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# A Historical Narrative of Bangladesh and the Role of Media Bias

Involve Consultancy Project 2023/2024

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In collaboration with GHRD

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# 1 Executive summary

The history of Bangladesh is complex and multi-faceted, however, it is not well known among Western countries. Especially the events of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War are often overlooked. Mention of this critical event in the history of Bangladesh often leaves out the consequences and aftermaths which affect current events. It must be questioned why the events of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War have not been recognised as a genocide and if a re-evaluation is required. Not only could recognition serve as moral justice for the people of Bangladesh, it could also improve Western media's reporting on the country of Bangladesh. An improved portrayal of the events of the Bangladesh Liberation War may result in increased economic activity, for example, by means of investor confidence or more accurate views of (Western) policy makers.

The findings are summed up in the points below:

- **The resulting two-nation theory from the British rule of the Indian subcontinent resulted in a legitimisation of a united Muslim nation by West-Pakistan.** West-Pakistan denied requests for independence of East-Pakistani, which was likely motivated by economic-, military and strategic interests and national identity prestige ideas.
- **The West-Pakistani army constructed a perception of inferiority, resulting in the dehumanisation of the Bengali people which offered perpetrators a justification for their brutal actions.** The brutal actions of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War include systematic rape (camps) and targeted killings of minorities, scholars, experts, and non-combatant civilians, in an attempt to destroy the Bengali National identity. Moreover, a vast amount of Bengali people were displaced due to the actions of the West-Pakistani army.
- **The atrocities committed by the West-Pakistani army resulted in severe trauma of which the consequences can still be observed in the politics, economics and foreign relations.** The widespread suffering caused by the Pakistani army caused deep rooted psychological and emotional wounds among multiple groups in society, such as the Birangona women, but also within the collective thought. The political landscape, the formation of parties, and the ongoing tensions between the parties, act as a legacy of the war. The economic losses alone, without taking into account the loss of life and displacement of the population, harshly disrupted the economic development by destroying infrastructure and killing the intellectual elite. The lack of international recognition of the Bangladesh Liberation War, continues to affect Bangladesh's diplomatic strategies, alliances, and its portrayal in global media. These events likely resulted in greater instability and lower inflows of foreign direct investment, delaying the economic development of Bangladesh.

- **The underlying geopolitics play a pivotal role in the coverage and aftermath of events.** The strategic alliance of Western nations with West-Pakistan resulted in inadequate media coverage along with a failure to condemn the actions of the West-Pakistani army in current day Bangladesh. This failure continues as minorities in Pakistan such as the Ahmadi Muslims, Sindhi, and Balochi face human right violations.
- **Framing matters.** The way media presents information—either through episodic (focused on specific events) or thematic (providing broader context) framing—can significantly influence how the public interprets and reacts to events. During the Bangladesh Liberation War, Western media’s focus on military conflict and neutral tones might have downplayed the human suffering, showcasing a form of media bias that aligned with the geopolitical interests of the reporting countries.
- **The sentiment towards Bangladesh has notably improved.** Over the last two decades, with the exception of 2015-2017, the sentiment surrounding Bangladesh has improved. The frequency of coverage of Bangladesh has also increased in Anglo-Saxon media.

## 2 List of abbreviations

AL	Awami League
BCL	Bangladesh Chhatra League
BNP	Bangladesh National Party
BRI	The Belt and Road Initiative
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
LDC	Least Developed Country
JI	Jamaat-e-Islami
JL	Jatiya Party
KAL	Korean Air Lines
UN	United Nations

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### 3 Introduction

All throughout history, armed conflicts have wreaked havoc on the lives of millions of civilians. In these conflicts, major violations of human rights laws have commonly taken place, in some cases even escalating to genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes. The United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) monitors the extent to which human rights principles and international humanitarian law are abided by, investigating allegations made about violations of these principles and laws. Often, these allegations are heavily contested by involved parties, slowing down processes of obtaining official recognition of the violations of human rights. This paper will look into one such heavily contested allegation in the case of Bangladesh.

Located in the center of South Asia, Bangladesh is a country characterized by its rich history and cultural heritage. From the early settlements of the Bang tribe to the subjection to Mughal and British rule, Bangladesh has a long history that still has an effect on its society to this day. After the dissolution of the colonial rule over British India, the Bengal territory, what is now known as Bangladesh, became part of the state of Pakistan as East-Pakistan. What follows is a long struggle for autonomy and independence of the Bangladeshi people. The levels of tension between former West and East Pakistan reached their maximum and prompted the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. To suppress East Pakistan's plight for freedom, the Pakistani army launched a military operation. The events enacted by the Pakistani army during this military operation are heavily contested with the Bangladeshi ministry alleging West Pakistan engaged in several war crimes and the Pakistani government denying the incidence of these alleged war crimes. Correspondingly, the acts of the Pakistani military in 1971 have not been recognised as a genocide by the international community.

Global Human Rights Defence (GHRD) is dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights of minority and marginalized groups with the goal of improving their socio-economic status. GHRD is a member of the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2015, which is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN). ECOSOC acts as the central forum for discussions on international economic and social issues and formulates policy recommendations to member states and the UN System. To accomplish their goals, GHRD has several campaigns with which they actively advocate for human rights. One of these campaigns is dedicated towards seeking recognition for the tragic events in Bangladesh during the Liberation war. The mission of this campaign is to urge the UN, EU, and the U.S. to officially recognise the events of 1971 as an act of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. The three reasons they name for this are the sheer magnitude of the number of victims, the terrible acts enacted, and the involvement of the Pakistan Army in these events. The initiatives of their campaign consist of a petition for recognition,

collecting widespread support to highlight the importance of recognition, United Nations advocacy to shed light on the injustices that happened during the Liberation War, a media campaign to promote visibility and information, and strategic collaborations. The last point is achieved by collaborating with technocrats, politicians, ambassadors, and members of the European Parliament and using their influence as a leverage point to promote the goals of the campaign. Within the topic of their campaign, they have asked the Involve Consultancy Project to write an independent research report looking into the events surrounding the Liberation War. The report concentrates on the response of Western media to the Liberation War and the consequences, including economic and political, on both the general public and those directly affected by the 1971 Liberation War.

The influence of the media has been ever-increasing in the last decades, and with the influx of 24/7 access to media reports, there is no avoiding the effect that media has on shaping public opinion. As political events become more and more polarized, biases in media outlets have become increasingly apparent. Western media bias especially, has a significant influence, historically often setting the agenda for global news coverage. Research suggests that biases, whether that would be religious, cultural, ideological, economic or political, persist. This may distort the portrayal of events, especially for events that took place farther away from Western countries, leading to skewed perceptions and a lack of nuanced understanding among (western) audiences. As the media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion as well as political policies, understanding the dynamics of media bias is of high importance for understanding the interplay between relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan, the non-recognition of the genocide in 1971, and the influence of western media and its biases on both.

This report seeks to provide an independent description of the historical events prior to, during and after the Liberation War in Bangladesh. Furthermore, we look into media bias and its effects on economic aid and relations. Using text-analysis, we analyze media sentiment in the coverage of Bangladesh & Pakistan to identify whether there are any biases present. This all will be supplemented with interviews with people from Bangladesh and Pakistan to obtain insights in their opinions on the lasting effects of the Liberation War both in their everyday life as well as in the media.

The findings of this report may aid GHRD in their campaign for the recognition of the events in 1971 as a genocide. Additionally, they may also aid GHRD in their future efforts to report events happening concerning human rights violations and mitigate media biases that are present in coverage by western media. Although this report is commissioned by GHRD, we will provide an unbiased analysis of the literature on the topics of the history of Bangladesh and Western media bias.

Section 4 discusses the current situation in Bangladesh, namely the quota reform movement of

2024. In section 5, a description of Bangladeshi history will be given to highlight historical reasons for the challenges Bangladesh may face in modern day. A detailed analysis of different Bangladeshi communities and the lasting effects that the Liberation war may have on them is included in this section as well. We will also analyze possible reasons for why the recognition of the actions of the Pakistani army in Bangladesh as a genocide remains a heavily contested subject (section 5.6). Section 6.1 & 6.2 will look at the current economic and political climate of Bangladesh to identify long-term effects of the events during the Liberation war. The next section, 7 will give a literature review of scientific papers on media bias to establish a base-level understanding of the concept of media bias. Section 7.2 will look at media coverage of Bangladesh which will be followed by an analysis of media sentiment with regards to Bangladesh & Pakistan. Section 8 covers the sentiment analysis of media articles. Section 9 includes the findings of the interviews with people from Bangladesh and Pakistan. Lastly, section 10 will provide a conclusion to our research.

## **4 The Bangladesh quota reform movement of 2024**

At the time of finalising this report, August 2024, Bangladesh is experiencing great unrest. The unrest began on the first of July after the High court reinstated a quota which reserves thirty percent of highly sought-after civil service jobs for children of freedom fighters (Reuters, 2024b). Students, mainly from Dhaka and Chittagong, are protesting the reinstated quota system, demanding a fair reformed system based on merit rather than background. The demand for merit based system is likely driven by the high youth unemployment in the country.

The government of Bangladesh has attempted to harshly strike down the protest. The citizens have been subjected to a nationwide curfew, telecommunication blackouts, internet connectivity shutdowns, and leaders of the protests have been arrested (Reuters, 2024a). Besides these attempt to obstruct communication systems, a lot of violence has been reported by various sources. Police forces have been using rubber bullets, sound grenades and tear gas canisters to scatter protesters (Reuters, 2024b). As of August 16th, 2024, Reuters (2024c) reports that at least 300 people died with many more injured, 70% of which have been reported from Dhaka (Al Jazeera, 2024a) and the majority of casualties appear to be students. These casualties appear to have been fueling the fire with hackers putting texts on the website of the prime minister like: "Stop killing students, it is not a protest anymore. It is a war now." (Al Jazeera, 2024a).

The quota, also referred to as a reservation policy, was instated in 1972. In this initial policy, 80% of the jobs were reserved for certain groups, such as freedom fighters, affected women, and people from backward districts. The remaining 20% were to be filled based on merit. The reservation was reduced in 1976 to 60% reservation and 40% merit-based. In 1985, more changes were made.

Now the 10% of jobs that were reserved for war-affected women was extended to include all women. Additionally, a new category was introduced and 5% of jobs were reserved for indigenous people. The total distribution was now 55% reservation and 45% merit. In 1997 and 2010, the quota was extended to include children and grandchildren of freedom fighters respectively. The last change made was in 2012 when the quota was increased with a 1% reservation for people with disabilities. Anti-quota protests have occurred in Bangladesh in the past, for example in 2018, which led to abolition of the quota for families of freedom fighters in October 2018. In the beginning of June, the Dhaka High Court ruled this abolition of the quota as illegal and ruled that it should be re-instated. Consequently, protests broke out, mainly among students, against this restoration.

The prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, implied that the protesters were "Razakars", an offensive term used to describe collaborators of the Pakistani army during the 1971 war (Al Jazeera, 2024b; AP News, 2024b; Reuters, 2024b). She stated "Why do they have so much resentment towards freedom fighters? If the grandchildren of the freedom fighters don't get quota benefits, should the grandchildren of Razakars get the benefit?" (Al Jazeera, 2024b). The understanding of this quote from the prime minister reflects the trauma from the 1971 war in politics and society.

The precise source of the violence is disputed and will likely remain unclear until an independent investigation is done. Currently, Hasina blames the main opposition parties the Islamic party Jamaat-e-Islami and the Bangladesh Nationalist party for the clashes, which these parties deny (Reuters, 2024e). On the contrary, according to Al Jazeera (2024b), The Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), Awami League's youth wing, is believed to have incited the violence along with police forces. The president of BCL said "Those who openly identify as 'Razakar' must face consequences. Such individuals have no place in this country, and we have decided to politically confront the students protesting quota reforms," (Al Jazeera, 2024b) restating the belief that the protesters are traitors. Furthermore, Reuters (2024c) states that Awami League's (AL) student wing suppressed the demonstrations with clashes erupting between BCL members and protesters. The protesting students are in shock by the claims of the students being a Razakar. In response, they have been using slogans such as "Not quota but talent, talent, talent!" and "Asked for rights but became a Razakar". Hindustan Times (2024) writes that "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked if the protesters really understood the history of Bangladesh and the role of Razakars in 1971 genocide and crimes against Bangladeshi women. "They did not witness the bodies lying in the streets, yet they feel no shame in calling themselves Razakars," she reacted angrily."

Meanwhile, AP News (2024a) reports that the Hindu minority in Bangladesh is living in fear due to the reported violence. The motives of these attacks are unclear with possibly some element being based on the difference in faith, which is historically present. It appears somewhat likely that the attacks are based on their political affiliation with the AL, as traditionally the AL has backed

the Hindu minority in Bangladesh. However, Reuters (2024d) states that thousands of Bangladeshi Hindus have been trying to flee to India. There have been many reports of violence and destruction, for example, the temples of Bengali Hindus were targeted during the protests which points towards clear acts of violence based on faith.

In contrast, Al Jazeera (2024c) claims that Indian sources are spreading misinformation and are Islamophobic by stating that the Hindu minorities are targeted by 'Islamist forces'. They claim that the primary reasons for the attacks are the individuals' allegiance to the AL, not their faith. The complex situation and history of Bangladesh results in a loss of nuance making complete and unbiased statements difficult. Therefore, motivating the need for an unbiased investigation.

The differing claims of media outlets further show how media biases create inaccurate perspectives. This highlights the need for an independent description of events to aid news agencies in their reporting. The unrest stems from direct consequences and beliefs from the war of 1971. This supports our claim that further research and attention is required to understand the nuances of the effects of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War and the reporting of media of such events.

## **5 The historical context of Bangladesh**

As this report wishes to understand why Bangladesh faces its current challenges, we thought it important to explore the rich history of the country. Such a framework allows us to uncover path dependencies, that is, to understand how past events influence present and future options. Path dependencies are likely to emerge from historical events which illustrate the motives and rationales of choices in present day economic, political and societal realities. Additionally, an extensively developed framework provides a link between the collective qualitative data and the implicit realities created by the history of Bangladesh.

### **5.1 The earliest history of Bangladesh**

Archaeological evidence suggests that the history of human civilisation in the Bengal territory can be traced back millennia. As the Bengal delta became an important trading point, conflicts for control of the region were common over the course of Bengal history. The cultural influences of the different groups, such as the Gauda kingdom, the Muslim kingdom of Bakhtiyar and European colonialist powers, that ruled over the area can still be observed to this day (Harris, 1989; van Schendel, 2020).

The Mughal empire is one of the most influential empires in the history of South Asia. It was founded in 1526 and, at its peak, stretched from Afghanistan's territory to the Bengal delta. The

Mughal expansion in Bengal did not happen overnight, rather it took them several years to take over the region until it was fully occupied in 1576 (van Schendel, 2020). The Mughal rule over Bengal is characterised by a very fast-paced conversion to Islam. The rulers provided non-Muslims with religious literature to draw them toward embracing the religion but did not prevent non-Muslims from advertising their own religion (Elius et al., 2020). The Mughals supported the institutions of every religion without showing preference and the Mughal administration employed officials from various religious backgrounds, further illustrating their commitment to inclusivity. This policy for religious tolerance created a period of relative peace between Hindus and Muslims in this region. Aside from religion, the Mughals left several other long lasting influences on the local culture, such as architecture and language, and economy.

## 5.2 The British rule

Due to the weakening of Mughal authority and deteriorated governance as a result of internal conflicts, the British East India Company, an European Trading Corporation, was able to overtake the power over Bengal (van Schendel, 2020). With the goal of maximising their exploitation, the British aimed to change Bengal's economy. In Bengal, the East India Company capitalised on the region's resources and enforced its own economic policies.

Overall, the British had a considerable impact on the political and cultural lifestyle of the Bengali territory. Regarding the country's political system, the British laid an important framework that is still in place in the country. They implemented a centralized administrative system, including a standardized legal system as well as a parliamentary form of government. During this time, the education system was also considerably changed and, in 1921, the University of Dhaka, which continues to be an important higher education institution in Bangladesh, was established. However, social and cultural influences were more subtle. Christianity was introduced by the missionaries, but despite the efforts, this remains a minor religion in Bangladesh.

The changes imposed by the British during this colonization period are criticised for exploiting Bengali people and contributing to rural poverty. For instance, the British imposed a land revenue system that fixed tax demands on landlords (Lewis, 2011). This created tension between landlords and rural inhabitants in Bengal, as it pressured landlords to extract high taxes regardless of economic conditions. British policies often gave priority to short-term economic growth over the well-being of the local population. As an example, the rulers prioritised growing more indigo (used for blue dye) and jute (used for making ropes) as they were highly demanded in the international markets; however this strategy gave less returns to farmers compared to textile. The textile industry, which was peeking and encouraged under the Mughal rule, was now left behind as it was not prioritized

by the British. To transport agriculture and other goods, the British built more roads and canals, however, it is believed that this was done only under pure economic interests.

At the end of British rule, in 1943, Bangladesh experienced a devastating famine known as “The Great Bengal Famine”, resulting in deaths of approximately 2.000.000 people (Padmanabhan, 1973). The famine is believed to be the result of multiple factors such as the disruption of food imports due to the Second World War, floods, which damaged the crops, and high inflation. The famine played a significant role in shaping public sentiment towards British rule, the further impoverishment of the already suffering Bengal community fueling the push for independence.

### **5.3 The Pakistani rule**

On August 14, 1947, British rule over India came to an end, leading to the partition of British India. With Dhaka as its provincial capital, the Bengal delta became part of the new state of Pakistan, and became known as ‘East Bengal’ and later renamed “East Pakistan” (van Schendel, 2020). Bengalis, who initially supported Pakistan’s creation in 1947, soon felt unsupported as they perceived governance of the region was mainly led by West Pakistan, currently known as Pakistan. In particular, Bengalis perceived exclusion in decision-making processes and encountered disparities in cultural and economic domains (Lewis, 2011). The struggle for autonomy and independence left a mark on Bengali national identity.

The period following British rule had a profound impact on Bangladesh and began the road to its independence. Several factors contributed to this. Namely, the fact that political power was mostly given to West Pakistan, while East Pakistan citizens constituted majority of the country’s population (55 percent). Another factor was the imposition of Urdu, the language spoken in West Pakistan, as the sole national language. Lastly, there was the fact that East Pakistan’s resources, for instance, jute, were being used to fund the development of West Pakistan (Lewis, 2011).

Historians believe that the first nationalistic ideas emerged during the 1950s. The Bengali Language movement in 1952 played an important step in the Bangladesh independence movement. Activists and intellectuals demanded for Bengali to be recognized as the national language of the country. The movement escalated dramatically on February 21, 1952, when several student demonstrators were shot by the police (Murshid, 2022). The state’s violence and brutality unified the Bengalis even more than before. Although Urdu remained the national language, in 1956, Bengali was granted official status. This movement went beyond fighting for language rights, it set the ground for the upcoming national movement.

The Awami League (AL), led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, emerged as a powerful political party advocating for greater autonomy for East Pakistan. The Six-Points program, launched by Rahman



in 1966, highlighted the main political and economic needs of Bengalis (van Schendel, 2020). First, they demanded an autonomous Bengali state within Pakistan. Second, they believed the federal government should only deal with defence and foreign affair matters, leaving the rest to the federating states. Third, they proposed that a new currency for East Pakistan be introduced. This meant that East and West Pakistan would have separate currency systems, which may be freely exchanged between the two regions. Alternatively, a monetary system could be implemented under the supervision of two Reserve Banks, as to prevent capital transfer between regions. Fourth, the revenue should belong to the regional units, with a fixed portion designated for the central government to cover defense and foreign affairs, ensuring fiscal autonomy for the states. Fifth, each wing should maintain separate accounts for its foreign exchange earnings, with the central government receiving its required share based on a constitutionally determined ratio. Furthermore, foreign trade and aid agreements should be handled by regional or provincial governments within the national foreign policy framework. Sixth, East Pakistan should maintain its own army. This program laid the groundwork for a nationalist program and was a reference point in the road of Bangladesh as an independent country. It was however rejected by West-Pakistani authorities due to political, economic, historic and military reasons.

### **5.3.1 The motives of Pakistan to reject the 6-point program**

1) Geopolitical Unity: Pakistan aimed to maintain the concept of a united Muslim-majority nation. This concept is envisioned by a belief called the Two-Nation Theory. This theory states that Muslims and Hindus in the Indian subcontinent are not just two different religious groups, but also represent two separate nations. Both groups were deemed deserving of their own sovereign states to safeguard their socio-political rights (Şahbaz, 2020). West Pakistan considered retaining East Pakistan essential to uphold the integrity and legitimacy of this principle as the majority of the population of East Pakistan was Muslim. An independent Bangladesh was seen as a threat to national unity against West Pakistan's enemy India (Beachler, 2007).

