through open political parties like the Awami League, the Ganatantri Dal, and later the National Awami Party when it was formed in 1957.49 After the imposition of martial law, prominent communist leaders were either arrested or went underground with warrants of arrest hanging over their heads. Lala Sharadindu De, Amal Sen, Santosh Banerjee, Nani Bhattacherjee, Dhiren Das, Manmath De, Ratan Sen, Amulya Lahiry, Visnu Bhattacherjee and Ajoy Roy spent approximately eleven years in prison each and were only released in 1969 when the anti-Ayub mass upsurge forced him to release all political prisoners. More communist leaders were thrown behind prison bars with the outbreak of the 1965 war. Ranesh Das Gupta, Purnendu Dastidar, Jiten Ghosh, Mani Krishna Sen, Rabi Nyogi, Nagendra Nath Sarkar, Satyen Sen, Ranesh Maitra, Joytish Bose, and Shanti Sen were detained as security prisoners and were released in 1969.50 While the above-mentioned leaders were imprisoned, Mani Singh, Sukhendu Dastidar, Sudhanashu Bimal Dutta, Anil Mukherjee, Nalini Das, Gyan Chakravorty, Amar Sen, Sudhin Roy, Barin Dutta, and Khoka Roy escaped arrest, went underground, and carried on party activities.

The EPCP, until its split into pro-Moscow and pro-Peking groups in 1966, was led by Mani Singh.51 He was the secretary-general of the EPCP from 1951 until his arrest in late 1967.
When the EPCP underwent a split along the same lines as the international communist movement, Mani Singh and most of the senior Hindu communists formed the pro-Moscow group. Also among the cadres, the majority of the Hindus sided with the pro-Moscow group of Mani Singh. The breakaway pro-Peking EPCP (Marxist-Leninist) was formed with another Hindu communist, Sukhendu Dastidar, as its secretary-general. But the majority of the top leaders, as well as the cadres of this group, were Muslims from a comparatively younger age group with better education. The EPCP (ML) later underwent further splits and about a half dozen pro-Peking groups were active in East Pakistan in the late 60s. With the lone exception of the Siraj Sikdar group, all other factions had Hindus in their leadership. Like the EPCP, the communist-dominated NAP also underwent a split in 1967, and the pro-Moscow NAP showed a pattern of leadership similar to the pro-Moscow EPCP. It had a higher number of Hindus among the top leadership than the pro-Peking NAP led by Maulana Bhasani.

In the absence of electoral politics and with further intensification of anti-West Pakistan sentiments during the Ayub regime, radical politics had a great appeal for the younger generation of East Pakistan. During martial law, when all other political parties remained more or less inactive, the EPCP carried on its activities underground. It had been especially successful in recruiting a large number of students through its front organization, the East Pakistan Students Union (EPSU). The top leadership of the EPSU in the 60s now
provided the leadership of the different leftist political parties.\textsuperscript{55} The 1960 generation of Bengali students was more secular than its predecessor because it had not witnessed any bitter communal relations, and had become increasingly distrustful of traditional religious politics.\textsuperscript{56} This development made it easier for the old Hindu communist leadership to attract more support. While in the early years after partition, the overwhelming majority of the communist cadres were from the Hindu community, ninety per cent of the cadres of the different leftist parties were Muslims by 1970.\textsuperscript{57} Leftist students played a leading role in the 1968-1969 anti-Ayub mass upsurge and both groups of the EPSU were a dominating component of the Students Action Committee (SAC) which led the movement in East Pakistan. The 11-point demands of the SAC reflected radicalism of the leftists and the demands for autonomy by the Bengali nationalists.\textsuperscript{58} The Hindu leftists were also very prominent in the peasant organizations and in the trade union movement.\textsuperscript{59} Despite their poor start in the early 1950s, the communists had made a great advance by 1970.\textsuperscript{60}

The communist groups had not launched any revolutionary movement since the suppression of 1948-1950. The membership of the different communist groups were, in most cases, limited to the urban, educated class. The Hindu bhadralok dominated the Bengal Communist party since the 1930s. The Hindu involvement in the communist groups sprang more from an ideological motivation than from any conscious effort to safeguard the minority interest. However, some of them might have
thought that the Hindu survival in Pakistan could only be secured by establishing a socialist system.

