



BANGABANDHU AND BANGLADESH

An Epic of a Nation's
Emergence and Emancipation



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Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) revisited the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's thoughts, ideas and vision through a series of seminars and webinars throughout his birth centenary. This book is a compilation of revised and edited versions of the papers presented at those events. It commemorates the transformational leadership of Bangabandhu which organized people against oppression and contributed to nation-building, state-building and national emancipation. In the international arena, Bangabandhu's leadership provided a milestone for the foreign policy of Bangladesh. His ideas and goals along with his political philosophy not only helped with the restoration of the state during the post-liberation period but also paved the way for the country's emergence. Bangabandhu's holistic approaches towards economic development and international relations built up synergies of cooperation based on mutual respect and the motto that says, "friendship towards all and malice towards none".

(Continued to the back flap)

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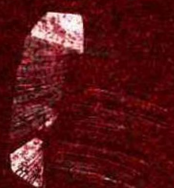
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In order to present those ideas in a more comprehensive manner for a larger audience, this book is divided into six chapters. Apart from the introductory and concluding chapters, the other chapters are national emancipation, leadership, foreign policy, nation building and development. Each of the chapters incorporates one or more papers from distinguished scholars who illustrated the contribution of the Father of the Nation in the gradual development of the country which went on to become Bangladesh. Bangabandhu's esteemed daughter Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina eloquently continued his legacy and maintained the prestigious status of Bangladesh in the global platform. This book collates and contextualizes the ideology, political vision and teachings of Bangabandhu throughout the past, present and future.

While remembering the visionary leadership of the Father of the Nation, the book will serve as reference material for scholars and notable literature for the future generations who are interested to work in the fields of International Relations, Political Science, Peace and Conflict, Economics and Development Studies.

Bangabandhu / Bangladesh / National Emancipation /
Foreign Policy / Leadership / Economics /
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An Epic of a Nation's Emergence
and Emancipation



*Mujib Year's Diplomacy
Friendship & Prosperity*



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Bangabandhu and Bangladesh

An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation

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Dedication

*To all who made supreme sacrifice
for emancipating Bangladesh*

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FOREWORD

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman occupies a unique position in the history of the twentieth century as the first leader to have successfully led the liberation movement in the post-colonial world. At the end of the Second World War, the European imperial rulers, faced with the rising challenges of nationalism, prudently withdrew from the colonies in the hope of safeguarding their interest after the end of formal empires. After 1946 decolonization followed fairly rapidly. The imperial powers hurriedly transferred to the dominant groups in societies that were heterogeneous and boundaries of the states had been arbitrarily and haphazardly drawn without any recognition of the conditions on the ground. People of different ethnic groups where some cases were lumped together in one state and in other cases the people of same ethno-linguistic groups were scattered over several states. Neither the opinion of the inhabitants nor geographical or economic considerations taken into account.

Of all the incongruities of decolonization, the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan were most bizarre. Pakistan was based on the premise that Hindus and Muslims could not live together, and that Muslims of the subcontinent were entitled to separate states on the basis of Jinnah's two-nations theory. The Bengalis constituted the significant majority in the new state but power was handed over to migrant Muslims from India and the minority inhabitants of West Pakistan. The demand and desire of the Bengalis for a sovereign-independent state was brushed aside on grounds

it would delay the transfer of power to which Mountbatten's egos were committed. The result was the creation of a so-called Muslim state composed of two wings, separated by a thousand miles of alien territory, and within in common between the people of the wings except a supposedly shared religion. The people of East Pakistan had their own language, culture and literature; ethnically they were different, as were differences in their diet, dress, and aesthetics. They seldom married each other; they could not communicate with the other in their native languages; and even the Islam as practiced by the people of the two wings were regarded as different.