2) Economic Interests: The 6-point program demanded that each wing should keep control over its own earnings. This raised fears in West Pakistan about potential economic instability and loss of resources. West Pakistan was highly motivated to retain control over East Pakistan for several economic reasons, one of them being the fact that 60 percent of the total revenue of the central government of Pakistan came from East Pakistan (Karmaker & Malaker, 2023). This financial input was crucial for funding various projects and maintaining economic stability in West Pakistan. Furthermore, the jute industry was a major source of foreign exchange earnings for Pakistan, as East Pakistan was the largest exporter of jute, essential foreign exchange that supported Pakistan's overall economy (Choudhury, 1972; Goswami, 1982). This meant that losing East Pakistan would

reduce funds for West Pakistan, which they were dependent on (Choudhury, 1972). These funds were coming from the revenues of jute exports, but also from development funds and foreign aid. Despite being the producers of jute, significant part of those revenues were spent in West Pakistan, with a high proportion of these revenues being designated for defence, which was concentrated in that region. As for development funds and foreign aid, despite having been home to more than half of Pakistan's population, only 25% of the total development budget had been allocated to East Pakistan (Karmaker & Malaker, 2023). Moreover, West Pakistan relied heavily on East Pakistan for raw materials and cheap labour. Lastly, East Pakistan also functioned as a market where consumer goods from West Pakistan were sold for arbitrary prices. Arbitrary pricing suggests a lack of fair market practices, which could therefore distort the local market in East Pakistan, discouraging local production, if local goods could not compete with arbitrarily priced imports (Cheema, 2013). These practices allowed West Pakistan to enjoy a higher standard of living and more robust economic growth. As such, losing East Pakistan, and the subsequent reduction in market access, would have a detrimental impact on West Pakistan's economy. The income gap between East and West, while already being significant at 32% initially, had more than doubled by 1970, illustrating the economic difference between the regions (Mason et al., 1971). These unfair practices, and resulting economic differences, generated discontent and a sense of unfairness among the people of East Pakistan. However, they were one of the key motivations of West Pakistan to reject East Pakistan's plight for economic independence.

3) Military and Strategic Interests: The geographic position of East Pakistan, between South and Southeast Asia, provided Pakistan with a favourable strategic position. The location allowed Pakistan access to the Bay of Bengal and the ports in East Pakistan were important entry and exit points for trade in the eastern part of the subcontinent (Frankel, 2020). Having access to this sea was very important for Pakistan's economic plans, allowing the country to exploit its advantageous location to improve trade and grow the economy in the eastern part. The location of East Pakistan was also strategically important from a military perspective. It allowed Pakistan to have a broader military reach and a presence on the eastern front of India, which provided a second front. Given the historical and ongoing tensions between India and Pakistan, having East Pakistan as a part of the country was seen as a strategic barrier against Indian influence spreading further east. The loss of East Pakistan would not only reduce Pakistan's geographical size and population but also its political and military influence in the region, which could be in favour of India (Dasgupta, 2013).

4) National Identity and Prestige: From a nationalistic perspective, losing East Pakistan would have been a blow to the prestige and success of Pakistan as a state entity, particularly given the Two-Nation Theory. The central government in West Pakistan was apprehensive that the 6-point program would effectively lead to the federation becoming a loose confederation. This would reduce

the central government's power over East Pakistan. Pakistan did not want to lose control of East Pakistan because they wanted to be the main voice in defining Bengali identity (Kokab & Hussain, 2017). The Indians, who were also displeased with Jinnah's two-nation theory, supported and empathised with the separatist movement in East Bengal, which made Pakistan worried about India's influence (Choudhury, 1972). Additionally, the government in West Pakistan viewed the distinct Bengali cultural and linguistic identity, promoted by the 6-point program, as a threat to the Islamic and nationalistic identity. The political elite and military leadership were worried that accepting these demands would set an example for other provinces, leading to further demands for independence from other regions and thus destabilizing the entire nation.

### **5.3.2 The perception of inferiority**

Pakistanis believed to be superior to Bengalis, viewing them as weaker people. This perception was significantly influenced by, but not limited to, the religious differences between Hindus and Muslims. Another factor contributing to West Pakistan's perception of Bangladesh as a weaker entity stems from the British colonial practice of primarily recruiting Punjabis for their military forces. This led to them to be considered as a superior martial race due to perceived racial traits that supposedly made them natural warriors. These stereotypes persisted into the postcolonial era, influencing Pakistan's military recruitment and leading to harsh treatment of other ethnic groups (Talbot, 1998).

A significant difference between most Pakistanis and Bengalis is the language. A wide array of languages are spoken in Pakistan, but Urdu is the national language and is most widely spoken in the country. Although just around 7 percent of the population in Pakistan speaks Urdu as a mother language, around 70 percent of the literate population speaks it as a second language. Bengali is the language of the Bengalis, who mainly live in north-eastern India and Bangladesh. Urdu is regarded as the language of Islam in South-Asia and therefore, speaking Urdu is often seen as a sign of Islamic identity (Rahman, 2008). At the end of British rule, around 56 percent of the population in the new state of Pakistan spoke Bengali. However, Urdu was still initially declared the official language of the country by the West-Pakistani political elite. (Willoughby & Aftab, 2020). By doing this, West-Pakistan exerted its dominance over East-Pakistan. This inspired the Bengali Language Movement which culminated in the deaths of multiple students during protests and became the forerunner for other Bengali nationalist movements (Sarkar, 2023). The importance of their language to the Bengali people is also shown in the name of Bangladesh as Bangladesh means the land of the Bengali speaking people (Mohsin, 2003).

Besides differences in language, there are also religious differences between the Pakistanis and

Bengalis. Not all individuals within both the Urdu-speaking and Bengali-speaking groups have the same religious faith, however, most Urdu-speakers are Muslim. Although most Bengali-speakers are also Muslim, there is a large Hindu minority among Bengalis. Bengali Muslims also often intermarried with Bengali Hindu's. This factor contributes to why some Pakistanis viewed the Bengali Islamic faith as less pure than their own. Urdu-speakers also regarded their Islamic faith as purer because of the differences in the manner in which they were converted. Islam was first spread amongst Bengali-speakers by missionaries. As the masses or lower social castes were converted before the Bengali elites, the background of Bengali Muslims is modest. However, among Urdu-speakers, the elites were converted first. For the Urdu-speakers, Muslim conquests transformed the Urdu political elite into a part of the Islamic ruling class. The conversion of Urdu-speakers was therefore very top-down. This also caused Urdu-speakers to believe that a top-down approach was the preferred way to achieve unity. Therefore, during the 1971 events, a lot of Pakistani soldiers believed they were fighting to make the Bengali Muslim faith pure (Khan, 1985). This sentiment of superior Muslim faith among Pakistanis was also shown by Memon (1983). He studied literature by Urdu writers who wrote that the interaction between the Bengali Muslims and Hindu's diluted their Muslim faith. Furthermore he found in the literature that many Urdu-speakers therefore thought it was in the Bengalis' best interest to be a part of a state that is ruled based on Islamic principles, namely Pakistan. This complex inter-play of circumstances allows us to better comprehend the underlying causes of the Liberation War itself.

#### **5.4 Further discontentment and Operation Searchlight**

The opposing plans for the country held by former West and East Pakistan, as well as what was considered an unfair treatment of the East province, led to increasing amounts of socio-political tensions between the two parties. These tensions fostered a rising level of disconnect between the East and the West, two already very different and geographically separate parts of former Pakistan.

At a time when they already perceived to be neglected by the central government, Bengalis faced a devastating tropical cyclone on November 12, 1970 (Frank, 1971). The central government's slow reaction for help left Bengalis feeling unheard and unsupported. While the Bengali movement existed before the cyclone, the disaster significantly intensified the push for independence.

On December 7, 1970, only a month after this disastrous cyclone, general elections were held to elect member of the National Assembly. Despite the victory of the AL, authorities of West Pakistan did not accept the election results and declined to hand over power to the East Pakistani party. As such, these elections marked a crucial moment in the road to independence as it demonstrated that the people of East Pakistan desired greater autonomy within the Pakistani federation.

The several attempts by the Bengalis at achieving justice and equality, such as voting Bengali politicians legitimately into power, as well as several socio-political movements to make the population of East Pakistan heard, proved futile. After years of rising levels of resentment on both sides, the situation finally escalated into what is now known as the Bangladesh Liberation War (BBC, 2021).

On March 7th 1971, the leader of the AL, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered a historic speech emphasizing East Pakistan's fight for freedom and independence. His speech, which he began with an appeal for armed resistance, would serve as an important catalyst in rallying the Bengalis for rebellion against their oppressive government. However, in order to suppress the increasingly growing aspirations for independence, the Pakistani army launched the so-called military operation "Operation Searchlight" against the Bengali population on March 25

In an attempt to keep attention from the operation, the Pakistani government had ordered all foreign journalists to leave East Pakistan. However, one reporter of the Daily telegraph, Simon Dring, managed to go into hiding and thus witness the beginning of Operation Searchlight, resulting in one of the first reports on the war in Bangladesh. The initial stages of the attack took place in the evening hours in Dhaka, with the first targets being the city's Hindu population as well as Dhaka university and the police department. Simon Dring describes how the heavily armed Pakistani army fired at the university dorms and shot students who were trying to escape the violence, resulting in a death toll of several hundreds. Furthermore, the old town of Dhaka underwent intense attacks as it was home to a large population of AL supporters as well as Hindu citizens. Homes, pointed out as belonging to AL supporters by Bengali informants, were set on fire and groups of people were shot in the streets. In response to the outbreak of violence, Rahman declared Bangladesh as an independent country, which immediately prompted his arrest. March 26th is to this day celebrated as the official independence day of Bangladesh

## 5.5 The Liberation War

It is estimated that within the first week after the launch of Operation Searchlight, half of the population had left Dhaka to flee from the heavy assaults. Things only continued to escalate from that point on as the Pakistani army expanded their attacks to other parts of Bangladesh as well. Initially, other major cities also became the targets of violent strikes, but later the army also spread out to the countryside. According to the Bangladeshi Institute of Foreign Affairs, witnessing the brutal and systemic killings of unarmed civilians left the Bengali's enraged and distraught. As a result, calls for independence strengthened and what had started as Operation Searchlight turned into the Bangladesh Liberation War (Ucl, 2022).

In June of 1971, however, Pakistan allowed a number of foreign journalists back into the country to attempt to save their international public image. The aim was to show that fighting had come to a halt and to secure economic aid provided by The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The economic support had previously been stopped as a result of the violence. One of these reporters, Sydney Schanberg, described the developments of the situation in Bangladesh, as well as the ongoing attacks in great detail (Columbia Journalism Review, 2016). He reported widespread destruction around the whole country, an increase in food insecurity and risk of famine, as well as a generally crippled economy. Additionally, the Pakistani army had replaced Bangladeshis with people from West Pakistan in all positions of public service and had been prohibiting people from speaking Bengali. To supplement their troops, the Pakistani army had begun recruiting and arming civilians loyal to the Pakistani government, such as Biharis<sup>2</sup>, a group of people stemming from the Bihar region in India, Urdu speakers and sometimes affiliates of right wing religious parties. Schanberg also reported on the abominable treatment of Bengali prisoners by the Pakistani army. As the actions of the Pakistani continued, Bengali resistance increased. Frequently armed and trained by the Indian military, thousands of Bengalis had organized themselves in groups of guerilla fighters, creating increasing pressure on the Pakistani army (Bangladesh Genocide Archive, n.d.).<sup>3</sup>

The situation persisted for several more months with continuous violence across the entire country. Unable to handle the ongoing strain of refugees, the Indian army eventually intervened in the conflict on December 3rd (Research & Journal, 2022). According to the Bangladeshi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Pakistani army launched another attack, specifically targeted at killing the country's intellectuals, such as professors, doctors and engineers, on December 14. This is generally interpreted as a last attempt to inflict long lasting damage on Bangladesh. After the Indian intervention, the war lasted thirteen more days, with the Pakistani army surrendering to the Indian and Bangladeshi forces on December 16, 1971 (Ucl, 2022). It is estimated that a total of 80.000-100.000 heavily equipped Pakistani military troops fought in the Liberation War, accompanied by 75.000 members of paramilitary forces. Out of those, over 93.000 surrendered on December 16, which amounts to the biggest surrender since the Second World war (Research & Journal, 2022).

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<sup>2</sup>The term "Razakar" is a term used by Bengali people to describe collaborators of the Pakistani army during the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, often seen as traitors. It will not be used in this report. The term "Biharis" refers to a distinct community, and its usage acknowledges the complex and nuanced individual experiences, allegations, and the negative connotations associated with the term "Razakar."

<sup>3</sup>Please note that this source is written by a genocide recognition activist and that we believe that this history statement likely does not reflect their possibly biased statements.

### **5.5.1 The human toll of the Liberation War**

During this war for Bangladeshi independence, the army of West Pakistan engaged in several alleged war crimes in Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports the number of Bengalis killed to amount to 3 million, while the official Pakistani government investigation by the Hamood-ur-Rahman Commission reported a mere 26,000 casualties. Independent research initiatives, such as the one conducted in 2018 by Christian Gerlach, report numbers of people killed between 500,000 up to a million. While the exact number of casualties remains up to debate, it is undeniable that a significant tragedy occurred (BBC, 2021).

It is important to acknowledge that the impact of the war extends beyond the number of casualties, as it brought severe and long-lasting social, political and humanitarian consequences to Bengali society. These included demographic changes, such as changes in family structure and population decline in certain areas due to the large number of lives lost and people displaced. The Liberation War, as well as the Bengalis' pursuit for justice for the alleged war crimes, remains a contested topic in Bangladeshi politics to this day. According to the Bangladeshi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as a result of the fighting, 10 million Bengalis fled to India to seek safety, as well as an estimated number of 30 - 40 million people being displaced internally. Out of this estimated number of refugees, approximately 1.5 million is assumed to have died in various camps set up for the displaced people. The event remains one of the biggest refugee crises in modern history (Ucl, 2022).

The destructive effects on a number of aspects of public life could be felt years, or sometimes even decades later. For instance, the Pakistani army and their collaborators specifically targeted the country's intellectuals, which the Bangladeshi ministry of foreign affairs believes to have been an attempt to create an intellectual vacuum for the future. Due to this specific approach, 4.2 percent of the country's university professors were murdered. According to the Bangladeshi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the desired effect was achieved as the large number of intellectuals killed had a long term and severely debilitating effect on the nation. A lot of highly educated individuals and their expertise was lost and the functioning of institutions was disrupted following the Liberation War. Even though the entire country suffered as a result of the attacks, some groups, such as the Biharis, women and children, were especially victimised, leading the society in Bangladesh to experience long lasting social consequences to this day (Ucl, 2022).

### **5.5.2 Sexual violence during the Liberation War**

As previously explained, effects of the Liberation War were felt heavily by the Bengali society, and some still remain to this day. A topic that is often overlooked or not talked about sufficiently due to the deep rooted stigma, is the violence that women had to endure. Even though women rarely

participated in the active fighting, they were heavily targeted by the Pakistani army. What happened to the women of Bangladesh is known as one of the first documented occurrences of rape being used as a consciously applied weapon in war. In many cases, women were kidnapped and held in military-style camps where they were assaulted over a time period of several months. This tactic was applied to Bengali women of all ages, meaning that even girls as young as 13 or 14 years old were abducted and raped by Pakistani soldiers. The women were then kept in large numbers in small rooms with insufficient food and often completely in the dark. The conditions in the camps were so horrific that many women died during their imprisonment. Many historians state that the mass rape of Bengali women was also done with the intent to impregnate as many women as possible with West Pakistani children, which would have a further effect of destabilizing the Bengali society (Begum, 2023). This would have occurred due to the stigmatization of sexual assault victims as well as of the children born out of wedlock. The effect was exacerbated by the patriarchal family structure present in Bangladesh. A family's honour was largely dependent on the women's chastity and purity. Assaulting a woman was therefore seen as a direct insult to the entire family (Daily history, N.d.).

After the Liberation War came to an end, abused women were ostracised by their families and husbands, in severe cases even murdered, and the shame they felt and continue to feel prevents many survivors from speaking up about their stories. This also inhibited many women from seeking help, leaving them to deal with their trauma by themselves. Children born out of this situation were frequently shunned as well, or sometimes even killed (Begum, 2023). In an attempt to counteract the repercussions of the sexual violence that occurred during the Liberation War, late term abortions were legalized for a limited amount of time. The Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimated that a total of 170,000 abortions were performed on women who had suffered abuse by the Pakistani army. However, for some women the trauma inflicted upon them was so severe that they committed suicide either after or during the Liberation War, the number is estimated to be around 30,000.

After the war, many women were desperately seeking to end their pregnancy, some were even forced or coerced into doing so by their families and husbands, which led to a large number of procedures being performed under unsafe and unsanitary circumstances. This large number of unsafe procedures was also partially caused by a general lack of resources, especially medical ones, after the war. The few medical resources that were left were also often dedicated to helping war veterans rather than the abused women (bdnews, 2010).

These stories provide crucial insight into how the Liberation War continues to have a detrimental effect on a number of people, even fifty years after its passing. The trauma of the events that occurred is a topic that the Bengali society still is fighting to overcome.

After the Liberation War had come to an end, the government of the newly established Bangladesh



faced the challenging task of providing support to abused women, as well as to aid in their reintegration into society. Safe houses were established to support and to provide shelter to women in need and vocational training was provided for women which were rejected by their families and husbands. Moreover, the government awarded the abused women the honoured title of Birangona women, which translates to “war heroines” or “brave women”. This was done with the intent to counteract the existing negative stigma and to demonstrate their utmost respect for the survivors (Begum, 2023).

What happened to the Birangona women serves as a direct example of generational trauma inflicted on Bengali civilians as a result of the suppressive Pakistani rule of Bangladesh culminating in the Liberation War. Bangladeshi society paid a high price to obtain its independence and the Birangona women, among other traumatized Bengalis, continue to pay it to this day.

### **5.5.3 The Biharis**

Another group of people in Bengali society that continue to suffer due to past events are the so-called “Stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh”. Ethnically, they are Biharis, a group of people originally from the Bihar region in India. However, in Bengali the term “Biharis“ is not just a term referring to their region of origin, but also strongly negatively connotated. During the Liberation War, they were in support of former West Pakistan, even though most of them had no actual roots in the country. This support led them to experience a lot of violence at the hands of Bengalis (The Guardian, 2022).

The “Stranded Pakistanis” remain a marginalised community in Bangladesh up until this day, being assigned to live isolated in camps set up for them in 1971 by the Bangladeshi government. Originally, this was supposed to be a temporary solution; however, their situation is still almost unchanged fifty years later. Often, the Biharis live in extreme poverty and face issues with discrimination as well as their rights on a regular basis. The reason for them living in poverty is mainly the fact that there are minimal economic opportunities available for them. Even though a law was established in 2008 that allows the Biharis to obtain Bengali citizenship, many still struggle or find themselves unable to do so due to discrimination from civil servants and government officials. In order to improve their circumstances, the “stranded Pakistanis” sometimes try to integrate and to pass as ordinary Bengali citizens. However, this comes at a significant sacrifice, namely the relinquishment of their language and culture (The Guardian, 2014).

Immediately after the war had come to an end, many of the Biharis were hoping to relocate to Pakistan. However, the Pakistani government denied their request as they feared that a huge wave of immigrants would further destabilise their country. Over time, efforts were made to relocate the “stranded Pakistanis” to Pakistan, and some people were even issued Pakistani ID cards in 1992.

However, the success of the efforts were very limited due to a lack of available funding (Tariq A. Al Maena, 2021).

This goes on to show how even fifty years later, the Liberation War continues to have a dividing effect on the society in Bangladesh. The memories of what happened are still very fresh for a big part of the population, and the country struggles to come to terms with its past. This lingering trauma as well as societal divisions has had an impact on various aspects of public life as well as the economy, through an effect on economic growth and stability.

## **5.6 Why is the topic contested?**

Despite this lasting impact on the events of 1971 on Bangladeshi society, considerable debate continues regarding whether these events meet the criteria for the genocide classification. The actions of the Pakistani military have not yet been officially recognized as genocide by the international community. The Bangladeshi government has made an appeal for recognition and recently they have been gaining outside support. Although no big international players have recognized the genocide yet, in the US, UK and EU, there have been initiatives and calls to get the government to recognize the events of 1971 as a genocide. This section will give a brief overview of why the events in 1971 have not been recognized as genocide and what the different perspectives on the events are.

### **5.6.1 Challenges in genocide recognition**

In international law, genocide was defined by the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948). Article 2 gives the following definition of genocide: “In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

Therefore, to prove events constituted a genocide, one must prove the intent to destroy. Fein (1993) stated that the borders of the definition of genocide are not clearly defined, which leaves room for different interpretations of events. As a result, a significant challenge in genocide recognition is proving this ‘intent to destroy’. The debate on genocide recognition is further complicated by international relations and reciprocal interests, which prevent states from accusing each other of genocide and the fact that perpetrators of genocide are often allied with international superpowers. This provides the perpetrators with a certain degree of security. Genocides, thereby, also often

go unnoticed in Western media and are rarely remarked upon in World Forums (Fein, 1990). In conclusion, both the way genocide is defined in international law and complexities in international relations, present significant obstacles in genocide recognition.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (N.d.) recently wrote an official appeal for recognition of the 1971 Liberation War in commission of the Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In this appeal it is acknowledged that the presence or absence of the intent to destroy is the most important factor in deciding whether events constitute a genocide or not. They state that the magnitude of the number of killings is often associated with public acceptance and recognition of a genocide. They argue that as per the UN definition, there is no specific amount of killings necessary for events to constitute a genocide. Instead, they state that conditions of life leading to physical destruction are just as important and that the number of killings is not always able to correctly quantify the emotional suffering of the victims. Thereby they also indirectly address the uncertainty regarding the number of Bengali casualties during the events of 1971. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (N.d.) states that these events can be constituted as genocide for multiple reasons.

Firstly, they argue that the West Pakistanis specifically targeted an ethnic group, namely the Bengali people, and that this had been happening before the Liberation War commenced. The West Pakistanis considered the Bengalis as ethnically and racially inferior since they perceived them to be "infected" with Hindu culture. Additionally, they were represented very little in leadership positions in the government and military. They argue that these prejudices were already shown during the Bengali Language Movement when Bengalis shed blood for the right to speak their mother language. Secondly, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (N.d.) argues that the policies implemented by the West Pakistanis both before and during the Liberation War had the goal to establish certain conditions of life that resulted in physical destruction. Examples of this are the slow reaction of the West Pakistani government after the disastrous tropical cyclone in Bangladesh in November 1970. These policies led to the displacement of millions of Bengalis from their homes, which not only damaged the Bangladeshi economy, but also led to a multitude of deaths and serious illnesses due to bad conditions in the refugee camps.

