

The Enduring Significance of Bangladesh's War of Independence: An Analysis of Economic Costs and Consequences

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ABSTRACT

The Bangladesh War of Independence, in terms of its human and economic experience, lasted only nine months. Still, it forever changed the character, pace and prospects of economic life in Bangladesh. When it ended, the economy was left prostrate; fortunes had been swept away and much of the capital stock was destroyed or in disrepair. This paper provides a systematic accounting of all these direct and indirect costs, as well as their impact on post-war economic life. Even the most modest assumptions place the direct and indirect cost estimates at \$9.53 billion and \$14.08 billion respectively—far greater than the \$200 million claimed by the United Nations Relief Operations Survey. In short, the war was not a minor event either by absolute or relative measures. It was many folds greater than the magnitude of effort implied by the secessionist's first call to arms. The warring parties may have expected a large conflict; what they failed to anticipate was a cataclysm.

INTRODUCTION

The causation of Bangladesh's War of Independence (1971)¹ has been extensively discussed and debated. Many hypotheses and explanations have been proposed and still more are emerging today, making the causation of the war the most discussed question in the country's historiography. Hence there now exists a large inventory of interpretations building upon such diverse themes as sectionalism, regionalism, economic antagonism, political ineptitude etc., none winning substantial favour to the exclusion of others and fewer still, that can be completely discarded. While recent scholarship has been very active and

productive in assessing the political and military events surrounding the conflict, it is surprising that a dispassionate appraisal of the War's economic costs has not received its fair share of scholarly attention. In fact, no systematic computation of the War's immediate and long-term economic impact has been attempted to date. Existing studies on this topic are at best ad-hoc, focussing primarily on the war's human casualties and the value of destroyed physical capital. Some aggravate matters even further by not discounting or deflating².

This paper will attempt to bring some analytical order to the morass of empirical observations emanating out of existing approaches. We will argue that a systematic compilation of the War's total and distributive effects should include both the direct and indirect costs: the costs of destruction and expropriation of materials for military purposes, damages to physical infrastructure, the effect of commercial stoppages, the implicit manpower costs of conscription and fatalities, foregone consumption etc. Ideally, one should also assign causative weights to any structural change observed. This is probably impossible given the absence of detailed industry-wide and region-wide data in Bangladesh. Data limitations definitely prohibit the incorporation of all of these factors into a systematic appraisal of the conflict's total economic impact. Consequently, only relevant and available data were employed to enable students and scholars to premise their discussions on grounds that are not solely emotive. Their monetary values were deflated by price changes and the opportunity cost of capital to obtain the net cost. While not claiming to be exhaustive, this approach will hopefully provide new insights into some of the broader issues surrounding the War's economic impact, as well as stimulate further research and analysis of this important event in Bangladesh's economic and social history.

Our paper is organised into the following sections: Section II provides an estimate of the war's direct costs by adding up the value of destroyed physical and human capital. For the latter, we used a human capital approach to determine the forgone earnings of the war dead, as that would indicate the extent to which the gross national product had been affected by the casualties of war.

Section III discusses the drawbacks of this procedure and goes on to supplement the earlier findings with an estimate of the War's indirect cost on both the wartime population as well as on subsequent generations. This is done by first creating a hypothetical warless economy that presumably grows at the pre-war rate and exhibits a peace-time consumption stream that also grows correspondingly. The discounted difference between the hypothetical (no-War) consumption stream and actual post-war consumption, constitutes the indirect cost of the conflict. Finally, Section IV provides a summary and concluding assessment.

THE DIRECT COST OF THE WAR

Direct estimates of war costs generally include monetary expenditures on the war effort as well as the value of destroyed human and physical capital. War expenditure figures are however almost non-existent in the present context, reflecting the chaotic supply efforts of a cash-strapped, provisional government in exile³. With contributions coming from a variety of sources - sympathetic foreign governments, private aid agencies, expatriate Bangladeshis living in England and North America⁴ as well as private citizens still residing in the occupied territories - records could not be properly maintained and at times may have even been deliberately neglected. In addition, the fact that combatants were almost never paid or paid

infrequently in much depreciated currency, also accounts for incomplete data on war expenditures. Nevertheless it does appear possible to make reasonable estimates of the war's direct costs by calculating the value of destroyed human and physical capital only. The aforementioned omissions are not likely to substantially alter our net cost calculations, since the War was of nine months duration only and the combatants were primarily volunteer soldiers.

