

Language as a Discourse of Legitimate Power: Bengali-Muslim Political and Cultural Consciousness and the Idea of East Pakistan 1911-1952

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The European Conference on the Social Sciences 2015
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract:

Every state must legitimize itself with a discourse of legitimate power. The state of Pakistan was originally imagined as a homeland for the Muslims of India. Religion, thus, served as the discourse of legitimacy for this state. However, its Bengali speaking eastern wing – East Pakistan – soon grew restive as Urdu was declared the sole official language of the state. The discontented East Pakistanis were never completely reconciled to West Pakistan. They eventually seceded in 1971 and thus was born the sovereign state of Bangladesh.

I seek to argue in my paper that the dissolution of bicephalous Pakistan was inevitable. This because, the Bengali-Muslim political elite had already crafted a discourse of legitimate power – one which combined religion *and* language – in 1947. East Pakistan had been imagined as a *sovereign* entity where the Bengali language and the cultural complex surrounding it will be supreme, albeit in an Islamicate framework. It came to take shape as a hitherto dominant Persianised elite yielded ground to a new Bengali-Muslim politician. Fazlul Haq, a typical representative of this new political leadership, stood up against the Muslim League high command and, probably, sought to build a movement for a sovereign *Bangistan* as early as 1942.

My objective is to study the evolution of the Bengali-Muslim political and cultural consciousness over a four decade period – from the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911 till the beginning of the language movement in East Pakistan in 1952. I will begin by attempting to understand the cultural aspirations that the state of East Pakistan represented in the eyes of the Bengali-Muslim political class and intelligentsia immediately prior to and after partition. They were, as we will go on to see, staunchly unwilling to compromise on the paramountcy of Bangla in East Pakistan. As they saw it, Bangla was necessary if the Bengali-Muslim society was to realize its full potential. Moreover, in their understanding, the Lahore Resolution entitled every unit of Pakistan to autonomously choose its official language. So, East Pakistan had every right to make Bangla the language of law courts and education. Bangla was also necessary if Islamic sentiments were to be transmitted to the masses. The East Pakistanis, however, were soon left very disgruntled as their aspirations ran into a dead wall of apathy. The Urdu speaking Punjabi elite which came to dominate Pakistan refused to yield to them.

The outbreak of discontent in East Pakistan immediately after partition, I seek to argue, was because the original vision of East Pakistan had not been realized in 1947. From the very beginning, East Pakistan had been imagined as a *sovereign* entity where the Bangla language and the cultural complex surrounding it will be supreme, albeit in an Islamicate framework. The second part of my research, thus, will be a study of Bengali-Muslim politics from the 1910s till the 1940s and the various articulations of this very specific imagining of East Pakistan. It came to take shape as the Persianised *ashraf*, the class that had traditionally dominated institutional politics in Bengal, yielded ground to a new Bengali-Muslim politician who was very rooted in the Bengali cultural milieu. Fazlul Haq, a typical representative of this new political leadership, stood up against the Muslim League high command and, probably, sought to build a movement for a sovereign *Bangistan* as early as 1942. Again, in 1943, Haq stressed the need to “modify the Pakistan idea so as to enable the Muslims of Bengal also to assert their self-determination along with the Muslims of other provinces.”¹ Around the same time, we also see the Bengali-Muslim intelligentsia organising in bodies such as the *Purba-Pakistan Renaissance Society* and *Purba-Pakistan Sahitya Sangsad* in order to lend more cogency to the vision of East Pakistan with a definite literary and cultural programme. In 1944, we see the Bengal Provincial Muslim League broaching the idea of the *Confederacy of East Pakistan and Adibasistan*. This proposed sovereign entity was to include the provinces of Bengal and Assam and the tribal districts of south Bihar which today form the state of Jharkhand. Along with Premier Suhrawardy and the younger members of the Bengal Provincial Muslim League, the chief architect of the CEPA plan was Abul Hashim. A close associate of Suhrawardy, Hashim never made any attempt to hide his Bengali nationalism. In the Lahore Resolution, thus, he saw his “complete independence as a Muslim and a Bengali.”² In April 1947, when partition was but months away, Suhrawardy, along with Sarat Bose, gave the call for a United and Sovereign Bengal. Partition of Bengal was not a viable option because, Suhrawardy said to the *Star of India* on 7 May 1947, “Bengalees are one race and have one language.” Further, a United Independent Bengal, Hashim said to the *Star of India* on 5 June 1947 was in perfect order with the

¹ See Amalendu Dey, *Islam in Modern India*, Maya Prakashan, Calcutta, 1982, p.172.