Thirdly, they state that the widespread rape of Bengali women and the selection of the women for the sexual assaults based on ethnicity not only show a crime against humanity but also show an intent to destroy the Bengali group by dehumanizing Bengali women.

Lastly, they argue that the large number of killings, although not the only factor of importance, show the intent to annihilate the Bengali national identity. In addition to their argument based on the UN's standard definition of genocide, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (N.d.) also introduces an argument from a human rights standpoint. They stress the urgency of recognition to address the human rights issue of the torture, rape and murder of hundreds of thousands non-combatant civilians. They argue that the memory and identity of these victims needs to be honoured by recognizing what has happened to them.

In conclusion, they urge the international community to recognize the committed atrocities in Bangladesh in 1971 as a genocide.

The Pakistani government denies these allegations of genocide. It has also openly reacted disapprovingly to the highly controversial war crimes trials held by the International Crimes Tribunal in Bangladesh since 2009 and has spoken out against the executions following these trials. While some Pakistani leaders have stated regrets for the excesses committed during the Liberation War in 1971, they have never issued an official apology for Pakistan's actions during the war (Pande, 2015). After Pakistan's defeat, the Hamoodur Rahman Commission Report was written in commission of the Pakistani government. This report looks into the tragic events of 1971 and acknowledges the atrocities committed by the Pakistani military against the Bengalis during the Liberation War, placing the blame for those atrocities on the Pakistani army. Initially this report was kept as a classified document, but after parts were leaked by the Indian Media, the report has been partially declassified. However, the burying of this report shows that the Pakistani government does not want to shed light on what happened in 1971 (Iqbal, 2017; Shoovra, 2010).

In addition, some arguments are made that the atrocities during the 1971 Liberation War cannot be called a genocide. A commonly used argument states that the atrocities committed in Bangladesh in 1971 were acts of war and not of genocide. They argue that the events of 1971 do not fit the U.N. definition of genocide as Pakistan's actions aimed to suppress the separatist movement in Bangladesh. Therefore, they see the casualties in Bangladesh as political killings and not as victims of genocide. Others point out, however, that by strongly emphasising the separatist movement, these contenders do not consider the ideological and political background of the conflict. They argue that the intent to undermine the Bengalis existed prior to the separatist movement, evident during events like the Bengali language movement. Therefore, they state that the killings during the Liberation War cannot be categorised as purely political (Iqbal, 2017).

Opponents argue that the events of 1971 were not a one-sided extermination but involved reciprocal violence as there have been some accounts of Bengalis committing violent acts on non-Bengalis during the Liberation War, classifying the events as a war rather than a genocide in their eyes (Ranjan, 2016). Ranjan (2016) further states that a major discussion point is that it remains unclear how many East Pakistani civilians were killed. Different sources estimate the number of victims between

26.000 and 3 million. These different perspectives on the events during the Liberation War allow for a debate on whether or not the atrocities during the it can constitute as a genocide or not.

The debate is further complicated by the lack of international attention. Recognition for the Bangladeshi genocide case is currently low as the alleged genocide initially received little international attention and there have been very few trials and convictions for war crimes committed during this period, which results in a low priority for recognition on the international agenda. Beachler (2007) argues that after the Liberation War, there was not much political benefit in the West in exposing the atrocities committed by the Pakistani army. Pakistan was an important partner of the U.S. at the time and the U.S. did not want to jeopardize their relations by accusing Pakistan of genocide. Therefore, they neglected addressing the tragic events. The scarcity of war crimes trials and convictions, further complicates the debate. Bass (2016) argues that this lack of trials is partly due to the negotiations in 1972 between Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. After India and Pakistan signed a peace treaty in 1972, negotiations followed for the return of Pakistani prisoners of war held in India. India sought international security and peace in the region and Pakistan wanted the return of its prisoners of war. India was not willing to release the prisoners of war without Bangladesh' approval, but after the peace agreement it did not have further motivation to prosecute these prisoners as war criminals. At the time, Bangladesh could not seek justice without the support from India and therefore compromised by giving most higher-level officials of the Pakistani army amnesty for their alleged crimes in return for official recognition of Bangladesh as an independent country by Pakistan (Bass, 2016).

Despite all this, the events of 1971 in Bangladesh have recently been gaining international attention. While no big international players have officially recognized these events as genocide, there have been initiatives in support of recognizing the genocide. For example, the former president of India referred to the atrocities as genocide. In a speech in Dhaka on 17 December 2021, president Kovind (2021) said: "... I was reminded of the declaration of independence that Bangabandhu had issued in Dhaka on 26 March 1971, the atrocities and genocide faced by the people of Bangladesh and the armed struggle of the Mukti Bahini against the brutal Pakistani occupation forces." There have also been calls to recognize the Bangladesh genocide to the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.K. house of representatives and the European Parliament ((Powel, 2023); Recognizing the Bangladesh Genocide of 1971, 2022 ; "UK parliament urged", 2024). However, none of these calls for recognition have had concrete effects and so far the events of 1971 are still not widely recognized as a genocide.

## 5.7 The period after the Liberation War: military coups and political instability

After Bangladesh gained its independence, it entered the world's stage as one of the poorest countries. Being disregarded as a 'basket case' (i.e. a hopeless case) by US secretary of state Henry Kissinger (Tripathi, 2021), the outlook for the war-ravaged country was not very positive.

Sheikh Mujib, who led the provisional government of Bangladesh during the war from a prison in West Pakistan and is honoured as the 'Father of the Nation', returned to Bangladesh from his imprisonment on January 10, 1972 (Shehabuddin, 2016). He was sworn into office as prime minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on January 12, 1972. His time in office was characterised by interior conflicts sparked by different ideological ideas on how the newly founded state should position itself politically and economically. Mujib and his party, the AL, won with a large majority in the first parliamentary elections in 1973, and aimed to create a democratic socialist state.

In his time in office, Mujib also tried to establish a one-party system inspired by other socialist countries, such as China and the USSR. India, Bangladesh's most important ally, was backed by the Soviet Union, whilst Pakistan had been supported by the United States. Mujib made himself president of Bangladesh and banned all opposition parties. The single-party regime was characterised by corruption and censorship (Datta-Ray, 2024). These developments, amongst others, led to a coup d'état on August 15, 1975. The coup was led by a group of army generals who were previously part of opposition parties (Sarkar, 2009). Ziaur Rahman, future leader of Bangladesh, was not directly involved in the execution of the coup, but is believed to have supported it. Sheikh Mujib, his guards, and all his family members were executed during the coup, with the exception of his daughters Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana (for Research & Information, 2021).

After the brutal coup in 1975, Bangladesh became increasingly unstable. The generals behind the coup on Mujib failed to gain sufficient support within government and military. On November 3rd of 1975, a counter-coup led by pro-Mujib military forces overthrew the new government and put Ziaur Rahman under arrest for supporting the coup against Sheikh Mujib. Only 4 days later, on November 7th, a soldiers' revolt took power and freed Rahman from his arrest, allowing him to concentrate the military around him and rule the country through a military cabinet headed by the three chiefs of armed forces. Rahman became president of Bangladesh in 1977. In 1978, he founded the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) to civilianize his regime (Shehabuddin, 2016). Ziaur Rahman ruled the country with harsh measures against his opponents, aiming to suppress revolutionary thoughts. He survived two attempted coups in 1977, and reacted with mass executions of generals and soldiers conspiring against him (Mannan, 2022).

On May 30, 1981, Ziaur Rahman was shot in his residence by revolting army generals. The

conspiracists were discontent with the treatment of army officers, and hoped for increased privileges by taking power. Despite killing Ziaur Rahman, the attackers did not succeed in overthrowing the government, and most were killed in a standoff against military forces that remained loyal to the government, with the rest being sentenced to death afterwards. Former Vice President Sattar, who had no military background, became acting president of Bangladesh following the assassination of Rahman. Sattar tried to restrain the influence of the military, which caused him to lose support within the Bangladesh Armed Forces.

On March 24, 1982, Lieutenant General Hussain Mohammad Ershad led a bloodless coup against Sattar, forcing him to resign at gunpoint. Ershad officially became president of Bangladesh in 1983 and dissolved the government, banning all political parties. In 1986, he established the Jatiya Party (JP) to legitimise his rule in a similar fashion to Rahman's procedure with the BNP. By granting large privileges to the military, Ershad was able to avoid further military coups during his reign.

Ershad's political reign was opposed by the descendants of previous political leaders of Bangladesh with the aim of restoring democracy: Sheikh Hasina, daughter of first president Sheikh Mujib, and Khaled Zia, wife of ex-president Ziaur Rahman. Hasina, leading the AL and Zia, leading the BNP, joined forces against the rule of Ershad and the JP. BNP and AL also allowed the Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) to join the movement despite vast differences in their political views. This unity is a significant event in Bangladesh' history, as Zia and Hasina's family history is overshadowed by bloody events. The joint effort against Ershad was further supported by the formation of the 'All Party's Student Unity', a combined organisation of the student branches of all opposition parties, which forced the party leaders to put their differences aside and keep their efforts united. After the killing of a doctor at Dhaka University on November 27, 1990, civil disobedience amongst members of all levels of society forced Ershad to react to this. He tried to instate martial law, but was denied support from the military, forcing him to resign and hand over power to a caretaker government. Bangladesh held national elections on February 27 of 1991, and successfully returned to democracy (Shehabuddin, 2016).

## **6 The evolution of Bangladesh's political landscape, economy and foreign affairs, post-Independence**

### **6.1 The current political system**

As seen in the previous paragraph, Bangladeshi politics after the Liberation War have been complex and contradicting. On the one hand, Bangladeshi democracy has proven resilient by peacefully end-

ing the military rule in 1991 and is being ranked as a upper mid-level democracy in The Economist' Democracy Index with a ranking of 5.99 out of 10 in 2023. The ranking has been constant around the value of 6 out of 10 since the first edition in 2006 and is comparable to Eastern European countries such as North Macedonia (6.1) or Ukraine (5.42) (Unit, 2023). On the other hand, high corruption levels, economic inequality and world-market dependence, the rise of extremist groups, and violent protests claiming multiple lives put increasing pressure on the political situation in Bangladesh. Whilst the trauma of 1971 is still very prevalent in the collective memory of the Bangladeshi population, with regards to politics, it mainly impacts underlying inter party relations and international affairs. The more common day-to-day politics are mainly driven by the aforementioned economic challenges. A large proportion of the political system can be traced back to the events of 1971 and the unstable time period after, showing the immense direct and indirect impact of 1971 on today's Bangladesh. All of the major political parties have emerged throughout the first 15 years of independence, taking power at different points in time.

The political system in Bangladesh is dominated by the aforementioned four main parties, which originate from different time periods in Bangladesh history previously discussed. The centre-left AL and the centre-right BNP are the two main parties, with the centrist JP and the JI having a disproportionately large influence on Bangladesh' politics relative to their low election results (Shehabuddin, 2016). Since the return to democracy in 1991, both BNP and AL have led governments and transitioned power peacefully multiple times.

However, despite a widely spread belief in democracy in the population, accusations of the AL becoming increasingly authoritarian in recent years have been more and more common. The AL has been in power since the 2008 elections, with Sheikh Hasina Wazed being sworn into the office on January 6, 2009, making her the longest serving female head-of-state in the world.

In the following sections, Bangladesh' politics will be separated into two main parts: The trauma of 1971, and the current economic challenges and their political ramifications. Both play a crucial role in shaping the political economy of this South Asian Country. Whilst the collective memory of the events during the Liberation War are still very prevalent in Bangladeshi politics, it is mainly inter-party politics and international relations that are dominated by the lasting memory of 1971. In contrast, day-to-day politics are primarily driven by economic challenges such as high corruption, economic inequality and world-market dependence.

### **6.1.1 The trauma of 1971**

Over the years, several attempts at achieving justice for the victims of the war, conducted by various parties have failed. However, since 2009, some highly controversial trials have taken place in the



context of the International Crimes Tribunal in Bangladesh. The start of the tribunals came as a great success to the former Bangladeshi prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, as prosecution of the alleged war crimes during the war in 1971 was one of the fundamental goals of her government. Nevertheless, since their start, the tribunals have been subjected to internal doubt, as well as received criticism from international organisations, such as the Human Rights Watch. They have uttered criticisms regarding the tribunals' fairness and transparency ("Bangladesh MP Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury to hang for war crimes", 2013).

Throughout the trials, several people have been convicted of crimes against humanity or genocide and have therefore received the death penalty. Most of the people convicted were people affiliated with the JI party, a party that was strongly opposed to the idea of an independent Bangladesh and that cooperated with Pakistani militia during the Liberation War ("Bangladesh MP Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury to hang for war crimes", 2013). Whilst the JI cooperated with BNP and AL to end the rule of Ershad in 1991, the partnership did not last for a long time.

However, it is crucial to note that Bangladesh was prevented from putting the respective Pakistani military officers accused of war crimes to trial ("Bangladesh MP Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury to hang for war crimes", 2013). This is due to the Simla agreement, a peace deal which was signed between India and Pakistan to restore stability to south Asia after the war. The agreement involved India releasing over 93,000 Pakistani prisoners of war and allowing them to return home, which included 195 people alleged to have been involved in acts of war crimes committed against the Bengalis. These people were all pardoned. In return, Pakistan acknowledged an independent Bangladesh (Weinraub, 1974).

The war crime tribunal in 2009 also serves as a great example of the current political situation in Bangladesh. The government under prime minister Sheikh Hasina follows a strategy of strategic framing to discredit both parties' legitimacy. Regarding the JI, the AL accuses the party of supporting West Pakistan in the 1971 Liberation War and charged several members of the JI with war crimes in the tribunal installed shortly after the AL regained power in the 2008 elections. During the tribunal, 8 war criminals were sentenced to death, 7 of which were politicians in high positions in the JI, and one conviction was spoken against a member of the BNP.

The United States issued a press statement in 2013, reminding Bangladesh that "any such trials must be free, fair, and transparent, and in accordance with domestic standards and international standards, which Bangladesh has agreed to uphold through its ratification of international agreements, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights." (Nuland, 2013). With regards to treatment of the BNP, relations have worsened significantly between the two main parties after colluding to end military rule in 1991. The relationship between AL and BNP is characterised

by an emotional, personal feud between current prime minister Sheikh Hasina and former prime minister and leader of the BNP, Khaleda Zia.

The personal background story between the two most powerful women of Bangladesh highlights the personal ties involved in Bangladeshi politics and how the current elite is intertwined with past events that trace back to the independence war. Hasina and the AL use framing to make the BNP responsible for several terror attacks such as the terror attacks by Al Qaeda in Dhaka in 2016, which claimed the lives of 6 attackers and 22 civilians (Ramani, 2016). The influence of the Liberation War of 1971 and the period are still clearly visible in the current political elite of Bangladesh.

### **6.1.2 Current economic challenges and their political ramifications**

Whilst the trauma of 1971 is still prevalent in the collective memory and political affairs, Bangladeshi politics are also shaped in large extent by the day-to-day issues the country faces. With a score of 24 (highly corrupt), Bangladesh ranks at place 149 out of 180 worldwide on the global corruption index (International, 2023). In addition, the Bangladesh economy is highly dependent on world-market factors beyond their control. Ready-made garments make up 80% of the country's exports, and export quantities are highly dependent on world market demand. With Covid-19 and the Russian attack on Ukraine slowing down Western economies, demand for garments dropped, which had a significant adverse effect on Bangladesh (Frayar, 2022).

With their exports taking a hit amidst recent macroeconomic developments, rising energy prices pose another significant problem for this country. Since the power grid runs almost exclusively on imported fuel sources, the combination of an increase in input prices and the decrease in revenue have become very problematic. Like most low and middle income countries, the Bangladeshi government subsidizes oil and gasoline. However, in August of 2023, the government announced that it can no longer afford to pay these subsidies, increasing fuel prices by over 50% overnight ("Fuel price hike inflates further essentials cost in Bangladesh", 2022). The announcement came as a surprise to many citizens, causing traffic jams of several kilometres around gas stations and further worsening the trust in the government. As a result of rationing, daily (planned) power outages in the capital city Dhaka and other regions have been occurring for several months, oftentimes inconsistent with the previously announced outage-schedule (Haq, 2024).

The economic challenges impact the political situation in Bangladesh, which can be seen when looking at recent government approval ratings, where a growing dissatisfaction with the political situation can be observed. The 2023 report of the International Republican Institute (IRI) shows a drop in satisfaction with the government from 70% in 2019 to 44% in 2023. Support for the opposition, so primarily the BNP, has increased from 36% to 63%. Despite government approval

ratings taking a major hit, 70% of respondents approve of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasana (Institute, 2023).<sup>4</sup> These figures show that the main issue with Bangladeshi politics is not its leadership, but deeper lying issues of distrust.

This underlying trust problem is further proven when looking at voter turnout. In the IRI study in 2023, 92% of respondents claim to be likely (57% ‘very likely’) to participate in the upcoming 2024 elections, should fairness and independence be ensured (Institute, 2023). The actual turnout raised questions amongst independent observers by suddenly jumping from 27% in a first media briefing to 40% shortly after (Mahmud, 2024). Concerns with the fairness and truthfulness of the elections have led the BNP to boycott the elections for the second time in three election periods (Macdonald, 2024). Concerns have also been raised regarding political prosecution of opposition parties. Thousands of court cases against members of the opposition, especially the BNP, are being held on a daily basis. The BNP sees this as politically motivated oppression and the efforts of the AL to eliminate democratic values and turn Bangladesh into a one-party state. Asked about the AL, BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam states: “They don’t believe in democracy” (Mashal, 2023).

## **6.2 The economy of Bangladesh**

### **6.2.1 Ambiguity and economic consequences**

The events of 1971, although not the origin of the conflict, provided Bangladesh with a chance to define itself after it seceded from Pakistan. The incidents took place in a setting of ethnic and linguistic conflict between the eastern and western wing of Pakistan. The 1971 events thus helped shape Bangladesh’s ethnic and political conditioning by offering its people a strong sense of nationality while also making them sensitive to centralised forms of political authority. In this regard, this legacy can be evidenced by the country’s federal system of government, a crucial structure that ensures power is distributed across the nation, and the general decentralisation of power and authority to the regional and local levels as a general policy (Akram, 2006).

The effects of the 1971 Liberation War were severe, further exacerbating Bangladesh’s economic problems during the immediate post-war period and depleted infrastructural infrastructure. Despite all these challenges, the country remained highly resilient and the emerging economy of Bangladesh performed well.

Nation-Building and Economic Challenges During the initial political and social development

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<sup>4</sup>Please note that this report was initially written prior to the events of July-August of 2024 and that the approval of Sheikh Hasina has drastically changed. Please refer to section 4

of Bangladesh, the country experienced a multitude of problems. The year of independence was characterised by the formulation of a viable state structure and dealing with the economic and bureaucratization problems that were inherited from the colonial period. During the period of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the ruling party initiated government policies aimed at constructing a new nation through measures such as land reforms, nationalisation of industries, and stabilisation of the economy. These policies were aimed at attending more than the basic needs of the people and at the same time to create the conditions for the future development. Although these policies put down the fundamentals for advancement, challenges remain today, especially in areas such as political stability, development of physical infrastructure, and bureaucratic efficiencies. (Jahan, 1973).

Bangladesh has inherited several major economic challenges as it emerged in 1971, including considerable fluctuations in GDP growth rates and inflation rates (Jahan, 1973). Moreover, the socio-political environment in Bangladesh during the early years was portrayed a lot by humanitarian crises.

Talukder Maniruzzaman discusses the role of economic policy in this task, the factor of political stability, and the factor of the international community's attitude towards Bangladesh (Maniruzzaman, 1975). There were various economic challenges Bangladesh struggled with and new economic policies were introduced in an attempt to redress these. Some of the economic policies were; reforms on the land, nationalisation of industries as well and a stabilisation policy that was characterised by acts such as controlling prices as well as subsidising (Maniruzzaman, 1975). In 1974, there was a vast difference between projected and actual GDP growth rates, hence portraying the challenges that Bangladesh experienced in the process of making the economy more stable (Maniruzzaman, 1975). Thus, while the government took essential steps to stabilise the economy by controlling prices and providing subsidies, these measures also created serious problems.

Maniruzzaman encourages the governments to pursue policies of economic diversification and industrialization and contents that the policy to mobilise local resources would help to stabilise if not to grow the economy. The fact that the country once relied mostly on foreign aid is evidenced by the fact that up to 75% of its development budget in the first couple of years was sourced from outside the country, and this underscored the imperative of the country to adopt policies that would enhance economic diversification and local resource mobilisation (Maniruzzaman, 1975).

### **6.2.2 Foreign direct investment and its effect on the economic growth of a country**

In the past few decades, Bangladesh has been actively implementing strategic economic policies with an aim to generate growth and development of the country, one of these key inclusive strategies being foreign direct investment (FDI). A study by Jagadish Prasad Sahu outlines the findings of

FDI in the developing countries and offers an understanding of the impact of FDI being part of the strategic plan of Bangladesh. To attract more investors, governments have to implement the following measures: economic zones, change of tax policy, and reforms in the regulations (Sahu, 2021).

