

## **Emergence of Neo-Razakars: Perspective from a Generation of Post-Liberation Era**

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It has largely become an integral part of our national psyche to associate our identity and existence with the war of liberation in 1971. We found it nothing wrong as our national independence came because of long struggle and paramount sacrifice. However, when we began to understand our national history, we came to realize that many contentious issues remained not only unsolved, but have also been kept alive. What we found is that a significant part of our population politically opposed the idea of separation, which is common to every liberation war and civil justice movement all over the world. What makes us so puzzled is that we—as a generation born after our liberation—have no clear answer from the history as to why a quarter of our population opposed the idea of a separated independent Bangladesh. Historians largely and lazily tried to not to uncover that mystery. Since it's a question of our identity and existence, we passionately feel that we need to have a clear understanding of not only “how” but also “why” a portion of our population did not subscribe to the idea of an independent Bangladesh.

Rather than having a clear historical account of our liberation, the whole realm becomes so diluted and vague that most often we have trouble in separating facts from fictions. We still suffer from a lack of consensus on some fundamental issues such as who declared independence, how many people were killed and raped, who opposed the war, why and in what way. One of the conspicuous reasons behind this diluted atmosphere is, as we observed, using the “liberation war” for political purpose. The political culture of last three decades was largely fraught with lies, fabrications, concoctions and emotional dispositions; and since liberation war has been one of the key issues in the realm of politics, our national identity has become diluted and contaminated. What we observed is that people—mostly political leaders—engrossed and embedded in that contaminated politics gradually became emotional and fanatic in attacking their political opponents and began to lose their objective disposition and fairness. So much emotions, exaggerations, concoctions, obduracy and extreme rebuffs towards political opponents are some of the traits that our political leaders and their hard-core supporters have been maintaining and nurturing for last three decades. Consequences are also apparent.

It has divided the whole nation into two: pro and against liberation. They use this “forged and discursive construction” for political gain is if liberation (*shadhinata*) is their personal and political property. They use this construction in most of their speeches, wrongly attack their political opponents, and brand them with some negative terms. They become blind as to how they are damaging the nation. As the issue of 1971 becomes their main political agenda, they use the emotions and dispositions of people for their own interest. They do not resolve the issue of 1971 as they will lose their political agenda. Sometimes they become so fanatic and lose every iota of objective thinking that they do not hesitate even to brand “Razakar” to those who were born after 1971, and those who were freedom fighters but subscribe to different political ideology. And other people, whatever role they had in 1971, become great “freedom-fighters” if they come to the fold

of their political party. In this way, being or not being in the political party becomes a “yardstick” as to who is a freedom fighter and who is not. They constantly focus on division, rather than cohesion. There are some conspicuous negative consequences of this construction, which we have witnessing for last three decades:

First, it makes people “retrogressive”. As 1971 becomes the focal point and subsequently occupies all of their imaginations, it makes a great hindrance for moving further. Who is pro-liberation and who is not becomes the main political and individual agenda, and consequently national development, social cohesion and progress always remain a secondary priority. It not only leads to stagnation, but also constantly drives us to go backwards. Consequently, our nation remains lagged behind economically, socially, and culturally.

Second, it makes a clear-cut and sometimes ambivalent division of the nation as expounded before. Many nations of the world faced almost similar juncture, and unlike some politicians of Bangladesh, the great politicians of those nations had different strategies to move forward as they had far-sighting vision to build their nations. They all focused on cohesion, rather than difference or division. Abraham Lincoln, for example, became famous as he devoted his utmost efforts to erase the dichotomy of white masters and black slaves. Noble peace prize laureate Nelson Mandela of South Africa did the same. Even the founding father of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, offered a “general amnesty” to all who opposed the liberation movement with a view to moving forward with harmony and cohesion among people. The biggest example we find in the case of the “Victory of Makka” by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The people of Makka who once tried with all of their efforts to hurt and eventually kill the prophet, which forced him to migrate to Medina and waged several battles against the prophet himself. However, the prophet (peace be upon him) vehemently declared to the people of Makka, “Today you are free and independent, I do not have any complain against you.” After that he never focused on division, rather one of the aims of his mission was to create cohesion and peaceful coexistence among the people even with different faith.

Finally, it creates a culture of hatred, division and emotion. They regard the whole nation as their own property. It eventually makes them arrogant, lusty of power by any means. Well-being of the country becomes the secondary agenda. If the politics with liberation fails, they never hesitate to create a global awareness against the country, and its own people.

The people who collaborated with Pakistani army to serve their interest were known as “razakars”. They were both opportunists and paid agents and comprised of both Bangalis and non-Bangalis (especially Biharis). In the similar vein, we also witness a small but strong cohort of people who are collaborating with India, Israel and the United States to serve the interest of these countries at the expense of our national unity and progress. It has become a lucrative career for a quarter of journalists and so-called intellectuals these days. Though they identify themselves as “the real patriots” and harbinger of independence to our nation to occlude their real faces, they are actively engaged in anti-state activities by exploiting the current political situation. Though Bangladesh is a great

example of communal harmony and social cohesion, these people discursively concoct different fabricated stories and problematize different contentious issues such as communalism, talibanism and religious terrorism or fundamentalism to invite foreign intervention; and this is exactly what Bangladesh is currently suffering from. Because of their active anti-state activities, these people appeared as “neo-razakars.”

Liberation is not just an event that happened only in 1971, but rather a continuous process. We got liberation from Pakistani oppression in 1971 with a hope that we would liberate ourselves from poverty, corruption, tyranny, foreign dependence and intervention and all forms of injustices. Rather than liberating ourselves from all these, our nation unfortunately went deeper into the quagmire of all these. After our liberation from Pakistan, those who took responsibility in liberating our nation from all these problems and in bringing progress, they often use 1971 as an ideological guise and ‘political property’ not only to hide their gross failure and massive corruptions during their regimes but also to stigmatize their political opponents branding them as anti-liberation and with other derogatory terms. As a generation in post liberation era, we strongly feel that Bangladesh needs further liberation from the shackle of these neo-razakars.

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