DESTRUCTION OF PHYSICAL CAPITAL

Physical capital destruction is measured as the difference between the pre-war (1970) value of physical capital and that at the end of the War (1973). Both the pre-war and post-war figures are taken from Easterly and Levine (1999) with appropriate adjustments to make the two figures comparable. This involved subtracting the discounted and deflated value of the stock of post-war physical capital from that existing on the eve of the war. Table 1 below quantifies the resulting loss of physical capital, using three alternative rates of discount.

Table 1. Physical Capital Destruction (Billions of US\$)

Discount rates	Post War Physical Capital Stock Discounted Figures ^a	1970 Capital Stock	Physical capital Destruction due to War	Destruction as a (%) of pre-war capital stock
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4) (3) - (2)	(5)
Bank rate 5.00% ^b	36.48	45.15	8.67	19.18
Money market rate 5.50% ^c	35.97	45.15	9.18	20.32
Defense saving certificate Rate 10.00%	31.73	45.15	13.41	29.72

Notes: a. The post-war capital stock is US \$42.24 billion. The discount rates are taken from IMF, 1997, Yearbook. The capital stock figures are found in Easterly and Levine (1999).

b. Deposit bank rate in Pakistan, 1970. In 1971, the discount rate in Bangladesh was also 5.00%.

c. Money market rate in Pakistan, 1970

Table 1 illustrates how extensive the material damage had been. Seldom has a short-lived conflict caused such disorganisation and change in a country's economic life or entailed such burdens and sacrifices as did Bangladesh's War of Independence. When it ended, the economy was left prostrate; fortunes had been swept away and much of the capital stock was destroyed or in disrepair. As shown above, even a modest 5 percent

discount rate places the value of destroyed physical capital at US\$ 8.67 billion (or approximately a fifth of the country's pre-war capital stock)⁵. The most visible form of damage was to transport facilities and it was several years before a fully functioning transport system could be said to have been restored. This posed a serious impediment to the country's economic recovery as it hindered the smooth flow of goods and services.

While not claiming that the estimates in Table 1 are exact and comprehensive, our paper does suggest certain standards that are necessary for calculating the same. It is likely that we may have erred, and if so, it is probably in the direction of underestimating the true capital loss. One factor biasing these estimates downwards is a lack of full accounting of the war's wanton destruction. Reports of travellers and war correspondents indicate that in remote border areas, entire villages, warehouses, mills, deserted dwellings (assumed to be homes of rebels) were systematically destroyed. Even in the war-free districts, property had been neglected and had depreciated in value. Absolute accuracy on a problem of this magnitude is nearly impossible, even though its quantification is important for comprehending the magnitude of economic reconstruction⁶.

HUMAN CAPITAL LOSS

The loss resulting from war fatalities constitutes the other component of our direct cost calculations. Exact casualty figures are not known and estimates range from 300,000 to as many as 1,247,000 (Rummel; 1997:331)⁷. The monetary loss attributable to these alternative casualty estimates is provided in Table 2 below. Since government records do not classify fatalities by age, gender, occupation or educational attainment, we decided to treat the fatality population as a homogeneous group. Per capita income of a specific year was assumed to represent the individual's earned income (in that particular year) had he or she survived the war. It was further assumed that each of the deceased would have a working life of 25 years. Based on these assumptions, the present value of the (deceased's) expected income stream may be expressed as:

$$G_i = \lim_{n_i \rightarrow 25} \int_0^{n_i} G_i \exp(-\rho_i t) dt$$

where

G_i is the expected average income of the i -individual who died in the conflict

ρ_i is the discount rate

n_i is the work horizon of the i -th individual

t is the working period

The cost of a single war death is thus computed as the present value of the foregone income which could have been earned by the deceased. The same when multiplied by the total number of war dead provides an approximation of the value of human capital destruction.

