

Introduction

Recovering a 'united' Pakistan

Writing in 2023, ~~the Cambridge eminent~~ historian Joya Chatterji noted that at independence in 1947 it was not 'clear where exactly East Bengal fitted into the emerging Pakistani national imaginary.'¹ This question has bogged down most assessments of ~~a~~ 'united' Pakistan between 1947 and 1971, ~~after which when~~ East Pakistan became Bangladesh ~~in~~after a bloody civil war. From the vantage point of 1971, the inclusion of East Bengal and Sylhet (a district of Assam ~~province~~) in a Pakistan ~~whose where~~ ~~the~~ other part, or 'wing' as it was called, was separated by over a thousand miles of enemy territory, ~~has always seemed to foretell the inevitable misplaced and disjointed, with the~~ death of a united Pakistan ~~almost foretold~~. This has led to a tendency of ~~only~~ highlighting the ~~elements—~~political, social and economic ~~elements,~~ which led to the ~~vivisection of the country's~~ ~~destruction,~~ while ignoring how ~~it the country~~ actually functioned ~~as one~~ for nearly a quarter of a century.

Similarly, ~~until very recently~~ in modern day Bangladesh, ~~and some other academic writing,~~ the period ~~between of~~ 1947 ~~and -~~ 1971 has been seen ~~solely as being a~~ preparatory time for 'national liberation' in 1971, sidelining all other issues and developments. For example, Bangladeshi scholar Badruddin Umar, writing ~~about on~~ the period 1947-58, even titled ~~s~~ his book *'The Emergence of Bangladesh,'* seeing the ~~history of a united~~ Pakistan ~~period in a completely teleological way through this~~ ~~singular lens~~.² Arguing for the inevitability of ~~civil war separation~~ he writes that many factors, ' *from the very beginning, decided the course of political developments which logically and inevitably led to the disintegration and partition of Pakistan.*'³ Similarly, Raunaq Jahan, writing ~~about the years between on the~~

¹ Joya Chatterji, *Shadows at Noon: The South Asian Twentieth Century* (London: Yale University Press, 2023), 112.

² Badruddin Umar, *The Emergence of Bangladesh: Class Struggles in East Pakistan, 1947-1958* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³ *Ibid.*, X.

~~period 1958 and 19-69, of Pakistan sees-examines the period it manifesting as~~ 'the gradual process of east-west disintegration in Pakistan that resulted in 1971 in the breakup of Pakistan.'⁴ This tendency has been so strong that Bangaldeshi scholar Taj Hashmi has even argued that the period ~~between 1920 and -1947~~ was a also a 'prelude to the history of the freedom struggle that eventually led to the creation of Bangladesh.'⁵

Even non-Bangladeshi scholars often see this period ~~in strongly teleological terms through such a prism~~. Thus, writing more recently, in 2011, Anatol Lieven also remarked that 'no freak of history like united Pakistan with its two ethnically and culturally very different wings separated by 1,000 miles of hostile India, could possibly have lasted for long.'⁶ The inescapability of the east-west Pakistan split has even entered the realm of fiction with author Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame* imagery of Pakistan as 'that fantastic bird of a place, two Wings without a body, sundered by the land-mass of its greatest foe, joined by nothing but God.'⁷

Yet, ~~neither was~~ Pakistan was not doomed from the start, ~~nor-and~~ Bangladesh inevitable. Many scholars, writing in the period before 1970, wrote about Pakistan's problems, but by no means ~~did they~~ pronounced the death knell of the new country. In those years, Pakistan was seen as dealing with problems that were common to many new states. Indeed, writing in 1957, American political scientist Keith Callard, who had long worked on Pakistan, remarked that despite its myriad ~~of~~ problems, 'Pakistanis are a people united by a common will to be a nation...' but, as ~~isn~~ common with many post-colonial states, '... they do not yet know what kind of nation they want to be.'⁸ If anything, it was India that was widely understood as being ~~more~~

⁴ Raunaq Jahan, *Pakistan: Failure in National Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), vii.