The liberalisation of FDI has been effective in sectors such as textiles, agriculture, and manufacturing as a result of new technology and enhanced production. For example, the textile industry in Bangladesh has greatly benefited from FDI and has positioned the country on the global map of the largest garment exporters with the sector contributing more than 80% to the total exports and employing nearly 4 million workers as reported by Sahu (2021). Thus, this sector has emerged as one of the most vital pillars of any economy as it has created millions of jobs and boosted the GDP.

There has also been a positive effect resulting from the government's effort to attract FDI, as it positively affected the advancement of some other sectors, such as information technology and telecommunications, thus diversifying the economic systems. The Office of Economic Cooperation and Development estimates that FDI inflows to Bangladesh in 2020 were \$2.37 billion, this is an indication of the increasing realisation of the country as a good investment destination (Sahu, 2021). However, factors including political instability, lack of adequate infrastructure, and bureaucratic complications, remain which still affect the efficiency of FDI. Political risk involves expropriation, and instability hinders an investor's ability to invest a lot of time in a business due to policy unpredictability. The trauma of the genocide and consequent actions in politics hurts the confidence of investors (Afolabi & Bakar, 2016) and hurts their willingness to invest in Bangladesh. Lack of infrastructure such as weak transport infrastructure and erratic power supply makes operation costs high, organisations less competitive. Political risks, including bureaucratic issues like corruption, act as a hindrance in the investment process by causing delays in project development and implementation as well as adding to the expenses (Sahu, 2021).

In his study, Sahu highlighted that politico-economic stability is the key driver that has the potential to fully harness FDI benefit. Some theories indicate that first world countries with efficient structures in managing their economic situations are in a better position to harness FDI thus enhancing the country's economic growth more. For Bangladesh, an integration of financial sector reform is crucial in order to attract FDI. The country can also look at its neighbours, adopting effective policies and encouraging more investment.

### **6.2.3 Macroeconomic environment and its gradual evolution**

Bangladesh now is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Currently, the country's GDP has been growing at a rate of 6-7%, on average, during the past decade (Sahu, 2021). With the aim

of creating value and stability for the people as well as for the country as a whole, several economic policies have been put in place that align with the national development priorities. The cases of other developing Asian countries can therefore be useful for Bangladesh in the effort to fine tune its economic policies and reap optimum utility of FDI.

Bangladesh has a government vision called Vision 2041 which seeks to turn the nation into a developed country by 2041 with the rate of GDP per capita to reach at least \$3,825 and goals of reducing poverty, investing heavily in infrastructure development and other fields. It consists of main strategic priorities as to develop the digital economy, to improve the human capital, and to advance the governance and institutions. These efforts are in a bid to prepare the ground for steady and sustainable economic development.

The performance of Bangladesh's economic system cannot be explained without taking into account the historical background and most significantly the events of 1971. As the foregoing discourse indicates, history and economic policies have played a crucial role in determining the course of the nation. Therefore, as Bangladesh steadily moves forward in its development, it will always symbolise strength and encouragement and serve as a model of how economic planning and cooperation from the international community can assist in the development of a once struggling third-world country.

## **6.3 International Relations**

This section looks at how international relations between Bangladesh and a selection of foreign players have evolved since Bangladesh gained independence in 1971. First, relations with Pakistan after the Liberation War will be discussed. Next, we will look at the relations between Bangladesh and its geographical neighbour India. Lastly, the relations with major economic and geopolitical global players important to Bangladesh will be analysed. The section will look at relations with the United States, China, and the United Kingdom.

### **6.3.1 Relations with Pakistan**

In recent years, there have been efforts to normalise relations. Pakistan has occasionally expressed a desire for reconciliation and improving bilateral ties. There have also been exchanges between leaders and attempts to increase economic cooperation (Jazeera Al, 2020).

Efforts have been made to improve trade and economic ties with discussions around a free trade agreement (FTA) being revisited. Originally proposed in 2002, the potential FTA aims to enhance bilateral trade by addressing tariffs and other barriers. However, the progress has been intermittent.

This is attributable to Bangladesh's demands for immediate and free access to Pakistan's markets within a year of signing, justifying this based on their status as a Least Developed Country (LDC). Pakistan was reluctant to allow such unrestricted access. Instead, Pakistan suggested easing the set of rules, reducing direct tariffs, removing non-tariff barriers, extending the tariff elimination timeline, and focusing more on anti-dumping and countervailing measures. However, these proposals did not lead to an agreement. There has been renewed interest from both Pakistan and Bangladesh to consider signing an FTA (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2022).

As Bangladesh is set to lose its LDC status in 2026, the Bangladeshi government is seeking to secure market access in important regions by establishing trade agreements. The Bangladeshi government sees Pakistan as a promising market for the medium to long-term future (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2022). Moreover, economic interactions have shown some potential. A report on a potential FTA agreement revealed that bilateral trade between Pakistan and Bangladesh has always been in favour of Pakistan. The report shows a decrease in Pakistan's export competitiveness within the Bangladeshi market, despite it being among the top ten import sources for Bangladesh.

Additionally, both nations have recognized the mutual benefits of cooperating on environmental challenges like climate change. Their shared vulnerability to climate change has created opportunities for Bangladesh and Pakistan to work together (Leeza, 2020).

### **6.3.2 Relations with India**

Relations between India and Bangladesh date back to the very beginning of the Liberation War. Faced with the severe costs of millions of refugees streaming into India and the opportunity to destabilise their enemy, India supported the Bengali independence movement from the start. India's intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing, trained and armed the Bangladesh liberation fighters and supplied them with crucial intelligence (Patnaik, 2021). The Pakistani attack on India on December 3rd, 1971 caused a full-scale war between the two countries and led to India's direct involvement in the Bangladesh Liberation War. In his speech to the Indian nation, Prime Minister Gandhi states the Indian intentions: "Today the war in Bangladesh has become a war on India." ("The World: India and Pakistan: Over the Edge", 1971). The involvement of the Indian Armed Forces served as a tipping point in the war. Less than two weeks later, on December 16, 1971, West Pakistan's forces surrendered unconditionally, marking the birth of the nation of Bangladesh. India formally recognized the nation of Bangladesh on December 6 of 1971 and became the first nation to do so (Francis, 2019).

A major milestone in bilateral India-Bangladesh relations was reached in 2015, when Indian

prime minister Modi and Bangladesh prime minister Hasina signed a historic agreement to simplify their border and swap around 200 small enclaves. Whilst the deal has little economic value, the symbolic value is immense. Talks to simplify the border were first held in 1974, and came to an abrupt end when Bangladesh's prime minister Rahman was assassinated in 1975, with subsequent governments unable to find an agreement. The deal was made possible by "political consolidation and goodwill", according to prime minister Modi. The deal also included expansion of the economic ties between the two South Asian countries including a new 2 billion USD line of credit (Quadir, 2015). Economic ties have been further deepened with India's G20 presidency in 2023, where Bangladesh was invited by India as a guest country. Modi and Hasina met during Hasina's state visit to the G20 summit, and agreed to further expand cooperation, especially in the infrastructure and defense sectors. The India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline started operation in early 2023, making it the first cross-border oil pipeline aimed at strengthening the ties and supporting the insatiable Bangladeshi power grid (Delhi, 2023). During the G20 summit, both countries agreed on the construction of the Akhaura-Agartala rail link, which will link northeastern India with their neighbour. This railway link expands the joint railway system that has been built up in the last 15 years, providing enhanced connectivity between both countries. India is also Bangladesh's largest export market with 2 billion USD worth of exports in 2022. Total trade between countries amounted to 15.9 billion USD in 2022 (of Economic Affairs, 2024).

Whilst the overall relations between the countries are very good, especially regarding economic policy and counter-terrorism efforts, the increasingly anti-Muslim policy of Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party is a major point of concern in Bangladesh. The anti-Muslim sentiment of Modi's government has put stress on the relations and allowed for the rise of extremist groups in Bangladesh, putting the country at the risk of a new period of political instability and discrimination of minorities. Moreover, rising tensions since August 2024 have put the relations at risk. India's unwavering support of Sheikh Hasina, even among the violent crackdown of her regime on the student protesters that resulted in hundreds of deaths, has turned public opinion among Bangladeshis against India. Modi has accused the interim government of failing to protect Bangladesh's Hindu population as allegations of attacks on minorities such as the Hindus have come out. However, in Bangladesh, these allegations are considered to be part of a smear campaign by AL (Parkin & Reed, 2024). Others claim that the accusations are the work of far-right supporters in India, who are spreading misinformation and false videos that give a misleading view of the events (Wakefield & Menon, 2024). With so many contrary news reports, it is unclear what the actual situation in Bangladesh is like until the dust settles and peace has returned to the country.



### 6.3.3 Relations with China

Bangladesh and China enjoy strong bilateral relations in terms of their economic ties, partnerships, and diplomacy. Diplomatic relations were established in 1975, when China formally recognized Bangladesh as an independent country after liberation from Pakistan. Over the past few decades, relations between the two countries have grown stronger and a solid legal basis for cooperation has been established. First and foremost, the partnership was established to ensure that the two states supported each other due to similar political beliefs and agendas at the UN. Their relations have gradually shifted over the years from domination to economic and strategic relations (Metrics, 2023). The economic dimension of the Bangladesh-China relationship is a mutually beneficial cornerstone of their bilateral ties. China, as Bangladesh's largest trading partner, plays a pivotal role in the nation's economic landscape. While the trade balance currently favours China, with imports exceeding exports, the potential for growth and rebalancing is promising. China's significant investments in Bangladesh, particularly in 2022, underscore the potential for further economic cooperation and development (Press Xpress, 2023). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is one of the key projects of the growing Bangladesh-China economic relations. Officially becoming a member of the BRI in 2016, Bangladesh's main intention was to improve connectivity and integration with China and the other parties of the initiative. This initiative has strategic implications for both countries, as it enhances China's influence in the region and provides Bangladesh with much-needed infrastructure development. Various infrastructure projects in Bangladesh - roads, rails, ports - have been funded with significant financial assistance from China through the BRI. These projects not only boost Bangladesh's economic growth but also enhance its strategic position in the region (Press Xpress, 2023).

Policy-wise, Bangladesh and China have maintained strategic cooperation. In terms of military equipment imports, Bangladesh imports military equipment from its most strategic partner and ally. Bangladesh has viewed this military cooperation as a way to adopt new suppliers for its defence needs and gain more independence. The defence cooperation is most evident in both countries' bilateral military training exercises and other military drills. These engagements increase and solidify military relations and boost deeper cooperation and compatibility of the armed forces of Bangladesh and China (The diplomat, 2023). Bangladesh and China have friendly diplomatic relations, as there have been frequent high-level exchanges of bilateral visits between the two countries. The heads of state of the two countries often consult each other and participate in bilateral, continental, and global forums. The relationship remains cooperative, with China always giving Bangladesh full backing in diplomatic forums such as the United Nations. Having solid diplomatic support has benefited Bangladesh in handling essential matters like climate change and development funding (Metrics, 2023).

Despite the strong bilateral relationship, some problems must be tackled. Trade balances have not improved to this day, and the deficit has even grown big, especially for Bangladesh. This trade imbalance poses a significant challenge to the sustainability of their economic relations. There are current activities in reversing this through measures being taken towards boosting the export of Bangladeshi goods to China and increasing Chinese investments in the more productive areas of the Bangladeshi economy. Another concern is whether China's rise in the region will threaten the strategic interests of South Asian states and their neighbours. This includes such factors as possible political and economic hegemony that can turn into threats to the state and strategic defense of these countries.

The nature of Bangladesh-China is a growing diplomatic and economic partnership that has unique prospects for both countries. This bilateral relationship has been fostered over the years based on the belief in mutual self-interest. Though hurdles may come in the way of such relations, the win-win potential here is vast. Given the general trend in Bangladesh's development path, as it is now heading towards becoming a more developed country, the strategic importance of a partnership with China will remain significant in the economic and political structure of the region in the future (Dhaka tribune, 2013; Press Xpress, 2023).

#### **6.3.4 Relations with UK**

The relationship between the United Kingdom and Bangladesh is multifaceted, including shared history, migration, trade and bilateral cooperation, as Bangladesh was part of British India until 1947. After gaining independence from Pakistan in 1971, Bangladesh established diplomatic relations with the UK in 1972, with the UK being one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh as an independent nation.

This diplomatic relationship provided partly for a large-scale migration from Bangladesh to the UK began in the mid-20th century. Many Bangladeshis moved to the UK in search of better economic opportunities and to join family members already settled there. These communities play a crucial role in enhancing bilateral ties through cultural exchanges.

The topic of trade is an essential component of UK and Bangladesh relationships, with the UK being one of Bangladesh's major trading partners. The country imports textiles and garments while exporting machinery and services. This trade exchange helps balance the economic relationship, promoting mutual growth and development (Dawson, 2006). The UK's trade liberalization policies, such as reducing tariffs and import restrictions have encouraged more robust trade relations, benefiting both economies. For instance, the Generalized System of Preferences allows Bangladesh to export many goods to the UK with reduced tariffs or even duty-free. These policies have made it eas-

ier and cheaper for Bangladeshi products, increasing trade volumes and enhancing economic growth in both countries (Iftikhar, 2012). Moreover, the UK is a significant source of FDI in Bangladesh, particularly in the telecommunications and banking sectors, which could help economic development and job creation (Ahmed et al., 2023). Additionally, British banks have provided credit to the private sector, which is essential for business growth and economic stability (Banerjee et al., 2017).

Economic cooperation also extends to areas of education, infrastructure development and governance. Firstly, the UK has supported various development projects in Bangladesh, like the Bangladesh-UK Friendship Bridge, a symbol for enhancing connectivity between the countries (Matin & Thrift, 2009). Moreover, The British Council and other organizations facilitate educational exchanges and scholarships. Many Bangladeshi students pursue higher education in the UK, contributing to academic and cultural exchange. Lastly, the countries also collaborate on health-care initiatives and governance reforms, aiming to improve the quality of life in Bangladesh. This cooperation includes training programs and sharing expertise.

Despite these positive interactions, challenges such as immigration policies occasionally strain the relationship. For example, strict immigration regulations impact family reunification and the socioeconomic status of some Bangladeshi migrants (Khanum, 2001).

The economic relationship between the UK and Bangladesh holds significant potential for growth. By enhancing trade ties, increasing FDI, and continuing development cooperation, both countries can achieve mutual economic benefits and stronger bilateral relations.

Thus, the relationship between Bangladesh and the UK highlights how historical ties can influence economic and cultural exchanges. The migration of Bangladeshis to the UK and their integration into British society has strengthened bilateral ties through cultural exchanges and trade. The cooperative efforts in education, infrastructure development, and governance reforms enhance the relationship, leading to mutual growth and stronger bilateral relations. Despite these positive interactions, challenges such as strict immigration policies occasionally strain the relationship. Addressing these issues can improve the well-being of Bangladeshi migrants and strengthen ties. Overall, understanding the historical context and the ongoing diplomatic and economic efforts provides a comprehensive view of Bangladesh's current situation, highlighting the potential for future growth and cooperation with countries like the UK.

### **6.3.5 Relations with US**

Although the U.S. and Bangladesh have a relatively close relationship now, the countries have not always been on the same side of history. During the Liberation War of 1971, Pakistan was an important ally of the U.S. in the Cold war. Therefore, the U.S. initially supported Pakistan in the

conflict between Bangladesh and Pakistan (Beachler, 2007). However, within four months after the end of the Liberation War, the U.S. recognized Bangladesh as an official country and the countries have since slowly developed good relations. This is, for example, reflected in the significant number of Bangladeshis living in the U.S (Islam & Şahin, 2023). The U.S. sees Bangladesh as an important regional partner in South Asia on economic, climate and security issues. Due to its location in the Bay of Bengal, its energy reserves and trade routes, Bangladesh is a nation of strategic importance (Islam & Şahin, 2023). Besides the geostrategic value of Bangladesh, the two countries also work closely together on security issues. As Bangladesh vigorously pursues militant Islamists and is seen by the U.S. as a moderate voice in the Muslim world, the two countries have a common interest in countering extremists Islamists. In addition, as both countries are active participants in international peace operations, they are also close partners in multilateral peacekeeping (Vaughn, 2006).

Bangladesh and the U.S. also have strong economic ties. The U.S. is currently not only Bangladesh's biggest Foreign Direct Investor, but also its largest export destination. As the Bangladeshi economy is highly dependent on exports, this makes the U.S. a very important economic partner for Bangladesh.. To ensure the endurance of their close economic relationship, the U.S. and Bangladesh have signed a bilateral investment treaty and a bilateral treaty to prevent double taxation. The U.S. has contributed nearly 1.9 million dollars to Bangladesh to assist them in the shelter of Rohingya refugees. This further highlights the importance of the U.S. for the Bangladesh economy (US embassy Bangladesh, N.d.).

## 7 The role of the Media

The events of the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 were of great significance and had a profound and long-lasting effect on the economic and political landscape of the country as highlighted in the previous section. When analysing this conflict and how it influenced and continues to influence Bangladesh's economy, it is crucial to consider the role that the media played in not only portraying the massacres but also in influencing the political actions of Western countries.

By determining how information is presented, media outlets have the ability to shape public opinion, as well as political and economic realities. This far-reaching impact of the media highlights the need for neutrality, accurate information and frequent reporting. However, the opportunity to choose how information is presented can often introduce biases to narratives that should have been reported with open-mindedness and impartiality. These biases can not only lead to misreporting and prejudices but also to underreporting of crucial topics and events. Despite extensive research on how the media influences public perception and policy-making, the literature fails to find a clear and concise definition of what media bias stands for. As stated in the Oxford Handbook of Political

Communication (Kenski, 2012), “media bias is most commonly used as a hypothesis to explain patterns of news coverage rather than an element of any detailed theory of political communication”. The lack of a clear definition of media bias is due to the several different methods that one can choose to conceptualise and measure it. Those methods vary, but some examples include comparing text written by the media to the text used in politicians’ speeches or analysing the amount of coverage a particular topic receives (Puglisi & Snyder Jr, 2015). With this in mind, this report investigates the various methods that are most commonly used in empirical studies to measure media bias, in specific framing theory and sentiment analysis. Based on that, the report also attempts to narrow down the effect that media coverage has on the political and economical landscape of a country following a crisis.

## 7.1 The power of media reporting

As previously mentioned, the media can play a crucial role in influencing public opinion and shaping economic and political realities. In the context of crises, this role played by the media is of even greater importance, as media coverage brings awareness to the general public, increasing humanitarian aid provided to these causes. Van Belle and Hook (2000) document that the amount of coverage, editing choice, and tone applied to a news story may influence the eventual levels of aid provided. This power of media reporting is further confirmed by Olsen et al. (2003) as they refer to a “CNN effect”. This effect refers to the fact that increased media attention and coverage can shape political agendas and the outcomes of events as well as lead to greater amounts of aid provided to crisis victims. However, their findings suggest that donor interest and stakeholder commitment tend to have the greatest effect on aid provided, mainly when the crisis occurs in a region in which there is a high strategic stake. This suggests that the role of the media on humanitarian aid is often overshadowed by political and other ulterior motives.

Nevertheless, media reporting is also able to shape political agendas by highlighting certain issues. By giving extensive coverage to certain issues, the media can elevate their importance in the public eye, which can pressure politicians to address these issues. Furthermore, media coverage of social movements can amplify their message and increase public support, leading to political and legislative changes

parencitesoroka-2003. The finding by Soroka (2003) suggest that foreign policy in the U.S. and U.K. is deeply affected by media content and salience of foreign affairs originating from the public. However, one should not forget the role of a country’s own political agenda on its foreign policy. Further literature on the topic reveals that foreign aid is provided by more powerful to less powerful nations to facilitate the economic development of the recipient or to enhance the donor’s prestige

(Rioux & Van Belle, 2005). This foreign aid includes strategic interests, which can change over time, further highlighting the role of political agendas on the amount of foreign aid provided by countries.

Aside from foreign aid, the media can also impact policy decisions regarding military action. According to Robinson (2000), the media coverage in the U.S. of the Bosnian conflict was able to influence the decision of the U.S. government, causing an American intervention in Bosnia in 1995. The paper argues that this effect was due to the extensive media coverage of the Bosnian conflict, the uncertain stance of the US government and the critical tone of journalists when covering this topic. This led the then uncertain US government to intervene in the Bosnian conflict, showing evidence of the aforementioned CNN effect (Robinson, 2002). However, Robinson's similar reviews of the conflicts in Somalia and Kosovo showed that the media was not able to influence policy decisions in those instances. According to Robinson, this was related to a lack of policy uncertainty by governments and late media reporting and shows that the media can influence policy decisions when governments initially face uncertainty about how to act and when the media coverage is framed as critical of governments and empathises with suffering people.

As such, the media have a far-reaching impact and are a powerful driver of change. However, such change is often based on shaping public opinion, which the presence of biases can have adverse effects on. It can reinforce stereotypes and perpetuate discrimination as well as lead to skewed perceptions of reality. In line with this, Mullainathan and Shleifer (2005) find that biases of news providers can lead to highly divided groups of readers according to specific ideological positions. They argue that, in this case, media bias manifests itself by the adoption and promotion of political stances and ideologies within the scope of reporting. In this case, whether readers' ideologies align or contrast with those of media outlets also plays a role in the creation of more divided groups of readers. Interestingly, Chiang and Knight (2011) argue that the preference of readers has a strong effect on the stance adopted by newspapers in the U.S., when considering endorsements of political candidates. This shows how media outlets, aiming to fulfill the audiences' preferences, tend to present information in a way that strengthens biased opinions rather than balanced perspectives.