Our human capital estimates also considered the loss of earnings capacity of those maimed or wounded. Figures on combatants wounded in the conflict was obtained from the records of the Muktiyoddha Kalyan Trust (Freedom Fighters Welfare Trust). This

organisation provides financial assistance to the wounded combatants according to the extent of their disability and we used their figures in our cost calculations. In calculating the human capital cost in this category, we assumed that there was a total loss of earning capacity for those confined to wheelchairs; loss of 50 percent earnings potential for those with 20 to 60 percent disability; and finally, a loss of 70 percent earnings potential for the most disabled (60 to 90 percent disability). The drawback here is the exclusion of civilians who may have been disabled by the conflict. Since the Freedom Fighters Welfare Trust caters only to the needs of the former combatants, no reliable estimate of wounded civilians appears to be in existence⁸.

Table 2. Economic Costs of the Human Casualties of War At a Rate of Discount of (Billions of US\$)

	5%	10%
Wounded (All categories)	0.0011	0.006
War Dead ^a	0.857	0.4989
War Dead ^b	3.566	2.074

Notes: a. Economic costs counting the war dead at 300,000 b. Economic costs counting the war dead at 1,247,000

As Table 2 illustrates, the total human capital costs for Bangladesh can be variously estimated at \$0.86 billion or \$3.57 billion depending on the casualty figure considered and the discount rate used. In addition, Bangladesh made almost no net income during the war and the (greatly reduced) consumption it did achieve was drawn from its stock of capital. Even the most modest human capital cost figure of \$0.858 billion represent nearly 13.2 percent of the pre-war GDP and this suggests that the issue of the impact of war ought also to turn on matters relating to personal economic costs and the resulting social discomforts, rather than the destruction of physical capital only.

The chilling aspect of this human capital destruction is that the atrocities committed represent a classic combination of genocide and eliticide. Mascarenhas (1972:116-117) contends that the carnage had been carefully planned and the victims deliberately targeted:

Members of the Awami League (the secessionist political party) - all office bearers and volunteers even down to the lowest link in the chain of command.... students - college and university boys and some of the more militant girls.... Bengali intellectuals such as professors and teachers whenever damned by the army as "militant".

Mascarenhas thus shows a clear link between the victims and their social class. In short,

it was a carefully planned strategy that often targeted young males for the most annihilatory excesses⁹. Considering that the victims were mostly intellectuals and young college/university students, our use of per capita income figures as proxies for foregone earnings, appears to have been quite justified.

It ought to be pointed out that the calculations above do not include the cost of gender-selective atrocities, suffered by Bengali women almost all through the conflict. An exact count of rape victims is impossible to obtain in a country where female chastity and virginity are cardinal principles. Susan Brownmiller (1993:81) reports three different figures - 200,000, 300,000 or 400,000 - on rape victims. Any consensus is really unimportant here, since even the lowest estimate (200,000) would make the 1971 events in Bangladesh comparable to the infamous Japanese rapes in Nanjing and those committed by the Germans in Russia during World War II. Also it is difficult to quantify the consequent economic costs, mainly because the victims had survived the conflict and one is not certain how the trauma may have affected their lives in the aftermath.

Table 3. Total Direct Cost of the War(Billions of US\$)

	Estimate I ^a	Estimate II ^b
Destruction of physical capital	8.67	8.67
Total Human capital loss	0.858	3.566
Total Direct Cost	9.528	12.236

Notes: a. Estimate I assumes a discount rate of 5 percent and counts the war dead as 300,000.

b. Estimate II assumes a discount rate of 5 percent and the higher human casualty estimate of 1,247,000.

To summarise, Table 3 demonstrates how large and expensive the war eventually became. Yet a careful assessment of the immediate pre-war period and its politics, suggests that both parties had grossly underestimated the consequences of their actions. The West Pakistanis expected the confrontation to be no larger than any “police action”, devoted primarily to upholding federal laws and protecting government property; likewise the secessionists (Bangladeshis) expected the war to be very short-lived and as such, their least costly alternative. Evidently, the biggest surprise of the war was how large it eventually became.

INDIRECT COSTS OF THE WAR

The direct cost estimates above are obviously deficient as they can not fully account for all costs actually incurred. In this section we develop an alternative (indirect) method of cost estimation that compares the actual post-war economy with a hypothetical war-free economy. While various assumptions concerning this hypothetical economy’s rate of growth may be made, we simply assume that in the absence of war the economy would

have continued to expand at its pre-war rate. In the process, the (hypothetical) economy would experience a particular rate of growth in per capita consumption. The discounted difference between two consumption streams - the hypothetical minus the actual - constitutes our indirect estimate of the cost of war. The rationale for such an approach is that measured income may not decrease during wars. In fact it could even increase on account of the massive expenditures expended on the war effort. On the other hand, a contraction in consumption is inevitable in every instance and as such, we treat foregone consumption as a more appropriate indicator of war costs.