² See Harun-or-Rashid, *The Foreshadowing of Bangladesh: Bengal Muslim League Muslim Politics. 1936-1947*, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1987, p.190.

Lahore Resolution as it “never contemplated the creation of an Akhand Muslim state.”³

What lent the Pakistan idea in Bengal its specificity? The third and final of my research objectives is to seek an answer to this question by studying a definite trend among the Bengali-Muslim litterateurs and intelligentsia. From the 1920s till the partition of Bengal in 1947, they articulated and also shaped a cultural discourse which reconciled the Bengali and Muslim halves of the Bengali-Muslim identity. They frequently resorted to rationalist critiques of religion and also urged their co-religionists to lay claim upon the Bangla language and create in it a literature which genuinely articulates their identity and aspirations as Muslims. The politics which sought to make of Bengal a sovereign entity, we suggest, would not have been possible without this intellectual and cultural discourse being in operation. In the following pages I briefly lay out the schema of this proposed research project along with some preliminary findings.

East Pakistan: The Contrarian Newborn

The partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947 bequeathed the territories of the British Indian Empire upon the two successor states of India and Pakistan. The predominantly Muslim north-western and eastern flanks of the subcontinent now came to be delimited as West Pakistan and East Pakistan. However, it was soon apparent that, religious affinity notwithstanding, the relationship between the two far flung bits of Pakistan will be uneasy at best. The spanner in the works, keeping the post-partition Pakistani national project from progressing smoothly, was language. Or, rather, the passionate attachment the East Pakistanis felt for their language – Bangla.

As a matter of fact, there were auguries of trouble even before East and West Pakistan came to grace the map of the world. After the Mountbatten plan was unveiled in June 1947, certain left leaning workers of the Bengal chapter of the Muslim League formed a small organisation called the *Gana Ājādi League* (গন আজাদি লীগ) in Dhaka in July.⁴ From its very inception, the organization took a very unequivocal stand on what should be the status of Bangla in the soon to be formed East Pakistan. It declared:

Bangla is our mother tongue. Every arrangement should be made to make this language suitably useful for the country. Bangla must be the national language of East Pakistan.

[বাংলা আমাদের মাতৃভাষা । এই ভাষাকে দেশের যথোপযোগী করবার জন্য সর্বপ্রকার ব্যবস্থা করিতে হইবে । বাংলা হইবে পূর্ব-পাকিস্তানের রাষ্ট্রভাষা ।]⁵

The protagonists of Urdu, on the other hand, were convinced that it must be the sole official language of Pakistan. In July 1947, Dr. Ziauddin Ahmed, the Vice Chancellor of the Aligarh Muslim University, argued that Urdu ought to be the national language of Pakistan as Hindi is of India. Apparently in agreement with it, no one in the Muslim League opposed the idea. However, Dr. Mohammad Shahidullah⁶ critiqued it scathingly in an essay entitled *Pākistāner Rāstrabhāṣā Samasyā*

³ Ibid., p.299.

⁴ See Badruddin Umar, *Purba Bānglār Bhāṣā Āndolan o Tatkālin Rājniti, Pratham Khanda* [পূর্ব বাংলার ভাষা আন্দোলন ও তৎকালীন রাজনীতি (প্রথম খন্ড)], Anandadhara Prakashan, Calcutta, 1970, p.1. All translations, unless specified, are mine.

⁵ Ibid., p.3.

⁶ (1885-1969), noted Bengali writer, educationist and linguist.

(পাকিস্তানের রাষ্ট্রভাষা সমস্যা). It was published in a daily called the *Ājād* (আজাদ). Shahidullah wrote:

If, in emulation of the Hindi decided upon by the Congress, Urdu comes to be regarded the sole national language of East Pakistan, it will be a retreat...The only logic cited against English is that it is not the language of the natives of any province of the Pakistan dominion. But the same logic applies against Urdu. The mother tongues of the natives of the various regions of the Pakistan dominion are Pushtu, Baluchi, Punjabi, Sindhi and Bangla, but Urdu is not in use as the mother tongue of any region of Pakistan. If English is abandoned as a foreign language, then there is no rationale against not accepting Bangla as the national language of Pakistan. If some other language is to be adopted in place of Bangla, then the claim of Urdu may be considered.