⁵ Taj ul-Islam Hashmi, *Pakistan as a Peasant Utopia: The Communalization of Class Politics in East Bengal, 1920-1947* (London: Routledge, 2019), Preface.

⁶ Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan: A Hard Country* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 10.

⁷ Salman Rushdie, *Shame* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1983), 186.

threatened by linguistic nationalism in the South and secessionism in Kashmir and the North-East.

The east v. west Pakistan binary also misses how even 'West' Pakistan was not a united monolith from the start, and unlike East Bengal, which was only renamed East Pakistan in 1955, was composed of three full provinces, one chief commissioner's province, one federal territory, a number of tribal areas, 'Azad' Kashmir, Gilgit Agency, and nine princely states. ~~E~~There even the accession of ~~the~~ nine princely states (and ~~even~~ some tribal areas) ~~there~~, even though they ~~all had~~~~were~~~~all~~ Muslim majorities, was not a given, ~~and in the case of a principality~~~~nd~~~~for a state~~ like Kalat, took nearly eight long months of negotiations.⁹ The consolidation of most territories in western Pakistan in 1955 under the 'one unit' ~~scheme~~ did not mean that the ~~new~~ West Pakistan spoke as one voice, but, as Maryam S. Khan's article shows, gave rise to several east-west conversations and alliances.

Recently, ~~only~~ Srinath Ragahvan has ~~has been the lone voice~~ strongly reject~~ing~~~~ed~~ the inevitability of the creation of Bangladesh. Writing about the emergence of the country, Raghavan contends that 'there was nothing inevitable about the emergence of an independent Bangladesh in 1971. Far from being a predestined event, the creation of Bangladesh was the product of conjuncture and contingency, choice and chance.'¹⁰ Any historically legitimate inquiry into this period would therefore need to abandon the teleological and crisis-dominated narratives that emerged after 1971 to explore instead the everydayness of Pakistan's efforts to fashion a postcolonial nation-state in no matter how violent or problematic a way. And the everydayness of this project was defined by the new state's

⁸ Keith Callard, *Pakistan: A Political Study* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1957), 7.

⁹ For details see, Yaqoob Khan Bangash, *A Princely Affair: Accession and Integration of the Princely States of Pakistan, 1947-55* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁰ Srinath Raghavan, *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 8.

imperial and Cold War inheritance as much as it was by a regional or domestic politics of nationalism and religion.

The sidelining of athe united Pakistan period in historical, as well as social and economic assessments, has led to an underassessment of the period 1947-71, preventing a fuller understanding of the dynamics of the time, by especially byonly allowing only a very jaundiced understanding of the development of the state, nation and society in Pakistan. Coupled with the fact that there are almost no academic linkages between Pakistan and Bangladesh, and that relations between the two countries are often more polarised than those between India and Pakistan, no serious attempt has also been made to bridge this historiographical abyss.

The Possibility of Different Imaginations

A re-assessment of the period 1947-71 in Pakistan throws open many ways in which the country can be imagined. For example, in the imperial imagination it was commonplace for a single polity to occupy different geographies. This was true not only of Western European empires in which centres and peripheries were defined by different and unequal laws, but even more so of North American ones which folded distinct and separated territories into a single nationality. This was true of the US, for example, which included Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico along with other territories while at the same time encouraging immigration to shape its citizenship.¹¹ Pakistan did not look so out of place in this context, where New World ideas of mobility, citizenship and loyalty rather than an Old World focus on the supposedly immemorial links of race and homeland defined both the nation and the state.¹² Such political forms included the constitutional identification of France and Algeria until 1962 and the United Arab Republic that brought together Egypt and Syria

¹¹ See, for example, Lanny Thompson, *Imperial Archipelago: Representation and Rule in the Insular Territories under U.S. Dominion after 1898* (Manoa: Hawaii University Press, 2010).

