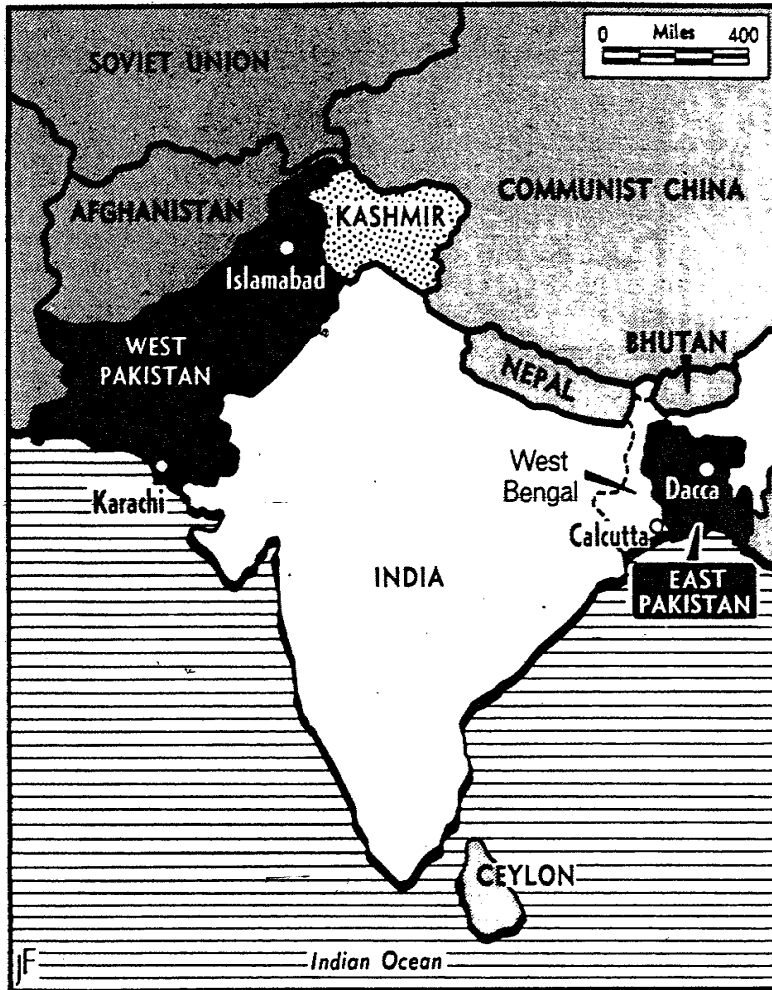


# South Asia unbalanced?

# East Pakistan in breakaway struggle



By Joan Forbes, staff cartographer

## Split nation?

The ties between the two halves of Pakistan, separated by a thousand miles of Indian territory, appear to have snapped. It remains to be seen whether West Pakistani troops, reinforced by sea this week, can reassert control over East Pakistan.

By Geoffrey Godsell  
Overseas editor of  
The Christian Science Monitor

After teetering on the brink for the whole month of March, Pakistan seems finally to have split in half.

An agency dispatch from New Delhi—still unconfirmed at this writing—quotes a clandestine radio monitored near the East Pakistan border as announcing the establishment in East Pakistan of "the sovereign republic of Bangla Desh."

"Bangla Desh," which means "the Bengali nation," is what the more separatist East Pakistanis have long called their province of Pakistan. At the time of partition in 1947, the former province of Bengal—as it was within Britain's Indian Empire—was divided into a predominantly Muslim eastern part (which became East Pakistan) and a predominantly Hindu western part which remained in the Indian Union.

### Survival as nation

Friday night's announcement was reportedly made by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, leader of the Awami League which had swept the polls in East Pakistan in last December's national election for a constituent assembly.

If the breakaway and declaration of independence stick, East Pakistan—for all its problems of poverty and overpopulation—can probably make it as an independent state. Within its borders live some 70-million people, compared with some 50 million in West Pakistan. But to survive healthily, it will probably have to work out for itself closer economic ties with neighboring India from which it has been more than ever cut off since the short Indian-Pakistan war over Kashmir in 1965.

Yet this will not necessarily be plain sailing, for neighboring India, to the west at least, is West Bengal—probably the most volatile and one of the most unstable of the states of India.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's Congress Party—for all its successes elsewhere in the country—was outvoted by the most militant Marxist party in the recent election for the West Bengal Legislature.

There are left-wing extremists in the

## U.S. eyes Pakistani split

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wings in East Bengal. And a union between these two groups in both parts of Bengal, strategically situated between Communist China and the Indian Ocean, is a prospect that Mrs. Gandhi would hardly want to facilitate or encourage.

If the two parts of Pakistan cannot be put together again, it will be a tragedy for all supporters of Pakistani nationhood. Admittedly the two parts of the divided country were held together only by their common Muslim religion. But over the near quarter of a century since Muhammad Ali Jinnah led Pakistan into independence, the new state had worked wonders in developing from scratch a well-running administration at the center and a viable economy.

In terms of population, Pakistan ranked with Japan and Indonesia in a bracket immediately after the world's obvious giants: Communist China, India, the Soviet Union, and the United States.

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# Reluctant guests at Kremlin

By Joseph C. Harsch  
Special correspondent of  
The Christian Science Monitor

Washington

The men of the Kremlin are going over their speeches for an occasion they must wish could have been spared them.

This is the eve of the 24th Congress of the



AP Photo

A recent demonstration in Dacca

## *Behind Sheikh Mujib: East Pakistan's masses*

# ★ East Pakistan struggles to become independent nation of Bangla Desh

Continued from Page 1

In East Pakistan, however, the ties of religion were not in the end strong enough to overcome differences of language and ethnic origin between the two parts of the country.

It might have been different if the West Pakistanis had not given their brethren in the East the impression that the country was run primarily by West Pakistanis for the benefit of West Pakistan. The national capital was in the West. The central government and the army were both predominantly West Pakistani.

Censorship prevents news dispatches from getting out of East Pakistan, but there are reports from the Indian side of the frontier of fighting between the predominantly Western Army units in the province and the local East Pakistani militia.

### Asian balance

The great geographical divide between the two parts of the country, however, makes it questionable indeed whether the Army can reverse the breakaway decision. The Indian Government has allowed no Pakistani military flights over Indian territory in recent months, and this only adds to the West's dilemma.

The splitting up of Pakistan, if maintained, is likely to alter the entire balance in South Asia between India and Pakistan. The perennial Kashmir issue was never as urgent to East Pakistanis as to West Pakistanis—for obvious reasons of geography. Now, West Pakistan may well find it has the hostility rather than the token support of East Pakistan, should the quarrel with India over Kashmir be revived.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's declaration of independence came Friday after last-minute efforts by President Yahya Khan—who had been in East Pakistan for most of the week—to hold the country together.

In last December's election for a Constituent Assembly to draft a constitution, East Pakistanis won an overall majority of the seats for the first time in any national legislature.

When President Yahya postponed opening of the Constituent Assembly, scheduled for March 5, East Pakistanis suspected that the West was once again scheming (as they saw it) to rob them of their rights and keep them in thralldom as second-class citizens. All the President's efforts subsequently to convince Sheikh Mujib otherwise have apparently failed. The result: Friday's breaking of the country into two.