...
If Urdu or Hindi is adopted in the courts and universities of Bengal in place of Bangla, it will be but a form of political subordination. We strongly protest against the opinion that Dr. Ziauddin Ahmed has expressed in favour of Urdu against the regional languages of Pakistan as vehicles of education in the Pakistani provinces. Not only is this against scientific education and justice, it is an infringement of the provincial rights of autonomy and self rule.

[কংগ্রেসের নির্দিষ্ট হিন্দীর অনুকরণে উর্দু পাকিস্তানের এক মাত্র রাষ্ট্রভাষা-রূপে গন্য হইলে তাহা শুধু পশ্চাদ গমনই হইবে। ...ইংরেজী ভাষার বিরুদ্ধে এক মাত্র যুক্তি এই যে ইহা পাকিস্তান ডোমিনিয়নের কোনো প্রদেশের অধিবাসীরই মাতৃভাষা নয়। উর্দুর বিপক্ষেও একই যুক্তি প্রযোজ্য। পাকিস্তান ডোমিনিয়নের বিভিন্ন অঞ্চলের অধিবাসীদের মাতৃভাষা বিভিন্ন যেমন – পুশতু, বেলুচী, পাঞ্জাবী, সিন্ধী, এবং বাংলা; কিন্তু উর্দু পাকিস্তানের কোনো অঞ্চলেই মাতৃভাষারূপে চালু নয়। ...যদি বিদেশী ভাষা বলিয়া ইংরেজী ভাষা পরিত্যক্ত হয়, তবে বাংলাকে পাকিস্তানের রাষ্ট্রভাষারূপে গ্রহণ না করার পক্ষে কোনো যুক্তি নাই। যদি বাংলা ভাষার অতিরিক্ত কোনো দ্বিতীয় রাষ্ট্রভাষা গ্রহণ করতে হয়, তবে উর্দু ভাষার দাবী বিবেচনা করা কর্তব্য।

...
বাংলা দেশের কোর্ট ও বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে বাংলা ভাষার পরিবর্তে উর্দু বা হিন্দী ভাষা গ্রহণ করা হইলে ইহা রাজনৈতিক পরাধীনতারই নামান্তর হইবে। ডাঃ জিয়াউদ্দিন আহমেদ পাকিস্তানের প্রদেশ সমূহের বিদ্যালয়ে শিক্ষার বাহনরূপে প্রাদেশিক ভাষার পরিবর্তে উর্দু ভাষার সপক্ষে যে অভিমত প্রকাশ করিয়াছেন উহার তির প্রতিবাদ জানাইতেছি। ইহা কেবলমাত্র বৈজ্ঞানিক শিক্ষা ও নীতি বিরোধীই নয়, প্রাদেশিক স্বায়ত্বশাসন ও আত্মনিয়ন্ত্রণ অধিকারের নীতি বিগর্হিতও বটে।⁷

Not the just the intellectual, but the political activist too now began to rally around the standard of Bangla. On 7 September 1947, within three weeks of the creation of Pakistan, the *Purba Pākistān Karmi Sammelan* (পূর্ব পাকিস্তান কর্মী সম্মেলন) adopted the following resolution in its first meeting:

⁷ *Purba Bānglār Bhāṣā Āndolan o Tatkālin Rājniti*, p.4.

The *Purba Pakistan Karmi Sammelan* proposes that the Bangla language be made the vehicle of education and the language of the courts of law in East Pakistan. It should be left to the masses to decide what should be the national language of all of Pakistan and their decision should be accepted as final in the matter.

[পূর্ব পাকিস্তান কর্মি সম্মেলন প্রস্তাব করিতেছে যে, বাংলা ভাষাকে পূর্ব পাকিস্তানের শিক্ষার বাহন ও আইন আদালতের ভাষা করা হউক। সমগ্র পাকিস্তানের রাষ্ট্রভাষা কি হইবে তৎ সম্পর্কে আলাপ-আলোচনা ও সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণের ভার জনসাধারণের ওপর ছাড়িয়া দেয়া হউক এবং জনগণের সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত বলিয়া গ্রহীত হউক।]⁸