Table 4 shows that until 1992 hypothetical consumption remained in excess of the actual, implying that the war continued to exact an economic toll even two decades after the event. These indirect costs are an important indicator of losses accruing to all survivors from the disappearance of specific business and earnings opportunities. With indirect cost construed primarily as foregone consumption, anything and everything that affected earning ability have been implicitly accounted for. In other words, we were able to incorporate the sufferings of the entire surviving population - wounded combatants, maimed civilians, traumatised women etc. The direct cost estimates tend to be less comprehensive in their coverage.

Although we have based our indirect cost estimates on two different discount rates, we realise that a consideration of other discount rates might be useful. Table 4 clearly shows that even at a modest 5 percent discount rate, Bangladeshis on average consumed roughly \$500 million less, than had per capita consumption continued to grow at the pre-war rates. These losses that continued even two decades after the conflict's end, are sometimes attributed to a variety of other causes as well, the oft-cited one being frequent commercial stoppages due to the country's endemic political instability¹⁰. In addition, one should also recognise that the severance of all economic ties with Pakistan, faced Bangladesh with the monumental task of adjusting its economy to a new economic order. New markets had to be found for products previously exported to Pakistan; new sources of input supply had to be developed; also the vacuum created when the Pakistani owners of industrial and commercial enterprises fled or were dispossessed had to be filled. All or most of these factors must have contributed to a lowering of measured consumption, as they may have been pivotal in preventing the exploitation of scale economies in certain critical sectors.

Evidently our indirect cost estimates, depend on our assumptions concerning the rate at which the economy would have grown in the absence of the conflict. One can reasonably argue that Table 4 may have overestimated the actual magnitude of costs for two reasons:

- i. The actual consumption stream also embodies the effect of business fluctuations experienced by the post-war economy. Since these disturbances were not considered when constructing the hypothetical consumption column, the discrepancy between the two may in fact be less than that reported above. It is however difficult to ascertain the magnitude of this error, mainly because one does not know to what extent the business fluctuations were caused by external factors and to what degree by the war's wanton destruction.

**Table 4: The indirect Costs of the 1971 War: Foregone Consumption
(Millions of US\$)**

Year	Actual Consumption (C _{at}) ^a	Hypothetical Consumption(C _{ht}) ^b	PVDF ^c	Indirect Cost ^d	
				(5%) ^e	(10%) ^f
1972	4685.799834	5149.491691	0	463.6918577	463.6918577
1973	5795.454656	6368.954428	1	546.1902589	521.363429
1974	8642.252595	9497.462443	2	775.7005418	706.7849978
1975	13030.93141	14320.43096	3	1113.918198	968.8201003
1976	6764.275158	7433.646327	4	550.6933176	457.1895153
1977	6175.581832	6786.697781	5	478.8253368	379.4549236
1978	8737.356426	9601.977446	6	645.1935175	488.0560253
1979	9745.379651	10709.75144	7	685.3610296	494.8752153
1980	10893.7344	11971.74373	8	729.6391474	502.8993086
1981	12717.64163	13976.13902	9	811.2386404	533.725747
1982	10755.07555	11819.36364	10	653.3805645	410.3291314
1983	11117.47856	12217.62891	11	643.2351197	385.5959833
1984	12231.91932	13442.35118	12	674.0137499	385.6808922
1985	13100.81408	14397.229	13	687.5165117	375.5252239
1986	12442.42405	13673.68679	14	621.8713495	324.2299605
1987	14535.76244	15974.17529	15	691.9011747	344.3445999
1988	15297.85125	16811.67799	16	693.50147	329.4528043
1989	15023.15734	16509.80124	17	648.6178088	294.12457
1990	17345.76366	19062.2453	18	713.2335745	308.7243104
1991	16563.04742	18202.07395	19	648.6184533	267.9939344
1992	16304.41112	17917.84382	20	608.0858161	239.8264901
Total	241906.1124	265844.3724		14084.42744	9182.68902