Nevertheless, the boundaries bequeathed by the foreign rulers were considered sacrosanct with no scope given to the people of the territory to exercise their right to self-determination. The rulers of the new post-colonial state were all agreed, and it was sanctioned by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), that the boundaries could not be altered. The international community also respected the consensus; and it was also accepted as customary practice that what happened within the state boundaries—ethnic or religious discrimination, economic exploitation of one group by another, violation of human rights or even genocide—were internal affairs and no concern of the international community. Even the United Nations took shelter behind the fiction of “non-interference in internal affairs”. Humanitarian intervention was a concept of the future.

There was another powerful factor that operated in favour of the status quo. The post-war international system was dominated by the Cold War rivalry between the two super powers—the United States and the Soviet Union—and their allies. The system was based on a “zero-sum game”—any gain by one bloc was seen as the loss for others. Groups struggling against “internal imperialism” virtually had no recourse to external assistance. The incumbent governments could always seek the support of a countervailing superpower to ensure the status quo was not disrupted. The history of Afro-Asian state is replete with examples of exploited groups struggling for their rights and being ruthlessly suppressed by the governments in power. It was about this time that the Ibos in Nigeria, the Turkish Cypriot in Northern Cyprus and the Tamils in Sri Lanka had made huge sacrifices for establishing their rights but none had succeeded. In fact, until 1971 no group had succeeded in challenging the

authority of the state. Mujib was the first post-colonial leader who successfully led his people to independence by challenging a government that had the backing of two superpowers—China and the United States. In the annals of liberation Mujib occupies a unique position. He not only liberated Bangladesh but he also opened up the sluice gate for many other groups and communities who were aspiring for independence in the former Soviet Union, Eastern and Central Europe and in the Balkans and Baltic regions. Mujib's action also challenged the conscience of the international community and put human rights and genocide on the agenda of the United Nations.

The centenary celebrations of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has offered us, albeit rather belatedly, the opportunity to assess his contributions in both national and international context and recognize his achievements that have been long denied. It is a tragedy that the study of the life of the greatest Bengali of all time, and the father of the nation has been neglected for so long. Not only it was neglected but for over a quarter of century after his, and his family's, most gruesome assassination, the history has been distorted and deliberate attempts were made to impugn his image and his contribution to making who we are today. Every effort was made to obliterate his name from the annals of Bangladesh. It is our good fortune that we have been given a second chance not only to recognize his contributions to the making of the country but also, under the inspiring leadership of his daughter, Sheikh Hasina, a chance to complete his work and realize his dreams of *Sonar Bangla*. It is also an opportunity for us to reflect, to examine our conscience, to rededicate ourselves so that we too can contribute to the realization of his vision.

I am delighted that the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organized a seminar series on the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman focusing on his leadership and foreign policy. This book is an admirable result of that celebration that commemorates and puts in perspective the policies of the leader through rigorous research and scholarship. The book encompasses a wide range of issues—bringing the past, present and future altogether. The book highlights Bangabandhu's charismatic personality, idealistic influence and intellectual prowess. These characteristics of the great leader had shaped the spirit of autonomy and emancipation of this nation. Among the other

areas that the book has taken into account, are Bangabandhu's nationalist aspiration for freedom with his global yearning for peace and justice, his post-war reconstruction efforts as well as his empowerment of the women and oppressed people. Looking beyond the state-border, this book also illustrates his idea of regional cooperation and strategies in balancing divergent global powers.

In the golden jubilee of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu's dream of a *Sonar Bangla* can be fulfilled if the coming generations can continue Bangabandhu's footstep towards a more prosperous Bangladesh. Economic emancipation is undoubtedly a comprehensive and long-term process. If this book can generate a radiant knowledge base, encourage further discussion and have an appeal among the analysts inside the country and beyond, the effort will be well-justified and appreciated.

The book is an outstanding contribution to the growing literature on Bangabandhu and the readers will be all grateful to BISS and especially to Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari, ndc, psc, te for bringing together an outstanding group of scholars and practitioners to contribute to the volume and making possible its publication.

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