Earlier, certain teachers and students of the University of Dhaka had founded a cultural body called the *Tamaddun Majlis* (তমদুন মজলিস) on 1 September 1947. A fortnight later, on 15 September, the Majlis released a booklet entitled *Pākistāner Rāstra-Bhāsā - Bānglā nā Urdu?* (পাকিস্তানের রাষ্ট্র-ভাষা বাংলা – না উর্দু?) Authored by Abul Kasem, the booklet passionately argued the case of Bangla. It pointed out that as per the provisions of the Lahore Resolution every constituent unit of Pakistan has the right to choose, what Kasem rather clumsily called, its “regional national language” (*prādeśik rāstrabhāṣā*):

In the Lahore resolution too, every unit of Pakistan has been granted the right to sovereignty and freedom. Hence, every unit [of Pakistan] must be allowed the freedom to decide what would be its regional national language.

[লাহোর প্রস্তাবেও পাকিস্তানের প্রত্যেক ইউনিটকে সার্বভৌমত্ব ও স্বাধীনতার অধিকার দেওয়া হয়েছে। কাজেই প্রত্যেক ইউনিটকে তাদের স্ব স্ব প্রাদেশিক রাষ্ট্রভাষা কি হবে তা নির্ধারণ করবার স্বাধীনতা দিতে হবে।]⁹

Kasem also decried the extravagant respect that some Bengali-Muslims had for Urdu. He demanded that the Bangla language be now made fit to articulate the Islamic cultural universe. Apparently, the concern for Bangla was tied to a concern for the fate of Islam in Bengali-Muslim society:

I do not disparage or show disrespect towards Urdu, but I regard the Bengali Muslims’ infatuation for Urdu truly dangerous. When I see that upon hearing even a bawdy love song in Urdu, the average Bengali *bhadralok* is overwhelmed imagining that it is the glories of Allah which are being described, while even some wonderful *brāhmosangeet* composed in Bangla is denigrated as *hārām*, then I realise that all this senseless devotion or disparagement holds no true value.

...

All these days, Muslims have put the blame upon Hindus’ shoulders and said with a comfortable certainty that Hindus have filled the Bangla language with *Hinduāni* sentiments. However, this won’t do in East Pakistan. Here primarily Muslim litterateurs will have to bear the responsibility of presenting the Islamic heritage. Thus, the time is nigh that the erudite Muslims create a literature as good and akin to the *punthi* literature and acquaint their country people with Muslim civilization and culture. Only then will the mother tongue be fully enriched and Islamic sentiments will genuinely be the equipment of the

⁸ Ibid., p.12.

⁹ Ibid., p.15.

spirits of the masses and remedy their poverty and inferiority. We will never genuinely benefit by being petitioners at the doors of Urdu.

[আমি উর্দু ভাষাকে নিন্দা বা অশ্রদ্ধা করিনা, কিন্তু বাঙালী মুসলমানের উর্দুর মোহকে সত্যসত্যই মারাত্মক মনে করি। যখন দেখি, উর্দু ভাষায় একটা অশ্লিল প্রেমের গান শুনতেও বাঙালী সাধারণ ভদ্রলোক আল্লেহের মহিমা বর্ণিত হচ্ছে মনে ক'রে ভাবে মাতোয়ারা, অথবা বাংলা ভাষায় রচিত উৎকৃষ্ট ব্রহ্মসঙ্গীতও হারাম বলে নিন্দিত, তখনই বুঝি এই সব অবোধ ভক্তি বা অবোধ নিন্দার প্রকৃত মূল্য কিছুই নাই।

...

এতদিন মুসলমান কেবল হিন্দুর ঘাড়ে দোষ চাপিয়ে নিশ্চিন্তে আরামে বসে বলেছেন যে হিন্দুরা বাংলা ভাষাকে হিন্দুয়ানীভাবে ভরে দিয়েছে, কিন্তু পূর্ব পাকিস্তানে ত তা চলবে না। এখানে ইসলামী ঐতিহ্য পরিবেশন করার দায়িত্ব মুখ্যতঃ মুসলমান সাহিত্যিকদেরই বহন করতে হবে। তাই আজ সময় এসেছে, মুসলমান বিদ্বজ্জন পুঁথি-সাহিত্যের স্থল বর্তী বাংলা সুসাহিত্য সৃষ্টি করে মুসলিম সভ্যতা ও সংস্কৃতির সঙ্গে দেশবাসীর পরিচয় স্থাপন করবেন; তবেই মাতৃভাষা সম্পূর্ণ সমৃদ্ধ হবে এবং ইসলামী ভাব ধারা যথার্থভাবে জনসাধারণের প্রানের সামগ্রী হয়ে তাদের দৈন্য ও হীনতা বোধ দূর করবে। উর্দুর দুয়ারে ধর্না দিয়ে আমাদের কোনো কালেই যথার্থ লাভ হবে না।¹⁰