¹² See, for this, Faisal Devji, *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

between 1958 and 1961. Like the US, these were federal polities, and in Pakistan's case we can even see the Muslim League's earlier demands for a federated India translated into the relationship between its eastern and western wings.¹³

Furthermore, the Cold War context for Pakistan's founding has to do with its leaders' frequent invocations of the Soviet Union as a model not of federation so much as the ideology that was required for it. Despite being staunchly anti-communist, for example, Islamists routinely cited the USSR as a model in this respect. After the creation of Pakistan, it was argued that Islam would be a 'panacea' forte the ills of the modern world split between the capitalist tt and communist tt campsworlds. Even religious scholars like Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, who was a member of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, evoked this comparison when, during the discussion of fn the Objectives Resolution, he compared the 'Islamic' ideology of Pakistan with the 'secular' ideology of the USSR.¹⁴

Having already repudiated the Old World vision of an ethnic nationality in colonial times, which was seen as providing cover for Hindu majoritarianism, influential Muslim thinkers like Muhammad Iqbal, who would be hailed as one of Pakistan's founding fathers, saw Islam not as a set of beliefs or practices so much as an ideological vision of the world like communism. Iqbal, in his famous 1930 address to the annual session of the All India Muslim League at Allahabad, stated that Islam in India 'has furnished those basic emotions and loyalties which gradually unify scattered individuals and groups, and finally transform them into a well-defined people, possessing a moral consciousness of their own.'¹⁵ Thus, 'it is not an exaggeration to say that India is perhaps the only country in the world where

¹³ On Jinnah's ideas for a federal India, see, Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Chapter 5.

¹⁴ He had said: "It is evident that such a State which is founded on some principles, be it theocratic or secular (like the U.S.S.R.), can be run only by those who believe in those principles.' Constituent Assembly of Pakistan Debates, (Karachi: Superintendent of Printing, Government of Pakistan, 1949), Vol. v, No. 3, March 9, 1949, 45.

Islam, as a people-building force, has worked at its best.¹⁶ This 'people-building force,' i.e., ideology, was then what set the Muslims of India apart from others, giving them an identity far above and beyond the confines of mere race, language, and culture. Therefore, in a way, Pakistan was a result of a modern ideological force where, again in the words of Iqbal, 'Islam is itself Destiny and will not suffer a destiny.'¹⁷

Having been developed in the circumstances of Hindu-Muslim rivalry in colonial times, this idea came to define the relationship between East and West Pakistan after independence. For a federation made up of geographically separate and distinct units required not race, language, and ethnicity but rather ideology to unite it. No wonder, then, Sir Zafrullah Khan, soon to be the first foreign minister of Pakistan, suggested to Jinnah that if the residual India tried to use the name 'India,' Pakistan should be called either 'Muslim India,' to clarify its existence vis a vis 'Hindu' India. This was important, Zafrullah argued, because Pakistan 'connoted an ideal rather than any territory.'¹⁸ Thus, while scholarship on the Bangladesh War has attributed racist attitudes to the West Pakistani army and leadership, ~~therefore~~, it was the Bengalis who were seen by the latter as opposing a narrowly racial vision of nationality to the officially ideological one whose universality went well beyond the state itself.

If the joining together of East and West Pakistan did not look so unusual in the imperial and Cold War world, the political differences between its wings also drew upon older visions which in intellectually coherent ways counterposed race to ideology. It was a distinction which had originated in colonial India to define the Muslim League against the Indian National Congress but was soon repurposed to characterise the relations between Bengalis and the national government. In this sense, it is possible to say that Islam as an ideological foundation for Pakistan today is a

¹⁵ Latif Ahmed Sherwani, ed., *Speeches, Writings, and Statements of Iqbal* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1977), 4.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Zafrullah Khan to M.A. Jinnah, 7 July 1947, in Z.H. Zaidi, ed., *Jinnah Papers* (Islamabad: Ministry of Culture, 2003), First Series, Vol. III, No. 62.

remnant of the pre-1971 period. These ideas, of a racial or territorially contiguous nationality opposed to an ideological and territorially unfixed one, had emerged in colonial times largely to define Hindu-Muslim relations. But they were only put into political practice after independence, having now been identified with East and West Pakistani debates. ~~But~~ they also came to characterise all other forms of provincial or ethnic autonomy, with Bengal serving merely as the biggest and most important example of such Old World visions which had been criticised by Iqbal decades earlier.