The Nationalist Movement and the Hindus

In spite of the fact that the leftists emerged as a strong force, however, they failed to capture the leadership of the popular movement in East Pakistan. The East Pakistan political scene was overwhelmed by the rise of militant Bengali nationalism in the latter half of the Ayub regime. Ayub ruled Pakistan for a period of eleven years with the backing of a civil-military bureaucracy. Bengali representation in these two institutions was minimal. Ayub's rule had a dampening effect on the integrative process of Pakistan. Bengalis had no access to Ayub's "ruling class" which was exclusively drawn from the top echelons of the civil and military bureaucracy. Thus the sense of frustration and ineffectiveness among Bengali political leaders, precipitated during the Ayub era, added new militancy to Bengali political demands. Bengali resentment against the Pakistani national elite was further enhanced by the fact that the economic fortune of Pakistan was monopolized by a small group of industrialists from West Pakistan. Bengali alienation from the Pakistan political system was further exacerbated by repeated attacks on Bengali culture and language by the Ayub regime.

In the 1965 presidential election, the Bengali political leaders joined the Combined Opposition Parties (COP) to fight President Ayub. In spite of tremendous popular enthusiasm in East Pakistan, the COP candidate, Fatema Jinnah, was defeated.
This defeat convinced Sheikh Mujib, the champion of the rising Bengali nationalist movement, that Ayub could not be dislodged under the existing electoral system of Basic Democracy.

Having lost all hope of attaining political power through electoral processes, the Bengali political leaders were now thinking in terms of launching a mass movement against Ayub. Their determination was increased by the 1965 Indo-Pak war, for during the war, East Pakistan was totally cut off from other parts of the world, and Bengalis felt completely helpless. Sheikh Mujib missed no opportunity to exploit the situation. As Maniruzzaman notes, "Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—a political entrepreneur par excellence—thought that East Pakistan's sense of isolation could be manipulated to spark a nationalist explosion among the politically discontented and economically frustrated Bengalis." At a press conference, Sheikh Mujib declared that "The question of autonomy appears to be more important after the war. Time has come for making East Pakistan self-sufficient in all respects." At this opportune moment, Sheikh Mujib and his party, the Awami League, came out with a radical programme to consolidate the Bengali support for the rising nationalist movement.

In early 1966 Sheikh Mujib put forward his famous six-point programme, "the charter of survival." The six-point programme was a significant departure from the past autonomy demands of the Bengalis. Jahan notes: "Unlike previous Bengali demands, it did not call upon the central government to do more for East Pakistan, but asked the Central government to let East Pakistan do more for itself." The programme demanded
maximum autonomy for East Pakistan. It immediately sparked a political movement in East Pakistan. Complete support for the movement was shown in different mass meetings, student rallies, and street corner meetings. The climax of the movement reached on June 7, 1966 when a province-wide hartal (general strike) paralysed the whole life of East Pakistan, Ayub branded Sheikh Mujib as 'secessionist' and threatened to use the 'language of weapon'. Sheikh Mujib and his close associates were imprisoned and a so-called 'Agartala Conspiracy Case' was initiated against Sheikh Mujib and others for an alleged "conspiracy to bring about the secession of East Pakistan."

The six-point programme received total support from the Hindus. The primary reason for their support was that the Bengali nationalist movement was the antithesis of religious Pakistani nationalism. The Hindus always clamoured for a secular democratic constitution, and the Awami League promised that. The extreme rightist spokesman of Hindu nationalism in India, Organizer, commented that the new movement reflected "the triumph of cultural nationalism over religious nationalism." To some Hindus it was a faint ray of hope for a united Bengal, if not a united India. Moreover, they thought that their lives would be more secure in a more autonomous East Pakistan, because under the six-point programme the control of the traditionally anti-Hindu West Pakistani leaders over East Pakistan would be remote. Finally, the Awami League advocated more friendly relations with India, a prospect which won
enthusiastic Hindu support.