Notes: a. The figure for actual consumption has been calculated using Summers and Heston (1998), The Penn World Tables 5.6 and Easterly and Yu (2000), The Global Development Network Growth Database, World Bank. We deflated the nominal consumption figures by the CPI (using 1968 as the base year) to obtain consumption in real terms.

b. In order to calculate the hypothetical consumption we first calculated the consumption growth rate (β) of the pre-war period. We considered 1965-69 as the prewar period. The basic assumption employed here is that in the absence of war, consumption would have increased at the same annual rate as during the 1965-69 period. Our calculations show that annually, the average rate of growth of consumption (between 1965 and 1969) was 0.09 Hence β is 0.09

c. Present value discount factor

d. Indirect cost has been calculated using the following formula,
$$\text{Indirect Cost} = \sum_{t=1972}^{1992} \frac{C_{ht} - C_{at}}{(1+i)^{(t-1972)}}$$

e. deposit bank rate in Pakistan, 1970

f. Rate on defense savings certificate-a popular form of private savings

ii. The loss estimate will be smaller than that reported above, if one argues that the hypothetical war-free economy would have grown at a rate considerably slower than assumed. After all the oil crises of 1974, 1977 and 1980 - all hit Bangladesh hard as she faced the staggering problem of financing her growing energy requirements. But while oil is an important commodity and OPEC had quadrupled its price, grain an even more vital commodity had quadrupled in price following the poor harvest of 1972-73. In the world market food prices were soaring: January 1974 Rotterdam prices for imported US hard wheat were over \$6 per bushel - \$3.30 above the level of the previous year (Schertz; 1966:524). This sharp increase in grain prices quickly eroded Bangladesh's own cash procurement for food, at a time when government food stocks were already below what could be considered normal. A serious food crisis began taking shape, one that gained runaway momentum when US aid commitments made in the Fall of 1973 were still not forthcoming.

All these factors created a food crisis of unmanageable proportions, now known as the autumn famine of 1973¹¹. In the face of these overwhelming difficulties on the food front, our hypothetical war-less economy could not have sustained its projected consumption trajectory. Future research on this topic might consider making adjustment for deviations from the trend values during those turbulent years.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING ASSESSMENT

The serious gaps in information coupled with the outpouring of passionate commentary and analysis, is perhaps why the topic of the economic costs of the Bangladesh war is fraught with controversy and conflicting and alternative interpretations. Even to date, the debate does not appear to be diminishing or approaching any consensus of interpretation. Furthermore, the discussion is sometimes tainted by personal biases - the views of authors who have been involved with this topic far too intensively (e.g., Jahan, Brownmiller, Rummel et al.) and far too long (e.g., Mascarhenas, Lifschultz, Parkinson et al.) - to be able to claim Jovian detachment. Setting these caveats aside, we have long felt the need to conduct a dispassionate, discipline-based investigation of three possibilities: (a) the war had no effect on the overall growth rate; (b) it had a retarding effect or (c) it had an accelerating one. Alternatively, one could argue that the war could have accelerated some sectors, retarded others and had no effect on others; thus on net, the impact on trend rates of growth was neutral. This paper reached the following conclusions in its quest for answers to these and similar questions:

iii. The hostilities broke out because both sides viewed recourse to war as their least costly alternative. Why the war became so large - much larger than any police action upholding federal laws; several folds greater than the magnitude of effort implied by the secessionist's first call to arms - is a challenge for future scholarship. Our feeling is that both parties had made objective, reasonable predictions about their prospects in the war before resorting to it but that an unusual turn of events had

invalidated their expectations.