In its first couple of decades, then, Pakistan did not look so unusual or exceptional as contemporary scholars think, though it predicated itself upon a different set of political ideas and genealogies than India. The relations between its two wings, moreover, also drew upon and reformulated older themes that had defined those between the League and Congress in colonial times. And it is this world of inheritances and connections that the articles in this special issue address.

(Re)Discovering Pakistan

Unusual in focusing on the period between 1947 and 1970, this special issue is also unprecedented in bringing together an equal number of scholars from Pakistan and Bangladesh working on a diverse set of topics about the everyday politics of a newly independent nation-state. The articles in this issue cover a wide range of topics which enable us to understand this early phase of Pakistan in a more nuanced manner, uncovering newer understandings of the country, ~~where~~ the nation state was being imagined, contested, performed and realised in a fashions not normally discussed in historiography. The articles ~~herein~~ come from a wide variety of disciplines—history, politics, law, anthropology, sociology, gender studies, and literature—reflecting not just different approaches but also the diverse ways in which the new nation state of Pakistan was being forged.

The first set of articles focuses on the the exigencies of nation building in Pakistan. Here Maryam Khan breaks new ground by

revisiting the relationship between the eastern and western wings of the country through the notion of 'symbiosis'— that they were connected and interdependent both in positive and negative ways. While noting the well-documented ruptures, she focuses on the the many alliances and bridges which emerged between the two wings in the united Pakistan period. Assessing the 1950s from the vantage point of the decade itself, she shows how an east-west alliance challenged the centralising forces of the federal government, and were indeed successful in many regards. Maryam S. Khan also brings back the focus ~~on~~ the 'politics' of the 1950s in Pakistan, ~~where~~ often the real and significant political contestations over the country's federal design get shrouded by the rising power of the military-bureaucratic nexus. Moreover, she points out that the engagement between the two wings in the 1950s stands in sharp contrast to the disengagement of the 1960s, which then led to the war that finally split the country in 1971. Hence, Maryam S. Khan's work calls into 'into question narratives of linear progression and historical inevitability by interrogating patterns and trajectories of power in a dynamic frame that takes account of the alternative possibilities of state-making and their limits.'¹⁹

Rohail Salman's article also investigates the same period, but through the medium of the language question, which for many scholars marks the beginning of the separatist movement in East Pakistan. Using primary sources, however, Salman upends the usual understanding of this debate between the status of Bengali and Urdu as being about the instantiation of West Pakistani hegemony over the East. Instead, he argues that it had more to do with statecraft and the attempt of 'a confused and undirected Pakistani state trying to implement its vision of the nation,' which led to a conflict that seems to have taken it by surprise.²⁰

¹⁹ Maryam S. Khan, "Patterns of Power in Constitutional Design: East-West Symbiosis in United Pakistan," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 2024, 21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2024.2429963>.

²⁰ Rohail Salman, "Language, Script and Enemies of the State: Bengali Language and Nation-Building in Pakistan, 1947-53," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 2024, 1, DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2024.2427509.

As discussed above, the new Pakistani state wanted to shed the old world connections of blood and soil, and wanted to forge its identity of a new and powerful 'Islamic' ideology. Hence, opposition naturally emerged to anything which hankered of the 'past' affiliations of ethnicity and language, hampering the already limited ability of the state to develop a new identity for its people.