A mass upsurge in 1968-1969 swept over all parts of Pakistan, resulting in the collapse of the Ayub regime and the release of Sheikh Mujib and other political leaders. After the fall of Ayub, General Yahya Khan came to power and a second martial law was proclaimed in Pakistan. All political activities were again suspended for the period from March to December 1969. Yahya Khan promised a general election on the basis of universal adult franchise to be held in late 1970. Sheikh Mujib and the AL participated forcefully in the election, calling it a referendum on the six-point programme. Overwhelming popular support for the Awami League was manifested in the election results in East Pakistan. It won 167 seats out of 169 seats in East Pakistan. The West Pakistani leaders were not ready to concede the overwhelming victory of the Awami League. The first session of the newly elected assembly was scheduled for March 3, 1971, but it was postponed by Yahya with a view to pressuring the Awami League to come to terms with the West Pakistani leaders. The decision to postpone the assembly session sparked spontaneous mass protests all over East Pakistan. East Pakistan appeared to be on the verge of a total "mass revolution" and the machinery of the central government was completely paralysed. After a series of negotiations between Sheikh Mujib and Yahya which yielded no results, the latter decided to unleash a civil war in East Pakistan which ultimately led to the emergence of Bangladesh.

In the 1970 election, the Awami League received unqualified
support from the Hindus. The reasons for their support for the six-point programme have been discussed earlier. In early 1970, the East Pakistan Minority Conference resolved to work closely with the majority community.\textsuperscript{71} This obviously meant working unitedly with the Awami League, which by that time had emerged as the symbol of Bengali nationalist aspirations. Of the old Hindu politicians, Phani Mazumdar, Gour Chandra Bala, and A.K. Das joined the Awami League and fought the election on its ticket. Sheikh Mujib toured the densely Hindu populated areas with these Hindu leaders to win their support. However, only one Hindu was nominated for the national assembly elections, and eight for the provincial assembly elections by the Awami League.\textsuperscript{72} The reasons for this poor Hindu representation among the Awami League candidates are that there were not many Hindu politicians with national stature available, and also that the Hindus were late entrants to the Awami League organization. The extent of the Hindu support for the Awami League can be shown by the fact that none of the old Congressmen who decided to fight the election in the name of the Congress party in some heavily concentrated Hindu areas, were successful in getting elected.\textsuperscript{73}

The 1970 elections created high hopes among the Hindus. They were convinced that the Awami League victory would improve the conditions of the Hindu minority.\textsuperscript{74} Also, the Awami League slogans of Jai Bangla (Long Live Bengal), and Tomar Desh Amar Desh Bangladesh, Bangladesh (Your country My Country Bangladesh Bangladesh) easily attracted Hindu support. Only a few days
before his death in the middle of 1970, the former Hindu MLA Trailakya Nath Chakravorty made an extensive tour of India. He addressed many press conferences and receptions. He was also given a gala reception by a joint session of the Indian Parliament. Everywhere he made emphatic declarations that in the coming elections in East Pakistan, the progressive forces would win. "I would not like to die", he declared, "before the elections." In his address to the Indian Parliament he recounted the rise of secularism in East Pakistan. He expressed optimism that if the progressive forces won, the Hindu minority would not leave East Bengal anymore. He also predicted, with great accuracy, that, "Mujib will show miracle in the election."