Dominated by the Punjabis, the Pakistani ruling elite remained unmoved by the concerns of their Bengali speaking co-religionists. Displaying some wanton insensitivity towards them, it made Urdu the sole official language of Pakistan in 1948. It was precisely the provocation the growing resentment in East Pakistan did not need. By the turn of the 1950s, the anger among the intelligentsia and students of East Pakistan had reached a fever pitch. On 21 February 1952, the students of the University of Dhaka organised a protest demonstration against the imposition of Urdu on East Pakistan. As they marched down the streets of Dhaka, they were shot at by the police. Several students died. The fate of bicephalous Pakistan was sealed.

East Pakistan: A Unique Vision

As we saw above, in the days leading to and in the immediate aftermath of partition, there was no doubt in the minds of the Bengali-Muslim intelligentsia and politicians as regards the status of Bangla in East Pakistan. As far as they saw, only Bangla, the language in which the Bengali-Muslim expressed his “fears and loves,” could be the official language of the new state. This certitude, however, did not develop overnight. It will be erroneous to assume that it emerged of a sudden in the aftermath of partition in response to the Pakistani ruling elite’s efforts to make the Bengali-Muslims learn Urdu. For the previous many decades the Bengali-Muslim litterateurs and public intellectuals were engaged in a strenuous project – one of resolving the contradiction between their Bengali and Muslim identities. The intention of this research project is to establish that by the time partition occurred in 1947 this resolution had already been done. We will argue that, over the 1920s and 30s, as this resolution reached fruition, the two constituent halves of Bengali-Muslim identity – Islam and the Bangla language – came to reinforce each other. This, in turn, resulted in East Pakistan being imagined in a distinct way – as a state in which the Bangla language and its attendant cultural complex will reign supreme, albeit in a properly Islamised incarnation. This unique imagining of East Pakistan began to cohere as the Muslims of Bengal ceased

¹⁰ Ibid., p.16.

to look up to the Persian speaking *ashraf* for political leadership and produced a new politician who proudly wore his Bengali-ness on his sleeves.

A typical example of this new Bengali-Muslim politician was Fazlul Haq who was, in his own words, “proud of Bengal, proud of its culture.”¹¹ Thus, in 1937, when the Muslim League adopted Urdu as its official language in its Lucknow session, Haq led the opposition of the Bengali-Muslim delegates against the decision. Haq and his fellow dissenters argued that the adoption of Urdu would hamper the League’s popularity with the Bengali-Muslims. In 1941, when Haq had a brief spat with Jinnah, we once again find him posing as the guardian of the interests of the Bengali-Muslims vis-à-vis the Muslim League High Command. In a letter Haq wrote to Liaquat Ali Khan around the time, he declared that he will “never allow the interest of 33 millions of the Muslims of Bengal to be put under the dominance of any outside authority.”¹² It is likely that Haq had already begun to toy with the idea of Bengal as a sovereign entity in the foreseeable future. *Searchlight*, a daily published from Patna, reported in 1942 that “Fazlul Haq, Premier of Bengal, is seriously contemplating the starting of a Bangistan Movement for the recognition of Bengal as a separate state.”¹³ In 1943, Haq stressed the need to “modify the Pakistan idea so as to enable the Muslims of Bengal also to assert their self-determination along with the Muslims of other provinces.”¹⁴ There was, he believed, no use “hoodwinking the Muslims of Bengal that the formula which may hold good in the Punjab will also hold good in Bengal.”¹⁵ Seemingly, Haq’s demands were but a reflection of the very particular form the Pakistan movement had taken in Bengal. This meant that, as pointed out by Sheila Sen, the majority of Bengali-Muslims,

were also not thinking of sharing power with Muslims from other parts of India. The Pakistan movement in Bengal during the period 1943-45, therefore, *aimed at achieving an independent state comprising Bengal and Assam* and at democratising and making the party (League) broad based so that the aristocratic leadership did not control the destiny of the Muslim masses in the region at the time of the establishment of Pakistan.¹⁶

