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MAD - 2020
HISTORY
Day - 37

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Question:

Bangladesh's birth owes more to Pakistani policy flaws, than India's intervention. Discuss.

Answer-

The birth of Bangladesh can be summarized as a result of the fire that burnt in East Pakistan as a result of the partisan nature of the state of Pakistan and the discrimination that East Pakistanis felt, to which Indian intervention acted as a catalyst resulting in the birth of Bangladesh. Some of the policies that led to disgruntlement amongst people of East Pakistan were,

- i. Urdu was declared as the federal language of Pakistan in 1948, despite Bengali being the language of people in East Pakistan.
- ii. East Pakistan was an important centre for jute exports, silk etc. and so economically prosperous, and needed more promotion. Instead, the revenue generated was used for West Pakistan, and there was disparity in fund allocation towards East Pakistan.
- iii. The West Pakistani political and economic elite had acquired a dominant position in Pakistan's army, bureaucracy, economy and polity resulting in discrimination against East Pakistan.
- iv. There was no political democracy, so there was no avenue for East Pakistan to remedy the situation.
- v. When East Pakistan developed a powerful movement for democracy, instead of listening to them, the ruling elite of Pakistan crushed the movement.
- vi. In the election of 1970, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman won 99% of the seats in East Pakistan, and on the basis of that commanded a majority in the Pakistan Parliament, but he wasn't allowed to form the government, and instead when Sheikh launched a civil disobedience movement to enforce the constitutional provision, a military crackdown was ordered and he was imprisoned and sent to an unknown location.

Now began a ruthless elimination of intellectuals and leaders of the movement in East Pakistan to rid them of any leadership.

Those who were successful in escaping to Calcutta, formed a Government of Bangladesh in exile, organized the Mukti Bahini and launched a fierce underground movement and guerrilla warfare. India, flooded with over a million refugees, gave sanctuary to the Bangladeshi government in exile; the Indian army gave military training on Indian soil and material aid in money and military equipment to the Mukti Bahini. It also provided food, shelter, clothing and medical aid to the refugees.

With brilliant strategic and tactical leadership by PM Indira Gandhi and as well as the military, Indian army, joined by the Mukti Bahini ran through East Bengal and reached Dacca within eleven days, and got the Pakistani army to surrender, leading to the birth of Bangladesh, which was immediately recognized by the Indian parliament.