- ii. The direct cost statistic captures all war costs except those that may be attributed to political instability, unrecorded seizures and confiscations etc. The indirect estimate on the other hand, captures all costs since it measures total foregone consumption of the entire surviving population. Intuitively one would expect the indirect estimate figure to outweigh the direct cost figure so that the difference between the two, can be considered as the cost that was not included in the direct estimate. Our findings also show, that Bangladesh incurred \$9.53 billion in direct costs and \$14.08 billion in indirect costs (assuming a 5 percent discount rate and counting the war dead at 300,000). Counting the war dead at 1,247,000 the direct cost estimate increases to \$12.24 billion. It is clear that in either instance the indirect cost estimate is greater than the direct measure. This is as expected because the direct cost statistic is more narrowly defined and excludes other war costs such as those arising from political instability, commercial disruption etc. The indirect cost estimate, on the other hand, captures all possible costs and benefits, since it is a measure of the total consumption foregone on account of the war. Hence, foregone consumption, not income, is the more appropriate measure of the cost of a war. Even though measured income may not decrease during a war (it may even increase due to increased military expenditures), consumption could fall dramatically. As such the cost of a war may be positive even though income remains constant. Furthermore, all physical capital, destroyed or created by the war, is accounted for in our indirect measure in terms of the consumption that it inhibits or eventually generates.
- iii. Finally, the indirect cost estimate of \$14.08 billion confirms our earlier assertion that in actuality, war costs were far greater than the \$200 million claimed by the United Nation's Relief Operation Survey (cited in Faaland and Parkinson; 1976:12). The Bangladesh government's own statistics are similarly suspect as different figures have been reported at various times. A 1972 circular from the Ministry of Information placed the destruction of physical capital figure at approximately \$1.6 billion. The Ministry absolves itself of any responsibility for calculating the other costs by arguing that "the loss of life, destruction of homes, grief and agony cannot be calculated in terms of monetary value."

Critics may question our findings on the following grounds: the paper's inability to assess the war's true impact on trend rates of growth because of business contractions during the immediate pre and post-war years; and finally, a failure to highlight the variability in rates of output for key industries and commodities, reflecting important structural changes in the post-war economy. Some historians might even question our use of quantitative data to document structural changes. In their view, qualitative changes in the country's post-war political and social institutions¹² may well have been the most important results of the war, and a quantitative analysis such as ours can not suffice to illuminate what are essentially verbal, historical generalisations. While these arguments are not without merit, a counter-argument would be that the focus could be on several other issues as well, - e.g., a shift in the locus of national political power, already underway before the war; or, the desperate

struggle between two competing economic ideologies in the war's aftermath, each aspiring to underwrite its own economic and social agenda.

Today, in Bangladesh, we are witnessing the slow death of the state-dominated economic system put in place at the war's end. The transition to market orientation that is still underway is irreversibly altering the relationship between the people and their political, social and economic institutions. Consequently, the most visible structural changes in Bangladesh today are perhaps the growth of business enterprise and the growing conversion of mercantile capitalism into industrial capitalism. The pace however has been painfully slow, falling short of complete fulfillment because the rising industrial-capitalist class is not in possession of the instrumentalities of political power. Future research on this topic may want to revisit these issues, to illuminate the full impact of changes in the basic political and social institutions as a result of the war. Our own plan is to conduct a broader follow-up investigation that will examine the War's impact on Pakistan's economy as well. Specifically, we will examine if Bangladesh would have gained from an alternative (peaceful) solution such as compensated emancipation or even unilateral (non-compensated) emancipation. Apriori, it is our belief that Pakistan also would have fared better by accepting compensated emancipation.

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ENDNOTES

¹. When the British abandoned India in 1947, Bangladesh became the eastern province of Pakistan - i.e., East Pakistan. But the union with West Pakistan was an unhappy one both politically and economically. The frustration grew mainly from their lack of sharing in the economic fruits of independence and modernization. Ironically, the eventual disintegration of Pakistan came in the aftermath of the country's first ever democratic election in 1970. The Awami League won an overwhelming victory in East Pakistan, while the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) won a majority of the seats in West Pakistan. The elections thus resulted in the creation of two regionally dominant parties, each bent upon wielding power at the national level. The Awami League asserted its right to govern on the basis of its predominance under majoritarian rule; the PPP based its claim on the need for broader regional representation to assure governmental legitimacy. Each threatened to make

governance difficult if its claims to government were not honoured. In the political negotiations that followed, the country's caretaker military government initially appeared committed to searching for a negotiated settlement of the dispute. Also such a prospect appeared quite promising during the early weeks of negotiations. However, on February 22, 1971 the generals in West Pakistan took a decision to crush the Awami League and its supporters. The military crackdown was finally launched on March 25, 1971 transforming a secessionist political conflict into an all-out civil war. After raging for nine months, the conflict came to a speedy resolution when India decided to intervene. On December 3, 1971, India seeking to return the millions of Bengali refugees, launched a full-scale military invasion. The Pakistani defenses, demoralized by months of guerrilla warfare, quickly collapsed. Finally, on December 16, 1971, the Pakistani Commander agreed to an unconditional surrender and Bangladesh was born.