While the media can shape public opinion, research shows that news exposure does not appear to have a strong effect on people's perceptions, especially those who are well-educated. Haller and Norpoth (1997) reveal that individuals who closely track actual economic conditions and form more realistic perceptions by evaluating the different sources of information can limit the distorting effect of media bias. Additionally, voters who review media publications and political stances prior to making their electoral decisions can also limit the distorting effect of media bias. This highlights how individuals who are able to restrict the impact of media bias can make more informed decisions.

### 7.1.1 Media Bias and Framing

The role of the media in influencing public opinion also applies to foreign conflicts, as the public does not have direct access to information concerning foreign matters. As such, they rely on the media to form their opinion. And, again, these opinions are further dependent on media reporters since the media can choose how they wish to present information and frame events. This view is confirmed by framing theory (Dimitrova et al., 2005), which argues that the media is able to shape the public's perception through the wording they use to describe an event. For instance, the emphasis on certain aspects of an event can be interpreted differently by the public.

Framing theory suggests that framing can be divided into two trends: episodic and thematic frames. The former focuses on individual events, highlighting specific aspects, and through which the author puts blame on a specific group. Thematic framing, on the other hand, provides a broader context of an event by exploiting patterns, trends and underlying issues, which creates a deeper understanding. With thematic framing, the aim of the author is to hold society and politicians accountable for their actions (Iyengar, 1991). According to framing theory, media bias is confirmed when episodic framing is more present than thematic framing, as this focuses more on individual, specific events rather than the broader context. Furthermore, the framing of an event by the media is also dependent on the political and economic environment of the native country (Dimitrova et al., 2005). During times of crisis, media and government are more closely connected, which can result in less critical reporting (Topoushian, 2002). This is better known as the domestication of news, where national news is framed according to a specific cultural context. Dimitrova et al. (2005) examine this topic by analysing the immediate coverage of the Iraq War by 48 countries worldwide. These articles are analysed according to the following types of framing, namely military conflict, human interest, diagnostic, responsibility, media self-referential and prognostic frame. The authors find that episodic framing dominated American media (e.g., military conflict and human interest frame), whereas thematic framing dominated international media (e.g., self-reference and responsibility frame). After the war, a survey was conducted on the global attitudes towards the war, which indicated a large division in perspectives of the war across countries. Program on International Policy Attitudes (2003) found that in the U.S., the media misled the public concerning the actual events of the Iraq war, as they were under the impression that weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq, while this was not the case. The dominance of episodic framing in the American media shows the influence of framing on the public perception of events.

Moreover, it is also essential to understand how distinct differences in framing are determined. This is done by analysing text according to the following characteristics, namely size, agency, identification, categorisation and generalisation (Entman, 1991). In specific, sizing refers to how frequently

an event is covered in the media and how prominently it is portrayed to the public. Increasing the coverage of the event will, in theory, also increase mass awareness among the public, while decreasing the amount of coverage will do the opposite. This aligns with Entman (1991), as they document that an event that was reported on more frequently was perceived as more politically significant. Being perceived as more politically significant, these events are seen by people as potential aid recipients, encouraging action and increased humanitarian aid. This is confirmed by Van Belle and Hook (2000) as they found that there was a positive and significant effect of the amount of media coverage on the aid provided by the US. Specifically, they found that a country received up to 230,000 dollars more money in aid per news story. Rioux and Van Belle (2005) found similar evidence in France, where a country received up to 77,000 dollars more funding per additional article in the national newspaper *Le Monde*. This shows the significance of the amount of reporting on the amount of humanitarian aid a country receives.

Entman (1991) identified additional factors that influence framing aside from sizing, one of which being agency. Agency refers to naming the perpetrator in the conflict. A comparison was made between two similar conflicts where a civilian plane was brought down by military force, resulting in the deaths of almost three hundred people. These two instances relate to the attack on a Korean Air Lines (KAL) plane in 1983 by the USSR and an attack on an Iran Air plane by the US in 1988. Distinct differences in how these events were framed in the media are extremely prevalent. Concerning the agency, the American media identified the Soviet Union as the perpetrator of this attack in their headlines, creating a perspective that the Soviet government knowingly shot down the plane. On the other hand, the U.S was not mentioned as a perpetrator in the Iran Air conflict, instead a passive, abstract voice had been used in the media. Additionally, KAL victims were humanised in the media using visualisations, while Iran Air victims were referred to using neutral words. These framings of the media ultimately influenced the perspective of the public on the events, which further highlights the influence of the media and media bias in shaping public opinion.

Also in line with the analysis of media bias in reporting international conflicts, Evans (2010) found that the location of the conflict could influence the frequency of reporting. This was found while studying two conflicts: one in Jenin and one in Nahr-al-Bared. While the conflict in Jenin was located close to Tel Aviv, where reporters could stay in luxury hotels, this was not the case for the other conflict in Nahr al-Bared. As a result, the conflict in Jenin was reported on by more than a thousand journalists, while the conflict in Nahr al-Bared was reported on only by two local journalists. This puts forward a possible linkage between the accessibility of a conflict and the reporting on the same conflict. While it seems to be important for reporting, budgetary restrictions also force reporters to focus on violent conflicts that are 'world news' and located close to each other to minimise cost (Hess, 1996). As a result, the media focuses on hot spots with little in-depth knowledge of the



regions or conflicts being covered. Additionally, reporting is also restricted by several limitations, such as legal, political, and physical limitations. Lack of infrastructure, electricity or transportation could also be the cause of limited reporting (Hess, 1996). The frequency of reporting is, therefore, impacted by several factors that are important to consider when comparing different conflicts.

Furthermore, the analysis of the conflicts that took place in Jenin and Nahr al-Bared also found that emotional proximity in reporting played a role in public opinion of the conflicts (Robinson, 2002). Overall, the framing of the proximity of the events in Jenin resulted in greater empathy among the public, which elicited more responses. On the other hand, the conflict in Nahr al-Bared was reported on with much more distance, resulting in the public expressing feelings of detachment (Evans, 2010). Therefore, as a result of the significant media coverage, Jenin received significant funding, while Nahr al-Bared received none. However, most important of all, the framing of the events in Jenin and Nahr al-Bared was not in line with the actual events. The conflict in Jenin was framed as pointless destruction but resulted in fewer casualties and destruction compared to Nahr al-Bared, framed as justified. This shows how differences in media framing have a significant impact on public perception and humanitarian aid, highlighting the importance of media bias.

## **7.2 Media coverage of Bangladesh and Pakistan**

West Pakistan's media was, in 1971, under government control, meaning that both media and TV had limited political influence (Parveen & Bhatti, 2018). This oppression was furthered by the creation of the Press and Publication Ordinance in 1962 under General Ayub Khan (Hussain, 2011). This law gave authorities the power to confiscate any newspaper and seize journalists (Bashir, 2013). However, the Pakistani government's oppression of the media continued in 1971 as Yahya Khan prohibited the publishing of news of atrocities of Bengalis against Pakistan (Qaddos, 2024). As such, this lack of freedom of the press limited the objective coverage of the Bangladesh Liberation War by the West Pakistani media.

Although Pakistani media portrayed a biased narrative of the 1971 war, the same can also be said for the Bangladeshi media. According to Shad et al. (2021), the narrative of the East Pakistani media was also a means of propaganda as it was used to influence public opinion. This was done with support from the Indian government at the time, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi proudly confessed in June 2015 to India's role in supporting Mukti Bahini during the civil war (Correspondents, O., 2015). Through visual arts, the Bangladeshi media portrayed the Pakistanis as the villains, showing the horrors of their military missions but ignoring the atrocities committed by the Bengali nationalists (Shad et al., 2021). They tried to spread this image to Pakistan; however, these efforts were initially unsuccessful as the Pakistani state censored these messages.

From the start of the conflict, Pakistan made the decision to expel international media out of East Pakistan. However, this was an unfortunate decision for the state as foreign reporters were still able to report the events of this war, spreading awareness to the international community (Mostafa, 2023). In an attempt to counteract the East Pakistan narrative, West Pakistan invited several reporters to the site. This decision, however, backfired, as one of the invited reporters, Anthony Mascarenhas, published his article "Genocide" in June 1971. This article reported the systematic atrocities committed by the Pakistani military against Hindus and rebellious Muslims in what is now called Bangladesh. This article, in particular, helped to bring awareness of the armed conflict to the West. According to Mohaiemen (2008), it brought on protests in Western countries in support of Bengali people as well as movements in the neighbouring country, India, which manifested themselves in increased levels of humanitarian aid for East Pakistan refugees and military action. The publishing of this article led the then-prime minister of India, Indira Gandhi, on a diplomatic campaign in Europe to prepare for India's armed intervention (Dummett, 2011).

Furthermore, according to Shad et al. (2021), Mascarenhas' article prompted the interest of the international media in the conflict, especially within the British media. According to the authors, the British media mainly targeted the Pakistani army and its military operations, using sensationalist headlines to portray the brutalities. Given the possibility of media bias present in Western articles such as the ones in the British media, Hossain (2015) examined the framings of The New York Times and The Times (London) of the events of the Liberation War. His findings suggest that these two newspapers focused on the military-conflict frame and prognostic frame and that, as a result, the suffering of people and the violence experienced were highly neglected. The author also finds that the newspapers echoed the voices of their respective governments, becoming a part of the propaganda of these regimes, and as such, neutral tones were featured as the most prominent tone in the news. This highlights the presence of a Western media bias in the reporting of this conflict. We should note that these two articles are not enough to infer that there was a media bias, as such statements would need more evidence, which is unfortunately lacking.

Aside from print media, the television coverage of the Bangladesh Liberation War also played a pivotal role in spreading awareness among the international community. According to Mohaiemen (2008), the TV television coverage of this conflict was a marker of the trend in TV coverage of conflict zones. This came with a new focus on the hot news, which became cold very quickly, shifting the spotlight on to the next hot spot, meaning that conflicts that last for more extended periods are left behind. This dehumanises news, simplifies narratives, and puts emphasis on shocking statistics to gain the attention of viewers. These tactics employed by television news outlets portray a particular media bias in the coverage of conflicts, one which seems to apply to the case of the Bangladesh Liberation War.

After speaking with a Dutch journalist who frequently writes on the issues and events in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India, we were able to hear her experiences with media bias. She names one of the most common reason for media bias, or inaccurate reporting, is simply ignorance. Many reporters in Western countries do not know a lot about South Asian countries and often believe that their audience of Western readers are not interested in news articles on events in this region. In her opinion, ignorant reporters tend to do too little research and have make use of stereotypes in their writing. As a result, news on Muslims often is centered around terrorism while news on Hindus is either on spirituality or yoga, or they get described as instigators of aggression.

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## 8 Sentiment analysis of media articles

The following section will look into whether there is a certain sentiment attached to news articles from Western, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi media sources covering events occurring in Bangladesh and Pakistan.

### 8.1 Natural language model analysis

#### 8.1.1 Data extraction

When considering media, it becomes clear that Western media holds a more dominant position, a testament to the enduring Western hegemony (Altheide, 1984). Consequently, Western media, such as the New York Times wields more influence globally than written media from Pakistan and Bangladesh. Therefore, the sentiment of Western media outlets regarding Bangladesh will hold more sway and will impact more individuals worldwide than the sentiment expressed by Bangladeshi or Pakistani outlets. As a result, comparing the sentiments of these outlets provides valuable insights into whether the portrayal of Bangladesh in Anglo-Saxon media aligns with or diverges from the portrayal in Bangladeshi media. This comparison may reveal significant differences or similarities in how Bangladesh is depicted, highlighting potential biases in Western and South Asian media. By analysing the sentiment in Western media, we can determine if the portrayal of Bangladesh is more positive, negative, or similar to local Bangladeshi media during specific periods. In addition to this, examining the sentiment in Bangladeshi and Pakistani media provides a more localised perspective relative to the Anglo-Saxon one.

The sentiment analysis is performed on articles extracted from Factiva for three sources, namely Anglo- Saxon, Bangladeshi and Pakistani countries. Factiva is a site that provides the headlines

and accompanying articles of many newspapers and magazines. Access to this website is provided by the Erasmus University Rotterdam. Aside from the sources, these articles can be filtered based on multiple criteria. The criteria chosen in this research consisted of the date of publishing, subject and the language. This section will elaborate further on these criteria.

The articles are first filtered by the date of publishing, hence January 1st to December 31st, for each year. The articles were extracted from 1971 to 2023. From 1971 to 2005 a total of 15 articles were extracted per year, although this threshold was not met for Bangladeshi and Pakistani sources for earlier years due to data availability limitations. From 2006 onwards, at least 30 articles were extracted, as more articles were available and this thereby contributed to the validity of the research. Furthermore, the articles were filtered on certain subjects, namely Commodity/Financial Market News, Economic News, Political/General News, Corporate/Industrial News. These subjects were selected to ensure that the articles were relevant to the focus of this research. For example, articles focused on sports outcomes were omitted which are often prone to a very high or very low sentiment score based on the outcome of the match. However, this sentiment does not necessarily pertain to the political and economic status of the country which are the focus of this research. We also sort the articles by relevance. According to Factiva User Guide, this option presents headlines based on the quality of the articles relative to your keywords. This is important due to the fact that we download only a portion of all the results. Lastly, it is relevant that the language of the articles is English because this is the language used for sentiment analysis. Hence, ensuring all articles are written in English will allow a similar analysis of all articles. This is also the main language used throughout this research and thereby ensures that the researcher is able to interpret all articles.

Preprocessing of the articles included removing any special characters or white spaces. Furthermore, the text was tokenized into individual words. Stopwords such as a, the, at, etc. were removed from the text as these words appear very frequently but do not hold any significant meaning, thereby influencing the results. Furthermore, words were shortened to their base forms. For example, running is standardised to run because, in essence, they both have the same meaning. Lastly, all capitals are removed from the text.

All articles used in this research were in pdf-format which was essential to upload the files in R and extract the text.

### **8.1.2 Data preprocessing and explanation of the method**

This analysis was performed using the sentiment function from the sentiment package in R. In this research, it is used to define the public sentiment expressed by the media. To do this, a Lexicon-Based approach is used. This holds that a predefined list states the sentiment of the respective words,

where positive words receive a value of one, negative words a value of minus one and neutral words a value of zero. The dataset used in this research is the predefined list of positive and negative words according to Hu and Liu (2004a). The sentiment score is the average of the sum of these lexicons. This list is chosen because it provides a twofold of lists, e.g., negative and positive, that are easy to implement. Additionally, it provides a general interpretation of the words compared to other lists with a specific focus, such as financial or medical terms. As the articles used in this research cover a variety of subjects, the list provided by Hu and Liu (2004b) is most applicable. Furthermore, the list has open access, which is essential to enable the analyses. The results of the sentiment analysis in R are as follows:

### 8.1.3 Article sentiment on Bangladesh

The results of the sentiment analysis of Bangladeshi articles on Bangladesh are represented in Figure 1. The first time period, 1995-1998, shows that the sentiments of all three sources are considerably similar, with values ranging between -0.06 and -0.01. This indicates a slight negative sentiment among Anglo-Saxon, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani media articles when covering Bangladesh. The confidence intervals of these average sentiments of the three sentiments overlap with each other, this indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between media sentiments. Similarly, this also holds for the next time period 1999-2002. In the time period 2003-2006, Bangladeshi and Anglo-Saxon media sentiment in articles on Bangladesh again held relatively the same value, both decreasing slightly compared to the previous time period. However, the average sentiment of Pakistan is considerably more positive compared to the previous period as well as compared to the sentiment of the other two sources. The sentiment score is approximately 0.075, which indicates a slightly positive sentiment on average. This could be due to the fact that Pakistani media tends to focus on bilateral trade opportunities and mutual gains from trade between Bangladesh and Pakistan. On the other hand, Anglo-Saxon and Bangladeshi media sources seem to prioritise articles on hostile relations between Bangladesh and India.

During the period from 2007 to 2018, the sentiment in Bangladeshi media toward Bangladesh remained relatively stable, with little significant change. In contrast, both Pakistani and Anglo-Saxon media exhibited consistently lower sentiment levels compared to Bangladeshi media. This divergence in sentiment could be attributed to various geopolitical and historical factors that have shaped the perspectives of these media outlets. One of the aspects could be, for example, the situation of refugees in Bangladesh. Notably, while Pakistani media sentiment showed a significant increase in the last recorded period (2023), this observation should be interpreted with caution due to the limited sample size of only 30 observations, which may not provide a reliable representation of overall sentiment.

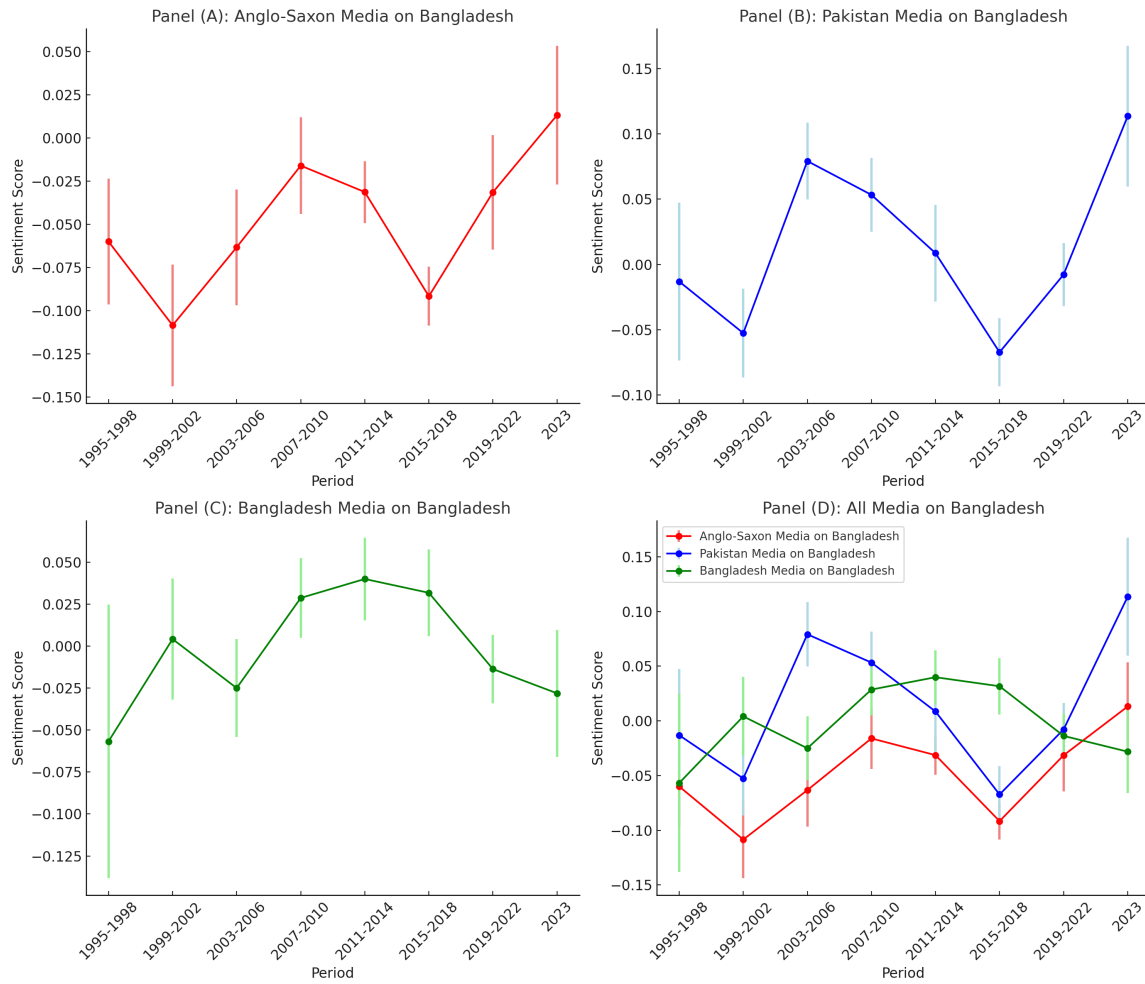


Figure 1: Sentiment of the articles on Bangladesh

*Note.* Figure gives the results of the sentiment analysis on articles on Bangladesh from Anglo-Saxon, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani media sources from 1995 until 2023. The average sentiment scores as well as confidence intervals are represented in the graph to help us determine average sentiment scores and whether these differentiate significantly between the three sources.

### 8.1.4 Bangladesh on Pakistan and Pakistan on Bangladesh

To investigate whether Bangladesh and Pakistan have similar media sentiments regarding each other in their respective written media outlets the media, sentiments of both countries will be compared. The results of this comparison can be found in figure 2, which shows the average sentiment scores for both countries from 1995 to 2023. The figure shows that, overall, the sentiments follow similar trends relative to each other, however, Pakistani media sentiment regarding Bangladesh is in general higher than Bangladeshi media sentiment regarding Pakistan, especially during the period 2007 to 2014. This is likely due to Pakistani articles during that time focusing on the growing economy of Bangladesh and the improving trade relations.