Continuing with the question of nation and state building, Sadia Mahmood assesses how the Hindu population in East Bengal was viewed and 'dealt with' by the Pakistani state. While a great deal of the academic literature has investigated issues related to refugee movement and settlement in what was West Pakistan, and some works have looked into these matters from a Bangladeshi perspective, the pre-1971 state's own view of Hindu refugees in its eastern wing has not been examined in any detail. Utilising new sources from both the Pakistani and the now Bangladeshi archives, Sadia Mahmood challenges the usual understanding of the issues around Hindu refugees in East Pakistan as 'communal.' She argues that in its attempt to forge a new nation state based on the 'Islamic' ideology, the nascent state saw in the Hindu East Bengali not just as adherent of another religion, but another competing ideology, Communism. This conflation of the Hindu with the Communist, Mahmood argues, then became the primary lens with which the state encountered this increasingly beleaguered minority in the eastern wing of the country. This article, then, like Srinath Ragahavan's work^{ed} discussed earlier, also puts Pakistan's state building within the wider context of the Cold War, where anxieties over the communist ideology taking hold were a real threat and defined state policy for its own people.

Our second set of articles examines the different process of becoming 'Pakistani' in East Pakistan. Here four articles recover different ways in which women, rural populations, climate responsive architecture and the radio were forging a new Pakistani identity in the province with little or no indication of the looming creation of Bangladesh. These articles then serve as a major corrective to the historiography, where a focus on the

emergence of Bangladesh has largely blacked out these voices, interactions, and state and nation building interventions.

Here Mithila Mahfuz tackles the issue of nation building from the perspective of three East Pakistani women. Tracing the careers of three educationists-- Professor Beggzadi Nasir, Zobeda Khanum and Hamida Khanam, she shows how these women 'got involved in nation building by continuing the work of modernising Bengali Muslim women.' Mahfuz argues that 'At the birth of the development-oriented, Muslim identity-based nation-state of Pakistan, the need for producing ideal women for the nation found fresh significance,' highlighting that despite problems between east and west Pakistan ~~from~~ almost ~~from~~ inception, there were certainly some leaders who found in the new nation-state an opportunity to develop and modernise. While all three women did eventually throw in their lot with the East Pakistani freedom movement, Mahfuz reminds us that it was only 'the large-scale military crackdowns on Bengali nationalists and civilians in March 1971 that fully convinced our protagonists that reconciliation between the West Pakistani-dominated state and the Bengalis in East Pakistan was impossible.' ~~Until~~ ~~then~~ they diligently worked for the uplift of women as they had 'entered life in Pakistan with great hope,' and even collaborated with women in West Pakistan through the All--Pakistan Women's Association. Thus, for these very active and impactful women activists as late as 1969-70, the possibility of Pakistan still existed, ~~an aspect almost completely ignored in modern historiography.~~

Where Mithila Mahfuz's article showcases ~~se~~ how ~~ideas about~~ modernity and development ~~drew positively impacted~~ the women of East Pakistan ~~into national projects~~, Tareq Hasan's article moves ~~our~~ the gaze away from 'national elites' to the vast rural polity of East Bengal. ~~He~~ argues ~~ing~~ that the bureaucrat--heavy and foreign funded 'development state' initiatives in ~~the~~ rural areas did not significantly improve the lives of ~~the common~~ peasant ~~stry~~ in the province. Focusing on the life of several rural based programmes, like V-AID, the Rural Works Programme, the Comilla experiments, etc., Hasan argues that 'state intervention

accelerated the polarisation in the rural communities by benefiting the rich and also destabilised traditional patron-client relations of the poor of East Pakistan.' While, as Hasan shows, these initiatives did not achieve their desired results, the sheer implementation of these programmes exhibits how the new state was keen on 'modern' developmental programmes based on the cutting-edge research of the time, and attempted to break with the colonial ~~past in,~~ keeping ~~in line~~ with ~~its~~the focus on ~~its~~ modern 'ideology.'