In order to crush the nationalist movement, the Pakistan army started a campaign of genocide in Bangladesh on March 25, 1971. The Hindus in particular were targets of the army. In the first few days of the Pakistan army's operations, their targets were the student dormitories, Bengali police and East Pakistan Rifles headquarters, and the Hindu populated areas of Dacca. In other cities, too, Hindus became prime targets of the army crackdown. Prominent Hindu politicians, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, and teachers, whenever found, were killed by the army. During the entire period of the civil war, they were discriminated against by the Pakistan army. Their houses were burnt, property looted, women raped, and temples destroyed. Under such circumstances, they either had to cross the border and take shelter in India, or else had to flee
to the remotest villages where there were no army camps. Later, their lives in the villages were also made insecure when the Pakistan army recruited 100,000 Razakars, a Bengali collaborator militia force. These Razakars, along with the local Muslim League, Jamaat-i-Islami and Nezam-i-Islam workers, carried out indiscriminate killings and looting of villages where the Bengali guerrillas were active. During the nine-month liberation war period, nearly ten million refugees fled to India, out of which seven million were Hindus. The Pakistani army action against the Hindus was motivated by their attempt to create a rift among the Bengalis by inducing the poorer sections of the Muslims to engage in looting and other kinds of oppression of their Hindu neighbours. Moreover, the West Pakistani leaders were keen to see East Pakistan's population reduced to parity with West Pakistan so that the Bengalis could never again claim a majority over West Pakistan. If they could push ten million Hindus into India, that would achieve their nefarious goal.

During the war of liberation, Bengali Muslims and Hindus fought shoulder to shoulder, though the Hindus bore the major brunt of the Pakistani military oppression in terms of loss of property, life and physical dislocation. Information is not available as to the exact numbers of Hindus in the Bangladesh Mukti Bahini (Liberation Army). It is clear that the overwhelming majority of the guerrillas were Muslims, because the vast majority of them were recruited from school, college, and university students. Although the Bangladesh government
in exile did not include any Hindus in the cabinet, it agreed under diplomatic pressure from the Soviet Union\textsuperscript{82} to set up a Consultative Committee in September 1971 which included two Hindu political leaders.

During the Ayub and Yahya regimes, the Hindus suffered politically and economically. The Hindus, as a political force, were suppressed to the extent of virtual non-existence. The rule of martial law, the Basic Democracy system, and the totally undemocratic Ayub constitution pushed them out of the political arena. The biggest problem the community was facing was that of survival. This prompted the Hindu leaders not to get involved in politics. However, the rise of Bengali nationalism raised new hopes among the Hindus, and they readily gave it their full support. The liberation of Bangladesh in December 1971 with the help of the Indian army marked the end of a chapter of communal politics in East Bengal. The victory of the Bengali nationalist movement under the leadership of the Awami League, a secular party friendly in its attitude towards India, opened up newer possibilities for the Hindus in the new republic of Bangladesh. They could now hope that Bangladesh would frame a secular constitution, and they would be able to play a more effective role in the political process. They also thought that the emergence of Bangladesh would put an end to discrimination against them, and their loyalty to the country would no longer be questioned.
NOTES – Chapter IV


3. EBDO was promulgated by Ayub shortly after the coup under which a total of 78 prominent political leaders were disqualified from political participation for a period of eight years ending on December 31, 1966.

4. K.B. Sayeed, The Political System of Pakistan, p.94.


7. The Pakistan Observer (Dacca), March 26, April 5, and May 12, 1960.


9. Sayeed, op.cit., p.94.


12. Only a very few migrations between India and Pakistan took place with government approval. Generally people from each side of the border managed to cross the border secretly.


14. Myron Weiner conducted a survey in 1957-1958 of the changing patterns of leadership in West Bengal. He found that the majority of the Congress party leaders were born between 1900 and 1920. The Congress leadership of East Bengal also would reveal the same pattern, because the leadership of the Congress party in both Bengals came from the same stock. Moreover, the Hindu leadership in East Pakistan was relatively older because no new recruitment in leadership took place there after the partition. For West Bengal,
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see Myron Weiner, "Changing Patterns of Political leadership in West Bengal", in Political Change in South Asia (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyaya, 1963), pp.177-227.

15. The list is compiled from Lahiry, Pak-Bharater Rup Rekha, pp.362-372.


19. Huq, op.cit., p.165. The election to the local councils had always been under the joint electorate system. The Basic Democratic system did not change the electoral system in the local council elections. But the Hindu community, under the martial law regime, was suffering from a sense of insecurity, so their participation in the election was very limited.