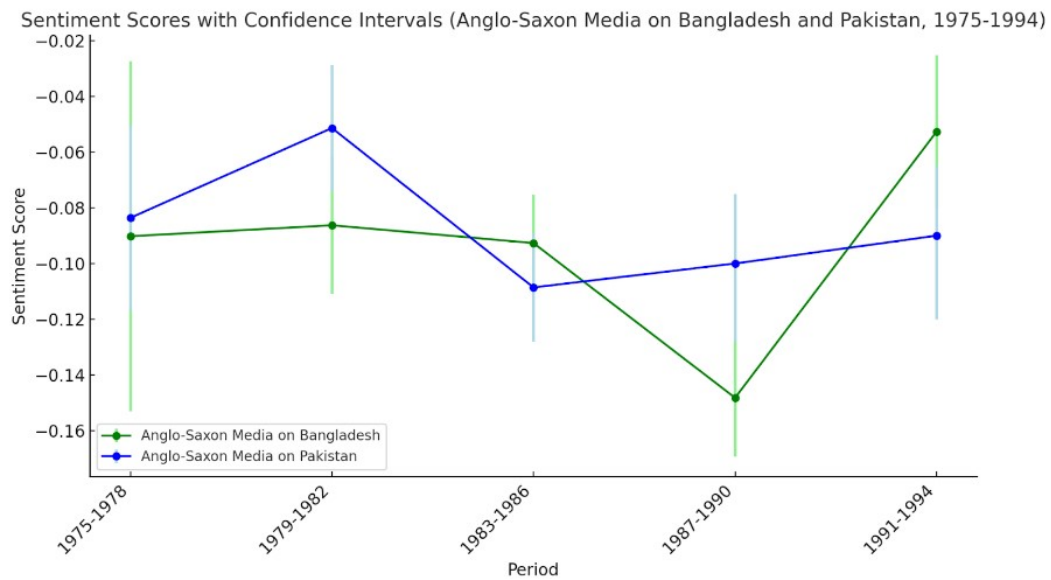


Figure 2: Sentiment of Bangladeshi articles on Pakistan and Pakistani articles on Bangladesh

*Note.* Figure gives the results of the sentiment analysis on articles. The average sentiment scores as well as 95 percent confidence intervals are represented in the graph to help us determine average sentiment scores and whether these differentiate significantly between the three

### 8.1.5 Article sentiment on Pakistan

Panel C, which combines the sentiment trends from both Anglo-Saxon and Bangladesh media on Pakistan, shows that from 2011 in most periods the sentiment does not differ significantly. We also see that the sentiment is generally negative. Anglo-Saxon media sentiment is always significantly lower than zero while Bangladeshi sentiment is more volatile and in the periods from 1995 to 1998

and 2003 to 2006 we cannot conclude that it is different from zero. In the period 2003-2006, it is notable that Bangladeshi media sentiment went up and was significantly higher than in all other periods besides 1995 to 1995 for which the confidence interval is much larger.

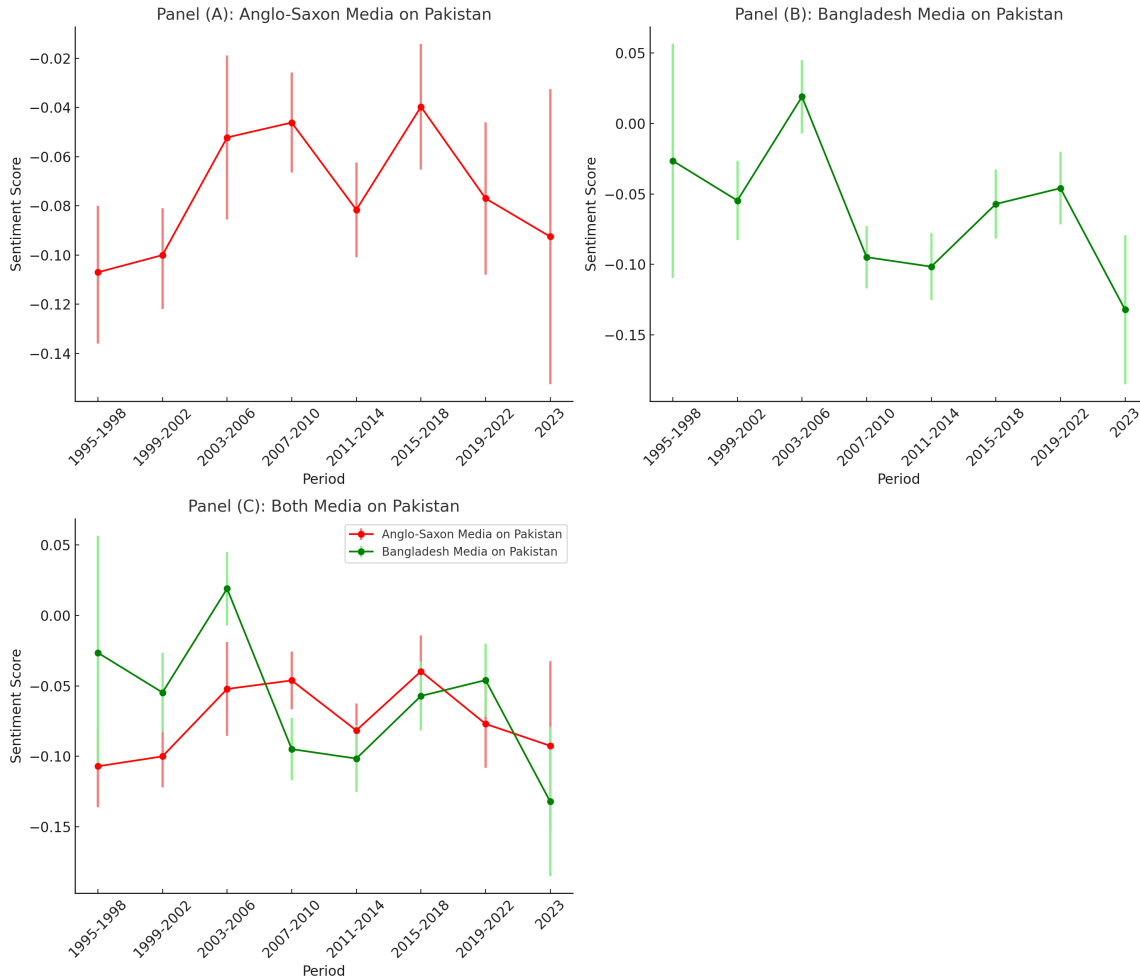


Figure 3: Article sentiment on Pakistan

*Note.* Figure gives the results of the sentiment analysis on articles. The average sentiment scores as well as 95 percent confidence intervals are represented in the graph to help us determine average sentiment scores and whether these differentiate significantly between the three sources.



## 8.2 ChatGPT analysis

### 8.2.1 Method explanation

In order to analyse the media sentiment and possible media bias, we also utilise ChatGPT. ChatGPT is trained on a large corpus of text data from the internet, which includes books, articles, websites, and other written content. ChatGPT has been exposed to various patterns of sentiment in its training data. When given a prompt about media sentiment or other topics, ChatGPT interprets the context and provides a simulated sentiment score based on patterns observed in its training data. All the prompts can be found in Appendix.

Since our analysis is multifaceted, differing by regions, topics and time periods, we decide to construct a basic prompt that starts the interaction with ChatGPT each time in order to ensure the comparison between the layers of analysis (most importantly - media regions). We define the score on a scale from -1 to 1 where 0 is classified as a neutral sentiment, 1 as a positive sentiment and -1 as a negative sentiment. Furthermore, we ask the model to consider the tone and context. Given our focus on economic and political implications of media bias and the fact that foreign policy and media coverage are often interrelated (Rioux and Van Belle, 2005; Soroka, 2003), we command ChatGPT to emphasise the issues such as development, conflict, terrorism, political stability, and humanitarian crises as well as take the impact of foreign policy and bilateral relations on media portrayal into consideration.

Since the responses of ChatGPT are generated probabilistically, there is a range of possible outputs. Thus, when opening another thread, we might get slightly different output. To tackle this, we repeat the same prompts and take the average. After five to ten repeats, the average score does not usually change by more than 0.1. In order to be sure that the score does not differ almost at all, we repeat the prompt chain 30 or 31 times for all analyses, except for frequency of coverage (12 times) and cross-check (6 times) where the scores were almost the same each time.

We check how the average scores differ by computing the standard deviations per period which are visible in the tables in Appendix concerning additional outputs. We can see that the great majority of standard deviation is about 0.2 which suggests that the model gives quite similar results, but not completely the same. As such, we propose to focus on the trends and relative sentiment of countries. To analyse the scores we use the trajectories of the scores over time that are represented in line graphs. What is more, we asked the model to give us explanations of the scores. This is important as we interpret our results on the most frequent line of reasoning given by ChatGPT. It also enables us to analyse why there is a deviation between the scores if it occurs.

We will start analysing the results by introducing the historic sentiment of the media on Bangladesh.

Then, we proceed to uncover recent times from 2005 onwards. The choice of the periods is not random as after 2005 many media started posting their articles online which, we presume, might be easier accessed by ChatGPT that is trained on online data. Later, the focus is on the Liberation War, mutual sentiments of Pakistan and Bangladesh. We end by analysing the frequency of coverage.

### **8.2.2 Overall sentiment scores on Bangladesh**

To start ChatGPT media sentiment analysis, we examine the overall media sentiment score in the Anglo-Saxon, Bangladeshi and Pakistani media towards Bangladesh. First, between 1971 and 2005, and a second analysis from 2005 to 2023. The results of the former analysis can be seen in Figure 6, which depicts the evolution of the sentiment scores of the media in the three regions between 1971 and 2005. From this figure it can be concluded that during this period, Bangladeshi media had the most positive view over Bangladesh, as it only registers positive sentiment values. This is then followed by Anglo-Saxon and then lastly by Pakistani media, which always presents negative sentiment scores. This ordering likely reflects optimistic and nationalistic sentiment within the Bangladeshi media and the strained relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan arising from ongoing political tensions between the two countries, economic competition and social differences.

Moreover, an overall upward trend can be seen in the Anglo-Saxon and the Pakistani media sentiment. The Anglo-Saxon media transitioned from predominantly negative to more positive sentiment over time, reflecting changing perspectives over the country as well as possible regional stability. The initial negative sentiment in 1971 was likely due to the Bangladesh Liberation War, as reporting of this in the media often focused on the violence and the humanitarian crises that arose with this war. However, this sentiment score improved as the country transitioned into a more solid democracy and focused on development initiatives. Between 1989 and 1990, the media sentiment turned positive. Another factor that might have also influenced the shift to a more positive sentiment was the end of the Cold War as the easing of Cold War hostilities fostered a more optimistic global narrative around peace and stability, a positive outlook that likely extended to the coverage of Bangladesh.

The evolution of the media sentiment within the Pakistani media is not as positive as within the Anglo-Saxon media. Despite significant improvements, the sentiment within the Pakistani media remained largely unfavourable in this period. This possibly reflects the ongoing political, economic and social tensions between the two countries, while the gradual improvement indicates efforts towards political stabilisation, economic reforms and improved bilateral relations. Indeed, between 1971 and 1972, the Pakistani media showed a highly negative sentiment towards Bangladesh, a reflection of the 1971 Liberation War and the loss of East Pakistan.

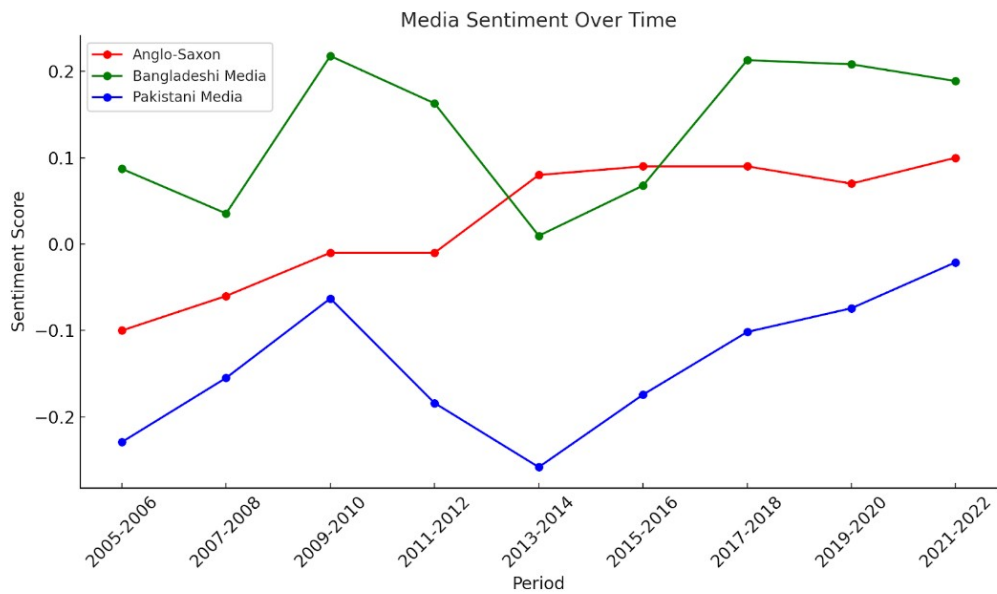


Figure 4: Media sentiment scores of Anglo-Saxon, Bangladeshi and Pakistani media on the country of Bangladesh between 1971 and 2006.

0.8

*Note.* The media sentiment score ranges from -1 to 1, where negative values reveal a negative sentiment of the media sources, and positive values indicate a positive sentiment of the media sources towards the specific topic. Values of 0 reveal a neutral sentiment. Media sentiment score reflects tone and context of media coverage as well as focus of coverage and western relations.

While the media in Anglo-Saxon countries and in Pakistan exhibits a positive trend over these 34 years, the Bangladeshi media do not show such a clear trend. Between 1971 and 1988, it is possible to observe a downward trend, which can possibly be explained by the political turmoil experienced at the time, with the assassination of Sheikh Mujib and the following military regimes. However, the economic challenges felt in these decades and the social issues in the country such as inadequate healthcare and poverty might have contributed to this decrease in the media sentiment. But, following 1989, the sentiment within the Bangladeshi media turned more positive, a trend which lasted until 2005, and reflects the country's transition towards democracy as well the economic reforms and social progress in the country.

### 8.2.3 Sentiment analysis media on Bangladesh 2005-2023

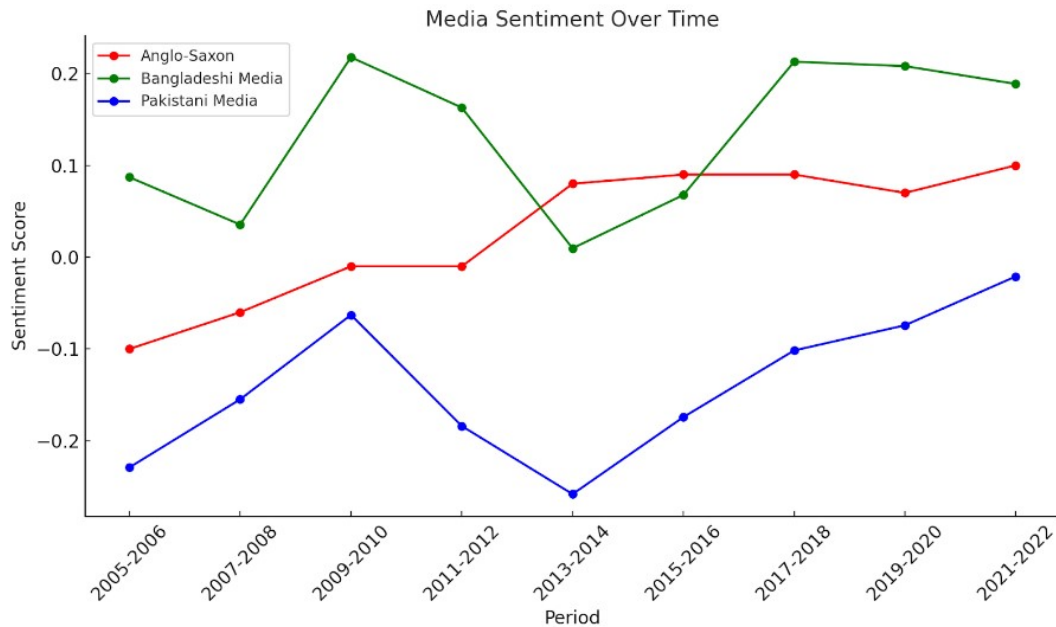


Figure 5: Media sentiment scores of Anglo-Saxon, Bangladeshi and Pakistani media on the country of Bangladesh between 2005 and 2022.

*Note.* The media sentiment score ranges from -1 to 1, where negative values reveal a negative sentiment of the media sources, and positive values indicate a positive sentiment of the media sources towards the specific topic. Values of 0 reveal a neutral sentiment. Media sentiment score reflects tone and context of media coverage as well as focus of coverage and western relations.

The green line represents the trajectory of Bangladeshi media sentiment in articles covering Bangladesh. The media sentiment fluctuates considerably over the time period 2005-2023. In 2005,

the media might have focused on the challenges that Bangladesh faces, such as political instability and natural disasters, with slight optimism and focus on Bangladesh's economic developmental progress. In the next few years, the sentiment is more negative, likely due to political unrest and issues concerning corruption that might dominate the media. Moreover, the president of Bangladesh also declared a state of emergency in January of 2007. Certain fundamental rights were suspended, a nighttime curfew was introduced and the upcoming elections were postponed. This rule lasted for almost two years, having been ended in December 2008 by the Bangladesh military. After this, sentiment improves due to continued economic growth and social developments like the return to democratic rule. In 2013, sentiment decreased again. Positive sentiment is balanced with political violence and instability due to election disputes. Additionally, the collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory contributed to the negative sentiment used in the media. Since then, improvements have been made with regards to infrastructure development and healthcare and education sectors, which boosted positive sentiment. Strong GDP growth and political stability as well as coverage of the Rohingya refugee crisis resulted in a further increase in positive sentiment. Rohingya families, around 742,000 people in total, fled from Myanmar and sought refuge in Bangladesh. In 2019, there was a slight decline in media sentiment due to global economic challenges. The economic growth Bangladesh experienced was countered by the impact of COVID-19 as well as political instability. Since then efforts to manage the pandemic led to more positive sentiment, however, a focus on political challenges led to a decrease in the positive sentiment. Crackdowns on free speech, arrests of critics and heavy censorship of the media could have played a role in this. This has continued up until 2023. To conclude, the sentiment of the Bangladeshi media fluctuates heavily with national events, however, it is generally positive.

The red line represents Anglo-Saxon sentiment towards Bangladesh. The sentiment starts out slightly negative which may be related to coverage of political instability and natural disasters. In the years after, the sentiment gradually became more positive, likely due to political improvements and economic development that Bangladesh experienced during these years. The years 2009-2010 show more neutral coverage as Bangladesh has become more politically stable which also leads to a more positive sentiment in the years after. The increase in positive sentiment slowed down around 2013, possibly due to the collapse of a clothing factory which counted many casualties and received a lot of attention in western media. Around 2019, there was a slight dip in sentiment. This could be attributed to political issues going on in Bangladesh at that time. In the most recent years, the sentiment has seen some improvements again, likely due to economic improvements. Although, there are many concerns that temper the sentiment slightly.

Lastly, the blue line represents the sentiment of articles from Pakistani media sources on Bangladesh. Overall, the sentiment seems to be more negative than both Anglo-Saxon and Bangladeshi media

sentiment. There is a slight upward trend in sentiment over the time period 2005-2023. However, a considerable dip can be seen between 2010 and 2015. This could be due to events in Bangladesh, such as the Rana Plaza clothing factory collapse, or events affecting relations between the two countries. An example of the latter is the tension arising after Pakistan issued a National Assembly protesting the execution of JI's former Assistant Secretary General Abdul Quader Mollah in 2013, who was convicted of war crimes during the Liberation War (Chowdhury, 2013, December 22).

### 8.2.4 Liberation War

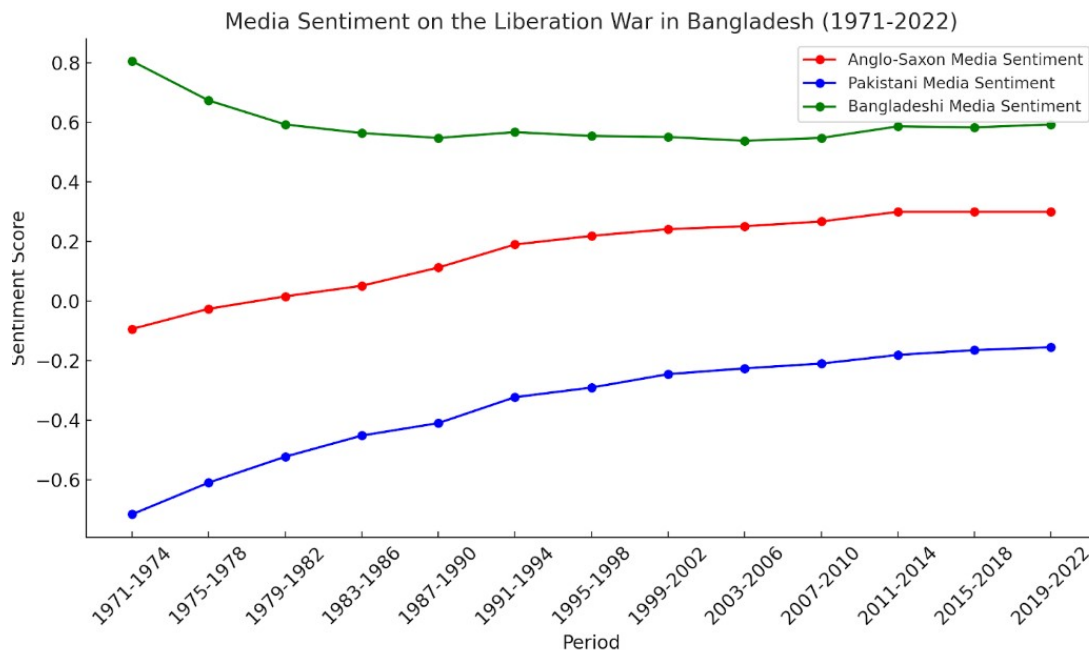


Figure 6: Media sentiment scores of Anglo-Saxon, Bangladeshi and Pakistani media on Liberation War between 1971 and 2022.