². Many have relied on a bewildering variety of sources for war damage estimates. Mascarenhas (1986: 21) refers to an enormous chart in the office of Dr. Viktor Umbricht, head of UNROD (UN Relief Operations in Dhaka) as a 'ready reckoner for the war damage'. UNROD estimated that at least 1.5 million houses had to be rebuilt; \$78 million was needed for food and housing in the spring of 1972; \$80 million for additional food imports; \$15 million for railway repairs; \$13 million for inland water transport; \$200 million for industrial and agricultural equipment, inputs, etc. What gave the UNROD estimates their credibility, was the fact that UNROD was widely hailed as the greatest single international outpouring of money, food, equipment and technical assistance known to date.

³. The provisional government's immediate concern was to provide for the millions of refugees (10 million according to the Asian Recorder, 17(38),p.1030) who had poured into India. The financial burden of refugee relief was estimated by the World Bank at about \$700 million in the fiscal year 1971-72 alone (World Bank Report, 17(41), p.10400

⁴. In addition to touching individual acts of generosity, one also remembers the 'Concert for Bangladesh' organized by Ravi Shankar, George Harrison and others in New York in 1971. In later years, this served as a model for Band Aid and Live Aid Relief for famine stricken Africa

⁵. Faaland and Parkinson (1976; 12) quote a United Nations Relief Operation document that estimated the war's material damages at US\$ 1200 million. This figure is highly suspect since they never explain how this figure was actually calculated. Interestingly, total UN assistance to Bangladesh had reached \$1200 million by the end of 1972; at around the same time, the United Nations Relief Operations in Dhaka came out with its "Survey of Damages and Repairs" placing war damages at \$1,200 million as well. The primary objective here might have been to demonstrate, that the United Nations assistance programs had fully made good wartime damages within a short span of just two years.

⁶. One could argue that even if these losses were accounted for, they would not substantially alter the figures in Table I. This is because the agricultural capital equipment damaged was mostly of the rudimentary type; the rural homes destroyed were mostly bamboo huts which in any case require frequent repair.

⁷. Rummel also cites others who place the casualty estimates at between 1 million to 3 million. In our own cost calculations we did not consider the brutal reprisal killings following the achievement of independence. Perhaps 150,000 people were murdered by the vengeful victors (Rummel;1991:p.334). This included non-Bengalis as well as “Bengali men...those who were coerced or bribed to collaborate with the Pakistanis...” (Jahan;p.298).

⁸. Civilians maimed or wounded in the conflict are accounted for in our indirect estimates provided in Section III.

⁹. Rummel describes a gendricidal ritual reminiscent of Nazi practices toward Jewish males. “In what became province-wide acts of genocide, Hindus were sought out and killed on the spot....soldiers would check males for the obligated circumcision among Moslems. If circumcised, they might live; if not, sure death”.

¹⁰. Political instability and turmoil became chronic following the assassination of President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a short three years after Bangladesh achieved political independence. General Zia eventually assumed power following a brief chaotic power struggle. While on the surface he appeared to have restored much needed political stability, in reality he was the target of twenty mutinies and coup attempts in five years. The 21st killed him. (Mascarhenas; 1986: v).

¹¹. Choudhry (1985) has suggested that the Bangladesh famine resulted from the US refusal to ship committed aid throughout the period 1973-74. It is true that alternating floods and drought presented the occasion for the famine. But floods and drought are permanent features of the climatic condition in Bangladesh. They occur at oft repeated intervals and the result is usually dislocation, higher food prices and increased malnutrition • not widespread famines.

¹². Post-war political and social institutions have been in a state of flux, undergoing marked temporal swings brought on by ideological conflicts. To elaborate: when the country first emerged in 1971, it symbolized the attainment of political sovereignty on the basis of Bengali language and culture. Parliamentary democracy, secularism and socialism were proclaimed as the foundations of the country•s political system. The same were pushed to the background when Bangladesh was declared an Islamic state on June 8, 1988. Many argue that this oscillation between ethnicity and religion is actually based on political expediency and in turn affects Bangladesh•s relations with her most important neighbor, India.