Apparently, a politician like Haq was expressing and striving to realise a distinct conception of East Pakistan that was taking shape in the minds of the Bengali-Muslim intelligentsia. This is, for example, underlined by what Zahur Hussain, a Bengali-Muslim writer, argued in an article entitled *Pakistan and Soviet Union*:

That the Musalman Chasi (Muslim peasant) of Bengal can make friendship with ‘Kabuli Mahajan’ (moneylender from Kabul) can only be imagined by those who do not have any connection with the soil of the country. Some time it is said that Urdu is the mother-language of the Indian Musalmans. But the leaders of Pakistan movement in Bengal have clearly said that the state language of ‘Purba-Pakistan’ will be Bengali and not Urdu. *That Peshawar and Chittagong cannot be brought under one state, Pakistan idea accepts this truth only.*¹⁷

¹¹ See *The Foreshadowing of Bangladesh*, p.117.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.134.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.150.

¹⁴ See Amalendu Dey, *Islam in Modern India*, Maya Prakashan, Calcutta, 1982, p.172.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ See *Muslim Politics In Bengal. 1937-47*, Impex India, New Delhi, 1976, pp.175-176. Emphasis added.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

We also see the Bengali-Muslim intelligentsia organising in bodies such as the *Purba-Pakistan Renaissance Society* and *Purba-Pakistan Sahitya Sangsad* in order to lend more cogency to the vision of East Pakistan with a definite literary and cultural programme. Abul Mansur Ahmed, an intellectual associated with these organisations, emphasised the distinctness of the Bengali-Muslims with the following argument:

Religion and culture are not the same thing. Religion transgresses the geographical boundary but ‘tamaddun’ (culture) cannot go beyond the geographical boundary. Rather flourishes within depending on that ‘sima’ (geographical limit).

Here only lies the difference between Purba-Pakistan and Pakistan. *For this reason the people of Purba-Pakistan are a different nation from the people of other provinces of India and the ‘religious brothers’ of Pakistan.*¹⁸

It seems that by the middle of the 1940s, along with the Bengali-Muslim intellectuals, a majority of the Bengali-Muslims political leaders too were convinced that the Bangla speaking Muslims form a distinct nation and are entitled to their own state. Thus, we see the Bengal Provincial Muslim League broaching the idea of the *Confederacy of East Pakistan and Adibasistan* in 1944. This proposed sovereign entity was to include the provinces of Bengal and Assam and the tribal districts of south Bihar which today form the state of Jharkhand. Along with Premier Suhrawardy and the younger members of the BPML, the chief architect of the CEPA plan was Abul Hashim. A close associate of Suhrawardy, Hashim never made any attempt to hide his Bengali nationalism. In the Lahore Resolution, thus, he saw his “complete independence as a Muslim and a Bengali.”¹⁹

In April 1947, when partition was but months away, Suhrawardy, along with Sarat Bose, gave the call for a United and Sovereign Bengal. Partition of Bengal was not a viable option because, Suhrawardy said to the *Star of India* on 7 May 1947, “Bengalees are one race and have one language.” Further, a United Independent Bengal, Hashim said to the *Star of India* on 5 June 1947 was in perfect order with the Lahore Resolution as it “never contemplated the creation of an Akhand Muslim state.”²⁰ Besides, said Hashim at another place,

If a united sovereign Egypt, where there is a mixed population of Muslims, Jews, Christians and others, can be a Pakistan, if a united sovereign Iran can be a Pakistan, I fail to understand why united and sovereign Bengal, where the Muslims are in a majority, will be anti-Pakistan, I wonder what sort of Pakistan a crippled and partitioned Bengal can be.²¹

It appears that for Hashim ‘Pakistan’ suggested not a state but a cultural order and every Muslim majority country which upheld a cultural matrix broadly derived from Islam could be and was ‘Pakistan’. So, indeed, Bengal with its Muslim majority could be ‘Pakistan’ too without needing to be a part of the state that was about to be created in the north-west of India.

¹⁸ Ibid. Emphasis added.

¹⁹ See *The Foreshadowing of Bangladesh*, p.190.

²⁰ Ibid., p.299.

²¹ *Statesman*, May 17, 1947.