*Note.* The media sentiment score ranges from -1 to 1, where negative values reveal a negative sentiment of the media sources, and positive values indicate a positive sentiment of the media sources towards the specific topic. Values of 0 reveal a neutral sentiment. Media sentiment score reflects tone and context of media coverage as well as focus of coverage and western relations.

The sentiment of Anglo-Saxon media coverage of the Bangladesh War of Independence and its aftermath has shown a gradual shift over the decades, as can be seen in Figure 6. Initially, during the early 1970s, the tone of the coverage was relatively negative, focusing heavily on the conflict, humanitarian crises, and the tumultuous political landscape following Bangladesh's independence. However, as the years progressed, particularly from the late 1980s onward, the sentiment began to

improve. This shift reflects a growing recognition of Bangladesh's developmental strides and increasing political stability. By the turn of the century and into the 2010s, the sentiment further tilted towards a more positive portrayal, underscoring notable economic progress and social advancements in the country.

Pakistani media sentiment towards the Bangladesh War of Independence started extremely negative, likely reflecting a deep-seated impact of the loss of East Pakistan and the resulting national trauma. Throughout the subsequent decades, the sentiment slowly moderated but remained largely negative into the 1980s and 1990s, mirroring ongoing political tensions and sensitive bilateral relations. By the early 2000s, the coverage began to show a slight improvement, moving towards a more neutral stance as both nations worked towards stabilizing their diplomatic relations. However, minor fluctuations continued, and the overall sentiment remained slightly negative even into the late 2010s, indicating lingering historical and political sensitivities.

The sentiment within Bangladeshi media regarding the War of Independence has consistently been highly positive, especially in the immediate years following 1971. This positive sentiment is rooted in the national pride and significance of the successful liberation struggle. Over the following decades, while the intensity of this positivity slightly tapered off, the overall sentiment remained strongly favorable. Coverage increasingly highlighted the country's achievements in rebuilding, development, and socio-economic progress. From the 2000s onwards, the media's positive tone became even more pronounced, reflecting substantial improvements in national infrastructure, economy, and international standing, culminating in an overwhelmingly positive sentiment in recent years.

### **8.2.5 Media sentiment scores of Bangladesh and Pakistan regarding each other**

Next, we will analyse the sentiment of Bangladeshi media sources on Pakistan and sentiment of Pakistani media sources on Bangladesh between 1971 and 2023, every four years.

Figure 7 shows that the model perceives the sentiment scores of the countries to be almost equal to each other, meaning that based on its knowledge the sentiment of Bangladeshi media regarding Pakistan and the Pakistani media regarding Bangladesh are almost equal and that they develop in a similar way over the years. As expected we see an upward trend of media sentiment over the years, following the lowest scores following the liberation war in 1971. The years following the liberation war we see the sentiment scores of both countries improving slightly, consequently this trend correlates with the improving political and economic situation, for example the consolidation of military rule in both countries during 1972 to 1982 as well as the establishing of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in 1985. We continue to see the sentiment scores improve as both nations returned to civilian rule through democratic elected governments, this trend continued

consistently up until the period 1999 to 2002. One explanation for this negative sentiment is the Kargil conflict in 1999 between Pakistan and India.

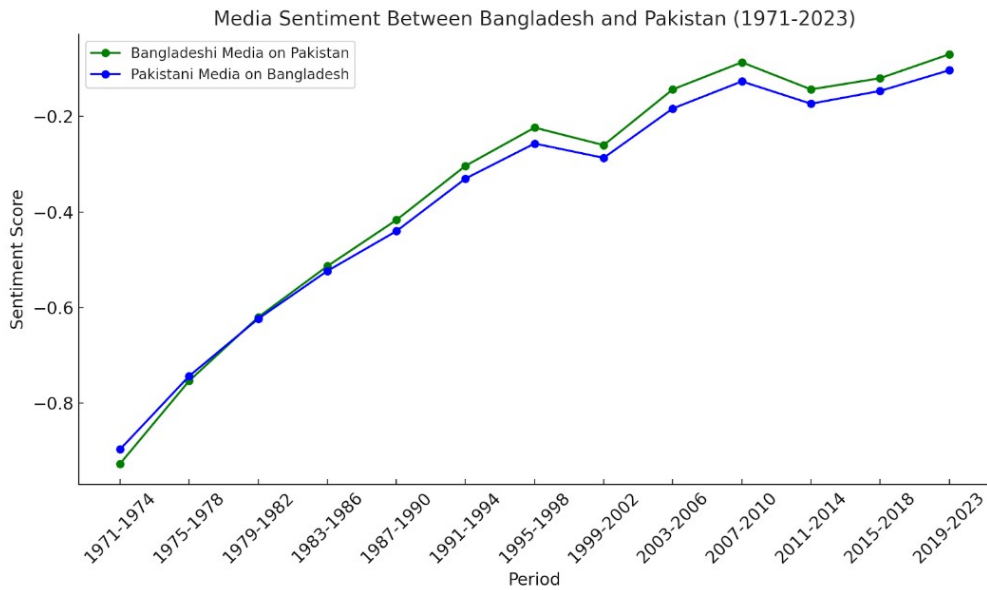


Figure 7: Sentiment of Bangladeshi media on Pakistan and Pakistani media on Bangladesh

*Note.* The media sentiment score ranges from -1 to 1, where negative values reveal a negative sentiment of the media sources, and positive values indicate a positive sentiment of the media sources towards the specific topic. Values of 0 reveal a neutral sentiment. Media sentiment score reflects tone and context of media coverage as well as focus of coverage and western relations.

### 8.2.6 Frequency of Anglo-Saxon media coverage of Pakistan and Bangladesh

From 2005 to 2023, the frequency of coverage of Bangladesh in Anglo-Saxon media (found in Figure 8) shows a generally moderate level, with notable peaks in certain years. In 2007, the score increased due to the coverage of Cyclone Sidr, a devastating natural disaster that attracted significant international attention. Another significant peak occurred in 2013, reflecting the extensive media focus on the Rana Plaza collapse, which highlighted critical issues in Bangladesh's garment industry. Throughout the 2010s, the coverage remained steady, driven by the country's economic growth, political developments, and the ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis. Despite these fluctuations, the overall coverage remained consistent, reflecting Bangladesh's gradual rise in global importance, especially concerning humanitarian and economic issues.

The frequency of coverage of Pakistan in Anglo-Saxon media from 2005 to 2023 shows consistently high levels, particularly in the early years. The period from 2005 to 2008 saw elevated scores, largely



due to the country’s strategic role in the War on Terror, the 2005 Kashmir earthquake, and the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in 2007, all of which kept Pakistan in the global spotlight. As the years progressed, the frequency of coverage gradually decreased but remained higher than that of Bangladesh. This ongoing attention is linked to Pakistan’s geopolitical significance, particularly in relation to its complex relationship with neighboring countries, internal security issues, and its role in global and regional politics. Even in the later years, the scores indicate that Pakistan continued to be a focal point for Anglo-Saxon media, albeit with a slightly lower intensity compared to the peak years.

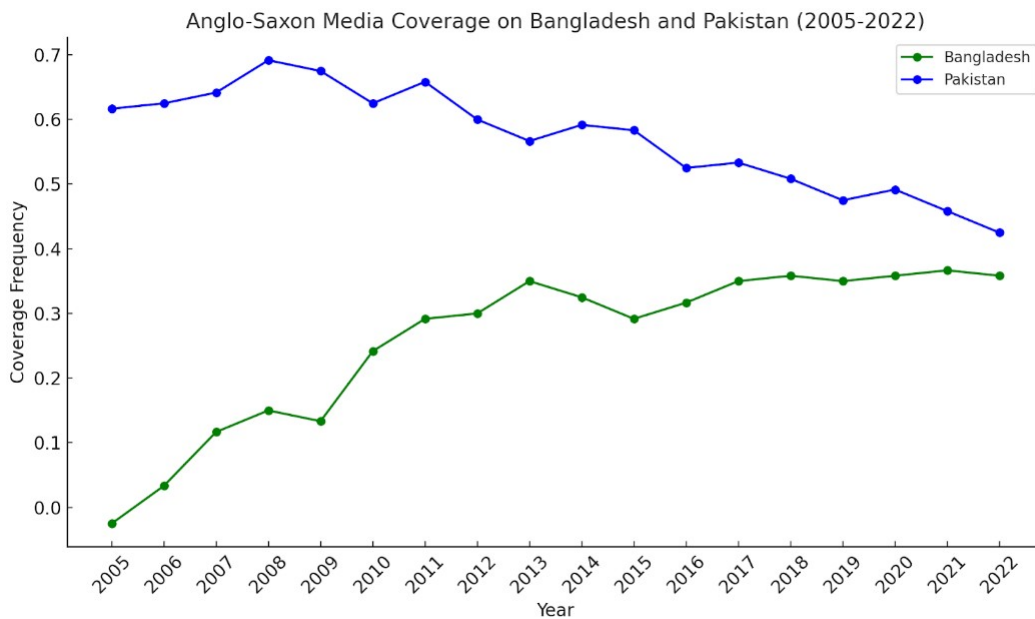


Figure 8: Frequency of coverage of Anglo-Saxon media on Bangladesh and Pakistan

*Note.* The frequency score ranges from -1 to 1. It is the measure of relative intensity of media coverage. The prompts to obtain the figure are in the appendix.

### 8.3 Cross-check and discussion

As a robustness check of the results found in the previous section, we take the news articles of Western sources on Bangladesh used in the text-analysis, and let ChatGPT analyse and assign a sentiment to each year. This process is repeated five times for the time period 2010-2020 and the average is taken. The results can be found in Figure 9. It is notable that both R and ChatGPT show similar trends, but ChatGPT sentiment seems to be one period too late. We must also note that ChatGPT has a meaningfully lower score. This might mean that we should consider only relative

trends in our ChatGPT analysis as it might interpret bad events as a negative sentiment in the articles.

R model and ChatGPT are different methods and both of them have quite substantial caveats. R model is different from ChatGPT as it does not take into account the context but only the neutrality of language. This might also not be the correct approach as every news is provided in some context. If you omit it, you might lose some crucial information which also can lead to bias. When describing atrocities in completely neutral language, media might contribute to the lack of understanding of one of the sides of the conflict.

Furthermore, a major limitation of the ChatGPT analysis is the inherent opacity of how ChatGPT computes these sentiment scores, often referred to as the "black box" problem. Since the model is trained on a vast and diverse corpus of text from the internet, it captures patterns, biases, and sentiment from this data, but the exact process by which it synthesizes this information into a numerical score is not transparent. This lack of transparency means that while the scores provide a useful approximation, they are influenced by numerous unseen factors, including the distribution of data, underlying biases in the sources, and the way the model weights different types of content. As a result, the scores should be interpreted with caution, recognizing that they are an estimate rather than an objective measurement, and the specific methodology for arriving at these scores is not fully accessible or understandable.

When considering the limitations, we note that R analysis is subjective to the extraction from Factiva for the respective years. Hence, this analysis relies on the availability of the articles as well as the filters used to select the articles. Referring to the availability of the data, only fifteen articles were extracted for 1975 to 1994 as there was only a limited number of available articles. This could explain the larger confidence intervals compared to the years following 1994. Furthermore, the filter of the articles indicates which articles are used and thereby also which are not used. These filters indicated the availability of thousands of articles per year, of which 15 or 30 articles is only a minimal selection. Hence, for further analysis it would be recommended to include a larger number of articles. Additionally, it would be interesting to include the filters in the analysis as well. In our research, the focus lay on year and country, although the subject of the article could also be included to improve the applicability of the sentiment scores. As mentioned, articles pertaining to sports were excluded to prevent biases in the results. Including the subjects in the analysis would prevent this as well.

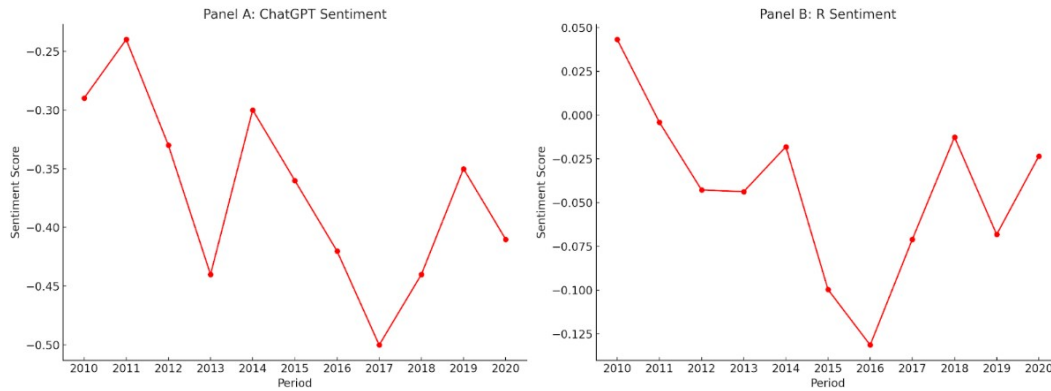


Figure 9: Robustness check - sentiment scores from ChatGPT and R

*Note.* Figure is based on the same articles over period 2010-2020. The articles are analysed by ChatGPT and R.

## 9 Interviews and interpretation

This research was supposed to be supplemented with field research in Bangladesh. Unfortunately, this two week field trip had to be cancelled due to safety concerns regarding the riots of July and August of 2024. During this trip, we were supposed visit important sights and interview several groups namely prominent Bengali academics, politicians, journalists, victims (of war crimes), and local people. The interviews were supposed to answer several questions which the literature was not able to provide answers on. Specifically, the sentiment of what recognition of the 1971 Liberation War would mean for different groups of Bangladeshi people. Furthermore, understanding the inside perspective of how media formed the perspective of foreigners is crucial in understanding potential biases. Last, the Bengali view on Pakistan would likely reveal how trauma and the consequences of the events of 1971 impacted different generations. Appendix 1 reveals our preparations for the interviews we were not able to perform, hoping that future researchers may get some use out of this work.

Despite these challenges, we had the opportunity to do online interviews with both Mr. Hassan and Dr. Dashti. In Geneva, we had the opportunity to talk to Mr. Laghari. In this section we have paraphrased the opinions and views they have shared with us. Additionally, GHRD provided the opportunity for us to attend a special event on minorities in Pakistan. This event was visited by several leading human rights advocates for their respective communities. We used this opportunity to study what patterns the Pakistani government and army uses to suppress different minorities and what the consequences of this suppression entail. The aim was to understand how certain tactics, also used on the Bangladeshi during the events of 1971, changed the lives of the minorities in current

day Pakistan.

Jamal Hassan was born in Bangladesh and studied in the Statistics Department at the University of Dhaka. He was twenty years old and attending university when the Bangladesh Liberation War broke out in 1971. In 1982, he moved to the United States, where he has lived ever since. Over the years, he has held various professional roles, including working as a security expert and Bengali linguist for the U.S. Department of Defense. He has also conducted extensive research on the 1971 Liberation War in Bangladesh.

During our conversation, Mr. Hassan shared his insights on the 1971 Liberation War. He expressed his belief that geopolitical relationships and media coverage significantly influenced the international response to the events of 1971. He argued that, initially, the U.S. had incentives not to condemn the Pakistani army because Pakistan had allowed the U.S. to establish a military base there, which was very valuable during the Cold War as it provided direct access to the Soviet Union. As a result, the U.S. chose not to intervene in Pakistan, despite the horrible events occurring there. In contrast, India ultimately liberated Bangladesh, with the Soviet Union supporting India and, therefore by extension, Bengali independence. The Soviet Union and India signed a crucial defense treaty and supported each other in the U.N. The U.S. attempted to pressure India into not supporting Bangladesh's liberation by placing a naval fleet in the Bay of Bengal, but the Soviet Union provided counter pressure with nuclear submarines. This illustrates how the complexities of the Cold War played a significant role in shaping international support for either the Bengali or Pakistani side during the 1971 Liberation War.

Mr. Hassan also states that Western media, particularly in the U.S., has failed to present a complete picture of the 1971 Liberation War. He observed that the media leaned towards Pakistan and did not ensure that Bengali voices were heard as well. He noted a similar pattern in the U.S. media's coverage of other conflicts. For example, during the Iraq War, the media overwhelmingly supported Bush and the war, but did not show the other side of the conflict.

Mr. Hassan argued that media coverage and international relations also play a crucial role in the recognition of the events of 1971 as a genocide. He pointed out that gaining recognition requires extensive lobbying, as seen in the case of the Armenian Genocide, where recognition was made possible by the strong Armenian diaspora in the U.S. and their influence in U.S. politics. While there are few Bengalis actively raising awareness about the events of 1971, their voices are getting increasingly more heard in the western world. For example, this can be seen in the initiative to celebrate Global Mother Language Day on February 21st. Although this is a small success compared to recognition of genocide, it is still a success. Mr. Hassan also stated that Western media influenced perceptions of the war crimes tribunals in Bangladesh. He argued that the tribunals failed to convict

the actual perpetrators, instead targeting collaborators and people who had already passed away. The Western media's coverage of these trials was strongly influenced by the Pakistani lobby and portrayed the tribunals as controversial.

Finally, Mr. Hassan shared his views on the impact of the Liberation War on Bangladesh's current economy. He noted that the war resulted in significant loss of life and destruction of infrastructure, leaving the country in ruins. However, over time, the trauma of 1971 has been healing and Bangladesh has emerged as an economic tiger. The country has been improving in various economic disciplines. He observed that young people are increasingly motivated to study and work. This healing of the trauma is also seen in the situation of the Bihari community. Compared to the older generations, the younger generations appear to be more assimilated. They were given ID's, work in stores and some have even opened businesses. Although their situation is still complex, Mr. Hassan states that as younger generations appear to be doing better it is also quite hopeful.

Dr. Naseer Dashti is a prominent advocate for Baloch human rights. His work plays a crucial role in bringing attention to the severe abuses occurring in Balochistan, a region with a long history of conflict and oppression under Pakistani rule since its annexation in 1948.

Dr. Dashti argues that the current position of the Baloch minority in Pakistan is heavily influenced by geopolitical relations. He explains that Britain encouraged Pakistan to occupy Balochistan primarily for strategic reasons related to Afghanistan. Additionally, Britain feared that an independent Balochistan, with its left-leaning politics, might align with the Soviet Union. Despite Balochistan's efforts to fight for independence, the lack of international support led to their resistance being crushed by Pakistan in 1948. This situation has persisted and continues to be largely ignored by the international community. Even though it has resulted in multiple human rights violations. Although Balochistan is rich in natural resources, the Baloch people are among the poorest in the world due to the exploitation of their resources by Pakistan. Furthermore, they are not allowed to teach their language. This shows how the position of minority groups can be shaped by the geopolitical incentives of other nations.

Dr. Dashti has also studied the impact of Western media coverage on perceptions of the conflict. He notes that raising awareness requires significant effort and government support, yet Western countries are reluctant to jeopardize their relationships with Pakistan. Consequently, international awareness, support, and media coverage of the issues of the Baloch people are minimal. Dr. Dashti points out that governments often use the media to generate public support for their policies. This increases media attention to topics that serve their interests. This point is illustrated by an incident from 14 years ago, when the drowning of a Kurdish girl off the Syrian coast became a major sensation in European media. The U.S. and European governments used this incident to increase

public support for their invasion of Syria. This highlights how media coverage can be controlled by Western interests. While the tragic drowning of this girl received widespread attention because it aligned with Western objectives at the time, the ongoing human rights violations in Balochistan have been largely ignored. This suggests that governments may use media to achieve their own goals and that media coverage plays a significant role in determining the amount of international attention a conflict receives.

A similar account is given by Sufi Laghari, executive director of the Sindhi Foundation. Laghari, and the Sindhi Foundation, are advocating for the rights of the Sindhi people in Pakistan. In the last few years, they have been protesting against the abduction of Priya Kumari, a Sindhi girl who is a victim of enforced disappearances in Pakistan. Laghari mentions that other issues in Pakistan do have coverage in Western and mainstream media, but the issues of Pakistani minorities are not covered. He hopes that bringing awareness through other means such as social media could motivate people, and especially young people, to start asking questions about the treatment of minorities. He also mentions that the media in Pakistan especially is also controlled, with journalists who try to cover the ongoing issues being asked to leave, or even worse abducted. The media in Sindh are scared to report on the issues going on in the province because they fear the Pakistani army and government, which is why the case of Priya Kumari has also not been covered within Sindh.

Last, one of the speakers, Fareed Ahmed (National Executive of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK.), at the GHRD event about minority rights in Pakistan discussed the situation of the Ahmadi Muslims. He states that the prosecution of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan is state sponsored and denoted in Pakistani law. In 1974, the Pakistani law denoted Ahmadi Muslims as non-Muslims, inciting beliefs that their way of practicing their faith is inferior to the mostly Sunni Pakistanis. This entails that, for example, Ahmadi Muslims cannot 'pose' as Muslims, are not allowed to preach, and cannot call their mosque a place of worship. These practices result in a dehumanisation of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan. Besides a plethora of other discriminating laws, there have been targeted attacks on the Ahmadi Muslims and the ability for Ahmadi Muslims to teach their religion by the Pakistani army and government. The situation is comparable with the Bangladeshi Liberation War of 1971, where the Pakistani army made their soldiers believe that Bengali Muslims are less pure Muslims. Furthermore, the killing of the intellectual ability is used as a way to destroy communities as the Pakistani army killed the intellectual elite in Bangladesh and is doing similar, more gradual, destruction of the Ahmadi Muslim community intellectuals.