20. For example in the year 1961 alone, US $621 million was provided for the rural works programme. Sobhan, op.cit., p.105.


23. Ibid., p.240.

24. For their background data, see Sobhan, op.cit., pp.77-89; and Jahan, op.cit., pp.120-121, tables VI, 2,3,4 and 5.

25. Sobhan, op.cit., pp.259-260. The Basic Democrats vigorously supported the Ayub regime until its collapse in early 1969, but they changed their political allegiance with the doom of the regime. They quickly joined the AL and formed its backbone in the rural areas.


27. Ibid., March 23, 1962.

28. For a discussion of the 1962 Constitution, see


32. The NDF was formed by Suhrawardy after his release from jail and the principal object of the Front was the restoration of parliamentary democracy and universal adult franchise. The Front was composed of the Awami League, NAP, KSP, and some other leaders of other groups. The formation of the NDF was declared by a joint statement by 54 leaders from the both wings of Pakistan. The signatories did not include any Hindus. *Ittefaq*, October 5, 1962.

3. The 1962 figure is taken from Huq, *op.cit.*, p. 165; and the 1965 figure is taken from *The 1965 Provincial Assembly Election Results* (Government of Pakistan Publications).


35. Another section of the Muslim League did not favour Ayub and revived the Pakistan Muslim League (Council). This group of the Muslim was led by Khwaja Nazimuddin, and it advocated parliamentary democracy.


42. Chakravorty, *op.cit.*, p. 100.


46. Franda, "Communism and Regional Politics in East Pakistan," in Political Development and Political Decay in West Bengal, p.231. By 1947 less than five per cent of the membership of the Communist Party in Bengal were Muslims. Also, Badruddin Umar, Purbo Banglar Bhasa Andalon O Tatkalin Rajniti, Vol.I, p.309.

47. Ibid., p.237.


49. For an account of the communist movement in East Bengal in post-partition period, see Talukder Maniruzzaman, "Radical Politics and the Emergence of Bangladesh", in Brass and Franda, op.cit., pp.-23-277; and Umar, op.cit., pp.287-352.

50. Ittefaq, February 23, 1969. During the Ayub regime the vast majority of political prisoners were communists and Hindus. Ahmedul Kabir, a NAP member of the provincial assembly, alleged that the authorities were showing a communal attitude because the vast majority of the political prisoners were Hindus, Sangbad (Dacca), June 27, 1966.

51. Maniruzzaman, op.cit., p.239.

52. Ibid., p.240.


54. Ibid., p.240.

55. The most prominent EPSU leaders of the early 60s are: Mohammad Farhad (present general-secretary of the pro-Moscow Communist Party of Bangladesh); Kazi Zafar Ahmad (former secretary-general of the Bangladesh NAP (Bhasani)
and present secretary-general of the United Peoples Party (UPP); Pankaj Bhattacherjee (present general-secretary of the NAP (Muzaffar); Rashed Khan Menon (Convenor, Bangladesh Chasi Samity and a top leader of the UPP); Begum Matia Chowdhury (organizing secretary of the NAP (Muzaffar)); Saifuddin Manik (a leading trade union leader); and Haider Akbar Khan Rano (another important trade union leader).

57. Maniruzzaman, op.cit., p.251.
58. For a discussion of the 11-point programme, see Maniruzzaman, op.cit., pp.259-260.
62. Ibid., p.60.
63. Maniruzzaman, op.cit., p.258.
64. Cited in Maniruzzaman, ibid.
68. Ibid., p.180.
70. Maniruzzaman, op.cit., p.261.
72. Ibid., December 20, 1970.
73. Ibid., December 12 and 20, 1970. Four Congressmen ran for national assembly seats, and six for provincial assembly
seats. The Congress Party at that time was almost non-existent. A few of the old Congress leaders decided to fight the election in the name of the party.