More significantly, this article ~~points to show~~ ~~exhibits~~ ~~the~~ a high level of engagement, with mixed results, of ~~the~~ rural populations with ~~the~~ state, ~~exhibiting that during the time frame of the article there was no a teleological perspective in which the independence of Bangladesh was seen as being predictable in the immediate future.~~

Modernity was certainly a key theme for the new state of Pakistan, as Tanjina Khan and Iftekhar Ahmed argue in their article on architecture. Their ~~essay~~article explores the ways in which modern architecture, traditional forms, and issues of climate, led ~~to~~ the development of distinctive new architectural forms in East Pakistan. As Ahmed and Khan show, the ~~country's~~ newly achieved independence and the chance to ~~create a new national culture for it. make something 'new'~~ led the 'architects working in the region... to adapt the modernist style to the local context.' The government of Pakistan was also ready to take a lead as it aimed to develop something new and modern, situating its new style within Cold War politics as 'a liberating force for the developing Third World.' As a result, ~~the key~~ ~~modernist~~ ~~acclaimed~~ architect, Louis Kahn, was invited to plan buildings ~~for~~ the new capital city ~~of,~~ Islamabad (whose masterplan was designed by yet another international architect Constantinos Doxiadis); ~~in~~ West Pakistan. ~~I,~~ ~~with~~ the new parliament building in ~~older~~ Dhaka was to connect the east and west of the country through modernist architecture. Pakistan's 'Islamic' ideology did not lead it to adopt purely Islamic, or even Indo-Saracenic architecture, ~~with~~ ~~but~~ modernism ~~instead~~ becoming ~~game~~ its almost official architectural form.

Ahmed and Khan then show how the first architectural school established at the East Pakistan University of Engineering and Technology in 1962 ~~then~~ became a hub for a new generation ~~whiche~~ 'showed the path for local architects to start thinking regionally, considering the local climate and cultural spatial experiences.' They then discuss the emergence of climate responsive architecture (then known as tropical architecture) through a number of case studies illustrating how 'each architect worked in their signature style...[and] adapted the local vernacular and climatic context in their own way.' Ahmed and Khan thus empathically conclude: 'Even though modernism was differently adapted in East and West Pakistan, it gave a common language and approach,' highlighting one realm in which the new nation-state had indeed found its collective expression.

Rounding off this set of articles is Mahruba Mowtushi's contribution, which explores how wireless broadcasting, especially the radio, was seen as a crucially important means of connecting both wings of the country and forging modern ideas about the nation and identity across it. She notes that the first five year plan (1950-55) included a large-scale expansion of the wireless network in order to 'create an 'aural-oral' interactive linkage spanning the 1,000-mile distance between Pakistan's Eastern and Western regions.'²¹ This, she notes, 'gave new meaning to ideas about nation and nationality and generated discourses about nation-building.'²² Mowtushi then uses a dozen interviews of people who worked at Radio Pakistan, as well as primary sources in Bengali and Urdu, to highlight 'the role of radio transmission in Bangla and Urdu in bringing together a territorially discontinuous state and how Radio Pakistan reflected the ambitions and failures of integrating this state.'²³

Mowtushi also examines the language issue through the medium of Radio Pakistan and concludes that despite its often charged

²¹ Mahruba Mowtushi, 'Speak True to the People': ¹ Radio Pakistan and the Making and Unmaking of a National Soundscape,' *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 3. DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2024.2422215

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*, 6.

discussion elsewhere, 'Radio Pakistan did not pit Bangla against Urdu; rather, the two major stations, Dacca in the East and Karachi in the West, worked towards the coexistence of the two dominant languages on air by designing programmes that complemented one another.'²⁴ This is a significant success story of nation building through aural means, which has hitherto been ignored. Similar to ~~the~~ **Pakistan International Airlines, about which an article has been written recently** [you will need to footnote it], these to an extent non-traditional arms of the government played a major role in fostering a sense of nationhood, whose success was often forgotten in the aftermath of ~~the vivisection of the country in~~ 1971.²⁵ Thus, as Mowtushi contends, it is important to remember that 'up until at least 1971, the national soundscape was neither pre-dominantly Urdu nor Islamic and had room for other regional sounds, languages and sonic narratives to coexist on the air waves of the nation,' creating athis uniquely democratic space in an otherwise dictatorial ~~regime in~~ Pakistan.²⁶

Two literature-based papers then complete this special issue, bringing an interdisciplinary focus to understand issues of nation building, identity and societal change. Asif Iqbal reads Shawkat Ali's trilogy, *The Days of Summer Solstice*, as a time of 'entanglement' and 'dis-entanglement' between the two wings. HThis article focusses on issues like state-led development plans, anti-communist propaganda and women's empowerment, through the experiences of the characters, Hasan, Shezan and Rakhi, in the trilogy. Spanning the period 1965-69, encompassing both the high noon and the fall of the Ayub Khan regime, the life of the characters in theof ~~this~~ trilogy exhibits how the promise of Pakistan was real and did attract and engage the people of East Pakistan, but also shows how it began to

²⁴ Ibid., 23.

²⁵ On Pakistan International Airlines, see, Pippa Virdee, "Women and Pakistan International Airlines in Ayub Khan's Pakistan," *The International History Review*, Vol. 41.6, 2019, 1341-1366.

²⁶ Ibid.

unravel towards towards the end of the 1960s-decade. Iqbal makes a very significant contribution here by arguing that 'While most Bengali writers fail to do justice to the undercurrents existing outside of more immediate tension [there is something missing here or the syntax is wrong] between Bengali nationalist politics and Pakistan's military-bureaucratic regime, Shawkat Ali's *Dhakkhinayoner Din* gives a literary life to Pakistan's development discourse, radical Leftist politics, and women's education as a modernising imperative.'²⁷ By not adopting the singular narrative lens of Bangladesh's the inevitability of 1971, this article then highlights the everyday life of people in East Pakistan, which was more complex and provided many more interpretations and understandings of Pakistan than some current scholarship would lead us to believe.

Rakibul Hasan Khan then brings this story full circle by assessing the composition of Bengali poetry in the period leading up to and during the war of 1971 as a decolonial 'poetry of resistance.' Even though the time period of this article goes a little beyond the 1970 cut off point of our endeavour, its inclusion is critical because it enables us not to lose sight of how the Pakistan project actually unraveled. Just as like the previous papers in the special issue showed ed how the process of modern state and nation building in Pakistan was progressing ed, albeit with many problems in the twenty-four years of the united country, this final article demonstrates that from 1969 onwards its the many fissures in the state and society began to it tear apart decidedly. Using the discourse of 'cultural resistance,' Rakibul Hasan Khan showcases how these poems were 'pivotal for the armed resistance to overcome the internal colonisation by Pakistan.'

Through the various perspectives lens employed by its authors above, this special issue begins ais but the first word in-

²⁷ Asif Iqbal, 'The East Pakistan-West Pakistan Entanglement: Gender, Politics and Postcolonial Development in Shawkat Ali's *Dhakkhinayoner Din*,' *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 2024, 19, DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2024.2424073.

~~the~~ reassessment of the 'united' Pakistan period on its own merits. We also hope that it is the start of a more in-depth and meaningful interaction between the scholars (and people) of Pakistan and Bangladesh, so that many more joint projects are germinated. These initiatives, we then hope, will also enable an honest, open and healing engagement between ~~the~~ two countries ~~about the genocidal violence on the horrors~~ of 1971 and its aftermath.

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The project started with over a dozen scholars, equal in number from modern-day Pakistan and Bangladesh. But as ~~it~~ happens in such endeavours, a few withdrew due to various reasons, and two articles which did make it to the final workshop are still in the process of being finalised and will hopefully be published, either in this journal or elsewhere.

Finally, the guest editors would like to thank the editors of the journal, Professors Jason Cons and Ali Usman Qasmi for their staunch support in bringing out this special issue. We are also grateful to all the anonymous reviewers who sent their reports in a timely fashion and whose comments have made these articles

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