77. Ibid., p.296.


CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

By now it should be abundantly clear to the reader that the Hindu minority in Bangladesh represents a unique case. Rarely does one find examples in history where a previously dominant community suddenly becomes a minority due to new political arrangements. The Hindus were in a majority in undivided India, and when they were thrown into a minority position in East Bengal their dominance was reversed. Previously downtrodden Muslims seized economic and political power in the newly established Muslim homeland. As a result, we find a shifting pattern of minority behaviour in East Bengal during the period 1947-1971. This pattern can be described and explained as follows:

1. **Initial Chaos and Struggle for Constitutional Safeguards:**
The Hindu community in East Bengal was initially seized with bewilderment when India was partitioned along religious lines. The great shock of partition, accompanied by communal bloodshed, caused a chaotic reaction to the new political system of Pakistan. The entire Hindu community was on the verge of disintegration. One section of it immediately left the country, fearing great losses of status and opportunity in the predominantly Muslim homeland. The initial Hindu migration was limited to the well-to-do Hindu **bhadralok** with service or professional backgrounds, who had some foothold in India. But most Hindus in East Bengal did not have a footing in West Bengal and could
not begin a new life there. Despite their abhorrence, they had to accept the citizenship of Pakistan. Still others chose to remain in East Bengal to see the actual workings of the new political system, and then make their decision to stay or leave. This latter group was disillusioned by the 1950 riots and the operation of the new political machinery, and the exodus of Hindus accelerated greatly after the 1950 riots.

After partition, most of the prominent Hindu leaders left East Bengal in despair, having lost all hopes for effective political participation in Pakistan, where political power was being monopolized by a single Muslim communal party. The remainder of the Hindu leadership concentrated on articulating minority grievances and seeking constitutional safeguards for the community. Some of the Hindu leaders were deceived by the hope that partition was temporary and that Pakistan would eventually go back to India. During the first few years of Pakistan, the Hindu leadership concentrated all its attempts on the prevention of the passage of an Islamic constitution. Their demands for a secular-democratic constitution were mostly ignored by the ruling Muslim League.

Among the Hindu leaders, a section was pragmatic enough to sever the emotional ties with the Congress party, and form the Gana Samity. They realized the necessity of the redirection of Hindu politics towards fostering unity with the dominant community. In an attempt to ally with the Bengali Muslims, the Hindu leaders espoused Bengali causes in the central and provincial assemblies.
2. Maximization of Minority Position: While they could not play an effective role during the first few years of independence, the Hindus made a significant advance in maximizing their position after the defeat of the Muslim League in East Bengal in the 1954 elections. During the period 1954-1958, they shared political power with the majority community both at the centre and in East Bengal. As an important component of the coalition government, they took part in constitution-making. Their support was instrumental in determining the fate of the different coalition ministries. They were successful in getting their most important demand, the joint electorate, incorporated in the constitution. By this time, the Hindus realized the hard realities of Pakistan politics and were more moderate in their ideological demand for a purely secular constitution. They accepted the necessity of getting their other demands met by compromising on ideological issues.

The Hindu effectiveness dates back only to the defeat of the Muslim League in East Pakistan. The resulting lack of cohesion between the Muslims of East and West Pakistan, and later the split of the UF, made it possible for the Hindus to play an effective political role and get the joint electorate system incorporated in the Constitution. The more the Muslim political groups were divided, the more effective were the Hindus in the political process.

3. Retreat and Regrouping: After the imposition of martial law, the Hindu community completely retreated. Hindu advancement in
politics was ended with the collapse of the parliamentary system. The repressive, anti-Hindu and anti-Indian martial law regime forced the Hindus to retreat. Even when Ayub Khan installed a quasi-constitutional government, they did not stage a comeback in the political arena. Survival was the greatest problem facing the community, and the leaders opted for a timid existence of the community. The Hindus were always free to migrate to India. This very fact explains the lack of any serious effort on the part of the Hindu leaders to rebuild their political base, and their gradual retreat. Had there been no opportunity to migrate to India, they would have made serious attempts to re-emerge politically.

The rapid polarization in the East-West Pakistan relationship during the Ayub era opened up newer possibilities for the Hindus. The Muslim League and communal politics became totally discredited among the Bengali Muslims. Bengali nationalist Muslims were now fighting against the ruling West Pakistani Muslim elite. The Bengali nationalists were espousing the causes of secularism, unfettered democracy, provincial autonomy, and equal rights for all citizens—causes for which the Hindus had fought a long time. The schism between the Muslims of the two wings of Pakistan led to the regrouping of the Hindus with the Awami League. The Hindu regrouping was manifested in the 1970 elections and the Bangladesh liberation movement.

The uncompromising stand of the Hindus on the joint electorate system explains their attempt to integrate them-
selves politically with the majority community. They were aware of what the adoption of the joint electorate system would mean: they would not be able to win as many seats as they could under the separate electorate system. However, they thought that only through forging political unity with the dominant group could they live peacefully in a predominantly Muslim country. Hindu pride was also at the root of their demand. "The minorities of East Pakistan," wrote Trailakya Nath Chakravorty, "are not used to being considered minorities. They are the one who fought for the independence of the country." It was unthinkable for the Hindus to ask the Muslim community to safeguard the Hindu interest through special privileges. However, the joint electorate system ultimately worked against the Hindus as a political force. In the 1973 elections in Bangladesh, only 3.3 per cent of the total seats in parliament were won by Hindus, and they all belonged to the ruling Awami League.

It was hypothesized at the beginning of this study that when a previously dominant group is thrown into a minority situation, its leaders attempt to reconcile the community with the existing situation and attempt political readjustment involving compromises. The evidence, described during the course of this study, supports our hypothesis. The Hindu minority in East Bengal underwent stages of political readjustment and its leaders made compromises in their political stand. The corollary hypothesis was that the achievement of the goals of the minority is dependent on the attitude and internal
cohesion of the majority. It is now clear that the Hindus were successful in attaining their goals only as long as the Muslim political parties in East Pakistan were divided. The Hindu demand for a secular-democratic constitution was only achieved after the estrangement of the Muslim community in East and West Pakistan which ultimately resulted in the emergence of Bangladesh.

This thesis has shed new light on the understanding of the minority problem as well as on Laponce's assertions. His assertion that a minority by force wants an intercommunal party system is not supported by the pattern of minority politics until 1958. Despite the existence of the AL and other non-communal parties, the Hindu leadership preferred to retain the existence of their parties. The Hindus joined the AL only during the latter part of the Ayub regime with the rise of the nationalist movement, and with the decline of the Hindu community as a political force. This leads me to conclude that the minority preference for an intercommunal party is a function of different economic, social, and political factors. Also, Laponce's concept of assimilation needs further clarification. In the case of the Hindus of East Bengal, there was never any attempt to assimilate socially or religiously. However, it has been found in the present study that the Hindu community wished to integrate politically with the majority insofar as they fought for and won a joint electorate system. During the first few years, though they demanded a joint electorate, they did not join secular political parties dominated and led by the
Muslims. Later, however, during the Ayub regime they became even more integrated politically by joining the Awami League and other secular parties.

The Hindu minority in Bangladesh has been dwindling since the inception of Pakistan. During the course of the brief existence of united Pakistan, thousands of Hindus paid the price of partition with their lives and millions had to suffer unbearable social and economic dislocation and distress. The near-obliteration of the Hindus during the past 30 years does not seem likely to be reversed in a short period of time. It is hoped that the Hindu minority will become an integral part of Bangladesh society and politics in the next generation, when there will be fewer memories of communal politics, and when politics will be based more on ideological lines or programmes than on religious identity.
NOTES - Conclusions

1. Pravash Chandra Lahiry, India Partitioned and Minorities in Pakistan, pp.85-86; and Atulya Ghosh, Pakistan O Sampradaik Samasya (Pakistan and the Communal Problem) (Calcutta: Congress Bhawan, 1956).


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