## 9.1 Discussion of interviews

The experts that we talked to highlight the role of geopolitics. The intervention of other states in conflicts is highly dependent on economic, military, strategic, ideological incentives. While, the U.S. was aware of the actions of the Pakistani army in today's Bangladesh during the Liberation War of 1971, they chose to not intervene or punish Pakistan. The U.S. chose to maintain their strategic and ideological interests in Pakistan, and access to Afghanistan through Pakistan, above denouncing the human right violations of the Pakistani Army during the Bangladeshi Liberation War.

The strategies of dehumanisation are common in history and used to this day to suppress minorities, as seen by the suppression of the Ahmadi Muslims, Sindhi, and Balochi in Pakistan. Media plays a crucial role in addressing the actions of countries such as Pakistan, however, according to these community representatives there has been a failure to do so. This further shows that Western nations likely choose their strategic and economic interest above pressuring countries like Pakistan to improve the human right situations of their minorities.

## 10 Conclusion and Discussion

This report aimed to provide an independent description of the historical events prior to, during and after the Liberation War of 1971 in Bangladesh. Furthermore, we presented an analysis of forms of media bias which influences the public opinion. We supplemented the research with several interviews with different experts.

The description of the historical context revealed that the effects of the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 can be observed in all parts of society, the economy, politics, and its foreign policy. The damages created by the Pakistani army caused deep rooted psychological and emotional wounds that resulted in collective trauma of the Bangladeshi people. Despite the exact number of casualties being up to debate, the loss of human life was immense, with independent research initiatives reporting ranges of 500.000 to 1.000.000 and the Bangladeshi government claiming up to 2.000.000 reported casualties. Furthermore, as many as 10 million Bengali fled to India, with 30-40 million people being displaced internally. Moreover, the Pakistani army attempted to create an intellectual vacuum by targeting highly educated individuals, severely debilitating the nation. Bengali women and girls as young as 13 or 14 years old were held in military style camps where they were assaulted and raped over a time period of several months. Experts estimate that 200,000 to 400,000 women were raped or sexually assaulted (Begum, 2023). Many women died to the horrific conditions of their captivity and roughly 30.000 women committed suicide due the traumas inflicted on them by the Pakistani army after the or during the Bangladesh Liberation War.

A perception of inferiority was created by the West Pakistani army as they regarded the Bengali Islamic faith as less pure than their own. The West Pakistanis used this argument to justify the dehumanisation of the Bengali people. For instance, the Pakistani army instructed its soldiers to spread the blood of West Pakistan by impregnating as many Bengali women as they could in order to make East Pakistani population more pure. Accordingly, the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 is one of the first documented examples of rape being used as a conscious weapon of war (Begum, 2023).

The trauma of 1971 can be observed in modern Bangladeshi politics. The relationship between the political parties is characterised by deep underlying issues of distrust, growing the dissatisfaction with the government. The Bangladesh quota reform movement of July and August of 2024 highlights the distrust and dissatisfaction. For example, Sheikh Hasina described all protesters as traitors, outing believes that quota benefits should not be spread to traitors. Furthermore, concerns have been raised regarding the political oppression of opposition parties.

The economic loss of the Bangladeshi Liberation War was immense. The loss of the intellectual elite, infrastructure, and great instability likely delayed the economic development of Bangladesh by creating less favourable conditions for foreign direct investment. The lack of international recognition of the Bangladesh Liberation War continues to affect Bangladesh's diplomatic strategies, alliances, and its portrayal in global media. The strategic alliance of Western nations with West-Pakistan resulted in inadequate media coverage along with a failure to condemn the actions of the West-Pakistani army in current day Bangladesh.

Understanding media bias and its effect on policy is crucial, as the way media presents information—whether through episodic framing, which focuses on specific events, or thematic framing, which provides a broader context—can profoundly shape public interpretation and reaction to events. During the Bangladesh Liberation War, Western media's emphasis on military conflict and neutral tones likely contributed to the neglect of human suffering, revealing a form of media bias that aligned with the geopolitical interests of the reporting countries.

For our final sentiment analysis, our most important findings are as follows. Both the R and ChatGPT analysis point to the significance of the Rohingya refugee crisis when analyzing the sentiment of the media. The sentiment in the years surrounding these events worsened significantly. According to the ChatGPT analysis, in first years after the Liberation War, Western media focused on the atrocities of the war but later the sentiment improved. Furthermore, the frequency of coverage of Bangladesh increased during the last decade. One of the reasons the model lists is an increase in economic stability of Bangladesh. The analysis highlights that Bangladesh is not only covered more frequently by all types of media in the last few decades, but also that the sentiment of Anglo-Saxon



media on Bangladesh improved over time.

Finally, based on our findings, we conclude that the events of the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 warrant a re-evaluation by the international community to investigate the actions of the West Pakistani army. Recognition of the Bangladesh Liberation War as a genocide not only serves as a historical and moral vindication of the brutal acts committed by the Pakistani army, it also educates future generations by raising global awareness. It can increase solidarity with the victims and guide the healing process for the people of Bangladesh. The power of media in shaping public opinion should not be overlooked, especially when biased framing can spread inaccurate information on the events. May the lessons of the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 serve as a reminder to our collective responsibilities towards humanity.

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## 11 Appendix 1: Uncompleted interviews - brainstorm question preparation

The field research of this report had to be cancelled due to safety concerns regarding the riots of August 2024. We believe that any party that wants to extend this work may benefit from potential the question we wanted to ask to supplement the research.

### 11.1 Questions for Politicians

#### 1. Introductory question

##### (a) Media question?

- How do you think that media reporting affects policy decisions in the country?
- Have certain events been framed a certain way in the media and how has this influenced the public?

##### (b) Do you think that the media coverage in Bangladesh describes the economic challenges in the country?

- Do you think that some topics gain more attention from the media than others?
- Do you think that the media coverage of economic topics in Bangladesh is influenced by a political agenda?

##### (c) What role do you think media coverage plays in shaping international relations?

#### 2. Pakistan Relations

##### (a) Pakistan

##### (b) Other international questions

- What do you think about the economic relationship with Pakistan?
- Would you like the economic collaboration with Pakistan to be increased?
  - If yes: How do you think this could be improved?
  - If no: Why do you think that the relationship shouldn't be improved?
- In what way do you think history plays a part in shaping the relationship?

##### (c) To dive a bit deeper into the shared history between Pakistan and Bangladesh. . .

#### 3. Genocide

##### (a) Biharis

**Goal: Perspective of the Liberation War between Pakistan and Bangladesh**

- Why do you think the international community does not acknowledge the events of 1971 as a genocide?
  - How do you think the portrayal of the 1971 events in international media influenced the response to these events?
  - How do you believe getting recognition for the events of 1971 as a genocide would influence Bangladesh' international relations with other countries?
- (b) Do you think the events of 1971 should be recognized as a genocide or not?
- if yes:
    - What do you hope the recognition of these events as a genocide will achieve in terms of healing and closure for the Bengali people?
  - if no:
    - Do you think recognition would help Bangladesh and its people in any way?
    - For what reasons are the events of 1971 not a genocide in your opinion?
- (c) The Biharis
- Would you be fine with being asked some questions about the Biharis?
  - Are the Biharis, and their situation, a topic that is often discussed/relevant in politics today?
  - Are there any recent policies aimed at improving the lives of the Biharis?

#### 4. Genocide and economics

(a) Families, politics

(b) ≠ in politics due to genocide

- Were family's hurt a lot by the Liberation War? How did the economic situation of family's change after the Liberation War?
- How was helping family's out after the war prioritised in politics?
  - Do you think there should have been done more/less?
  - Were there any specific economic policies or programs implemented to help families rebuild their lives?
  - How effective were these measures?
- What role did international aid play in helping families economically after the Liberation War?

## 11.2 Questions for Academics

### 1. Introductory question

- What do you think is the main economic challenge that Bangladesh faced during the Pakistani rule and what steps has Bangladesh taken to promote economic growth since gaining independence?
- What major challenges has Bangladesh faced in trying to grow its economy?

### 2. What are your thoughts on the (economic) relationship with Pakistan?

- Would you like the economic collaboration with Pakistan to be increased?
  - If yes: How do you think this could be improved?
  - If no: Why do you think that the relationship shouldn't be improved?

### 3. Media

- Personal view
- Do you think that the media coverage in Bangladesh describes the economic challenges in the country?
- Do you think that the media coverage of economic topics in Bangladesh is influenced by a political agenda? If so, can you explain how you think this influence manifests itself?
- Can you provide examples of how media narratives have influenced public support for specific economic policies or projects?

### 4. How do you think that media reporting affects policy decisions in the country?

- Can you provide examples where news reports have directly led to changes in government policies?
- Have certain events been reported on more frequently in the past than others, and how has this influenced the public?
- Have certain events been framed a certain way in the media and how has this influenced the public?

### 5. Neutrality

- How would you characterise the media landscape in Bangladesh/Pakistan in terms of political neutrality?
- How would you describe the level of public trust in the Bangladeshi media when it comes to reporting on economic and political events in the country?

6. Do you think that there are systematic differences between the Pakistani and the Bangladeshi reporting of the events of the Liberation War?
  - How do you think that the Pakistani reporting of the Liberation War influenced the international perception of the conflict? (same for Bangladeshi reporting)
7. Genocide
  - Recognition
  - Do you think the events of 1971 should be recognized as a genocide or not?
    - If yes: What do you hope the recognition of these events as a genocide will achieve in terms of healing and closure for the Bengali people?
    - If no: Do you think recognition would help Bangladesh and its people in any way?
8. How would you describe the relationship of the Biharis with the Bangladeshi government and society?
  - How would you describe the efforts the Bangladeshi government has made over time to improve the struggles the Biharis face? (Problems: statelessness, poverty, discrimination)
  - Do you think that the Bangladeshi public wants this group to integrate more into society?
9. Are you comfortable talking about the Birangona women?
  - Can you share your opinion on the effects of the Liberation War on the experiences of the Birangona women?
  - What were some common problems the Birangona women faced when seeking justice/ integrating themselves into society?
  - Do you think that there is a stigma around sexual war crimes?
    - If yes: Could you explain which factors are the underlying cause for the stigma the Birangona experience? (cultural factors, politics etc...)
  - How did the Birangona women receiving their honorary title affect their position in society?
10. End by linking the events of 1971 to current politics
  - Were family's hurt a lot by the Liberation War? How did the economic situation of family's change after the Liberation War?
  - Are there particular industries or projects that have notably transformed these areas?

- Were there any specific economic policies or programs implemented to help families rebuild their lives?
- How effective were these measures?
- What role did international aid play in helping families economically after the genocide?
- Do you think the families that have been struck by the Liberation War have been helped enough by the government?
- Do you think more steps should be taken to improve the economic situation? What kind of steps?

11. Do you have an opinion on the role of the International Crimes Tribunal?

- Which impacts did the tribunal and its convictions have on the victims and society in Bangladesh?
- What is your opinion of the criticisms the Tribunal is facing with regards to its fairness?

12. Does 1971 still influence current politics?

- If yes: How?
- If no: Why not?
- Who do you attribute the economic rise of Bangladesh to?

### 11.3 Questions for Locals

1. Introductory Question

- Q2: Have you or any of your family members received help from an NGO, like BRAC, Care Bangladesh, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society or any other NGO?
  - If yes, then
    - \* What type of help did you or your family member receive (Financial aid, health-care, education)?
    - \* How did it impact your or your family member's life?
  - If no, then
    - \* Have you noticed improvement and growth in your community due to the work of NGOs? Elaborate on how?
    - \* In your opinion, how can NGOs improve their work to better help the citizens?

2. Media



- Are you aware of the amount of media coverage done by Western countries on the genocide of Bangladesh?
  - Do you believe that they portray the events with a certain tone that is perhaps different from the one used by Bangladeshi media?
  - Do you believe that Western media holds certain stereotypes about Bangladesh and if so what are they?
  - How do you feel about the framing that Western media uses when covering Bangladesh?
  - How does Western media reporting (certain stereotypes the west uses to cover Bangladesh) affect the way tourists behave in Bangladesh? (maybe also ask if they have any personal experiences) (Directed towards the general public)
  - Do tourists from the west have certain stereotypes when they come to Bangladesh?
  - Do you know any acquaintances that have moved abroad? Do they experience any stereotyping or biases there?

### 3. Question set 4: goal: understanding how they view Pakistan

- What do you think about the (economic) relationship with Pakistan?
- In what way do you think history plays a part in this?
- Do you think the relationship should be improved?
  - If yes: How could it be improved?

### 4. Genocide

- Question Set 2: goal: appeal for genocide recognition
- How would you feel if the international community would officially recognize the events of 1971 as a genocide?
  - States they don't experience any trauma:
    - \* How do you think it would feel for the people who do experience trauma from these events?
  - States it would not matter:
    - \* What other way do you believe you would be able to get some closure from what happened in 1971 if at all?
  - States positive feelings:
    - \* Do you think there would be any positive effects in your day-to-day life after recognition?

- \* What do you hope the effects from international recognition of this trauma would be on your life?
- \* How do you think recognition of the events of 1971 would influence the life of the Bengali people?
- States negative feelings:
  - \* Why do you think there would be negative effects of recognition?
  - \* Do you think there would be any negative effects in your day-to-day life after recognition?
  - \* How do you think recognition of the events of 1971 would influence the life of the Bengali people?

#### 5. Victims (questions to local about being a victim or victims in general)

- Before asking this question: Would you be fine with being asked some questions about the Birangona women
- Question set 7: the Birangona women
  - Can you share your opinion on the effects of the Liberation War on the experiences of the Birangona women?
  - Did you observe any developments with regards to their situation over the years?
  - Do you think that there is stigma surrounding sexual war crimes today?
  - (if they don't really know anything about these specific questions we could also ask in a more general sense: What do you know about the Birangona women?)
- Question set 8: The Biharis
  - Before asking this question: Would you be fine with being asked some questions about the Biharis?
  - Q1: What do you know about the Biharis in general?
  - Q2: Can you share your opinion on the Biharis (and their history with regards to the support for Pakistan)?
  - Q3: How do you think the Biharis are being treated by society?
  - Q4: Have you experienced any developments with regards to their situation over the years?

#### 6. Linking events of 1971 to current standard of living

- Q1: How do you think the citizens think about the Awami League compared to during and after the war?

- Why do you think Awami League has remained the leading political party in Bangladesh for so long?
- Have there been big events or decisions by Awami League that changed how people feel about them since the war?
- Which party do you attribute the sharp economic growth since 1971 to?

7. Question set 1 “Economics”. Goal: Understanding what changes has the Bengal territory experienced before and after the war, how has this impacted the civilians

- Q1: How would you describe the economy before and after the war? What changes has the Bengal region experienced?
- How would you describe the standard of living now and then?
- What is the biggest change?
- What changes have you seen in the types of industries and jobs available in Bangladesh since independence?
- Which new industries or businesses have you noticed growing in your area?
- How did people cope with the challenges of the wartime economy?
- If the interviewee is older than 50 years
  - How has your standard of living changed now in the democratic period (1991-present) compared to the early post-independence period (1971-1990)?

## 12 Appendix 2: Empirical research

### 12.0.1 ChatGPT prompts

1. Media sentiment scores of Anglo-Saxon, Bangladeshi and Pakistani media on the country of Bangladesh between 1971 and 2006.

- (a) We are investigating Western media bias and we want to create a score that varies over time and across countries, regions or populations. The score can be defined in multiple ways so make sure you adapt to it. You are trained on almost all the data available on the internet. Therefore, you are able to analyze the sentiment of your training data, especially of specific countries. Since you are a language model you can act as an NLP. Create numbers based on your own training data. It should be a score from -1 to 1. Define the score of 0 as neutral sentiment, 1 as a positive sentiment and -1 as a negative sentiment. Please define how you came to this specific score. Since you are a black box,

you should explain your biases. This is a base for all instructions to follow. Consider these factors: Tone and Context: The overall tone of media coverage (positive, neutral, or negative). Focus of Coverage: The emphasis on issues such as development, conflict, terrorism, political stability, and humanitarian crises. Relations: The impact of foreign policy and bilateral relations on media portrayal.

- (b) Create a sentiment score of anglo-saxon media sources combined on Bangladesh, a sentiment score of Bangladeshi media sources on Bangladesh, and a sentiment score of Pakistani media sources on Bangladesh, separately. We understand that you do not have direct access to this data, but you are trained on this data. Therefore, we want to analyze what you think this score should be. Give us a number for every period of 2 years from 1971 to 2005 in the table and explain it, do not omit any period. Please give the table in excel format as well.

2. Media sentiment scores of Anglo-Saxon, Bangladeshi and Pakistani media on the country of Bangladesh between 2005 and 2022.

- (a) We are investigating Western media bias and we want to create a score that varies over time and across countries, regions or populations. The score can be defined in multiple ways so make sure you adapt to it. You are trained on almost all the data available on the internet. Therefore, you are able to analyze the sentiment of your training data, especially of specific countries. Since you are a language model you can act as an NLP. Create numbers based on your own training data. It should be a score from -1 to 1. Define the score of 0 as neutral sentiment, 1 as a positive sentiment and -1 as a negative sentiment. Please define how you came to this specific score. Since you are a black box, you should explain your biases. This is a base for all instructions to follow. Consider these factors: Tone and Context: The overall tone of media coverage (positive, neutral, or negative). Focus of Coverage: The emphasis on issues such as development, conflict, terrorism, political stability, and humanitarian crises. Relations: The impact of foreign policy and bilateral relations on media portrayal.

- (b) Create a sentiment score of anglo-saxon media sources combined on Bangladesh and Pakistan, separately. We understand that you do not have direct access to this data, but you are trained on this data. Therefore, we want to analyze what you think this score should be. Give us a number for every period of 2 years from 2005 to 2023 in the table and explain it, do not omit any period. please give the table in excel format as well

or

Create a sentiment score of Bangladeshi media sources on Bangladesh. We understand

that you do not have direct access to this data, but you are trained on this data. Therefore, we want to analyze what you think this score should be. Give us a number for every period of 2 years from 2005 to 2023 in the table and explain it, do not omit any period. please give the table in excel format as well

or

Create a sentiment score of Pakistani media sources on Bangladesh. We understand that you do not have direct access to this data, but you are trained on this data. Therefore, we want to analyze what you think this score should be. Give us a number for every period of 2 years from 2005 to 2023 in the table and explain it, do not omit any period. please give the table in excel format as well

3. Media sentiment scores of Anglo-Saxon, Bangladeshi and Pakistani media on Liberation War between 2005 and 2022.

(a) We are investigating Western media bias and we want to create a score that varies over time and across countries, regions or populations. The score can be defined in multiple ways so make sure you adapt to it. You are trained on almost all the data available on the internet. Therefore, you are able to analyze the sentiment of your training data, especially of specific countries. Since you are a language model you can act as an NLP. Create numbers based on your own training data. It should be a score from -1 to 1. Define the score of 0 as neutral sentiment, 1 as a positive sentiment and -1 as a negative sentiment. Please define how you came to this specific score. Since you are a black box, you should explain your biases. This is a base for all instructions to follow. Consider these factors: Tone and Context: The overall tone of media coverage (positive, neutral, or negative). Focus of Coverage: The emphasis on issues such as development, conflict, terrorism, political stability, and humanitarian crises. Relations: The impact of foreign policy and bilateral relations on media portrayal.

(b) Create a sentiment score of anglo-saxon media sources combined on Bangladesh War of Independence, a sentiment score of Pakistani media sources on Bangladesh War of Independence and a sentiment score of Bangladeshi media sources on Bangladesh War of Independence. We understand that you do not have direct access to this data, but you are trained on this data. Therefore, we want to analyze what you think this score should be. Give us a number for every period of four years from 1971 to 2022 in the table and explain it, do not omit any period and start with 1971-1974, then 1975-1978, 1979-1982 etc. Please, give the table in excel format as well.

4. Score of Pakistani framing on Bangladesh and score of Bangladeshi framing on Pakistan.

- (a) We are investigating Western media bias and we want to create a score that varies over time and across countries, regions or populations. The score can be defined in multiple ways so make sure you adapt to it. You are trained on almost all the data available on the internet. Therefore, you are able to analyze the sentiment of your training data, especially of specific countries. Since you are a language model you can act as an NLP. Create numbers based on your own training data. It should be a score from -1 to 1. Define the score of 0 as neutral sentiment, 1 as a positive sentiment and -1 as a negative sentiment. Please define how you came to this specific score. Since you are a black box, you should explain your biases. This is a base for all instructions to follow. Consider these factors: Tone and Context: The overall tone of media coverage (positive, neutral, or negative). Focus of Coverage: The emphasis on issues such as development, conflict, terrorism, political stability, and humanitarian crises. Relations: The impact of foreign policy and bilateral relations on media portrayal.
- (b) Create a sentiment score of Bangladeshi media sources on Pakistan and a sentiment score of Pakistani media sources on Bangladesh, separately. We understand that you do not have direct access to this data, but you are trained on this data. Therefore, we want to analyze what you think this score should be. Give us a number for every period of four years from 1971 to 2023 in the table and explain it, do not omit any period. Please, give the table in excel format as well.
- (c) Create a sentiment score of Bangladeshi media sources on Pakistan and a sentiment score of Pakistani media sources on Bangladesh, separately. We understand that you do not have direct access to this data, but you are trained on this data. Therefore, we want to analyze what you think this score should be. Give us a number for every period of four years from 1971 to 2023 in the table and explain it, do not omit any period.

##### 5. Frequency of Anglo-Saxon media coverage of Pakistan and Bangladesh

- (a) We are investigating Western media bias and we want to create a score that varies over time and across countries, regions or populations. The score can be defined in multiple ways so make sure you adapt to it. You are trained on almost all the data available on the internet. Therefore, you are able to analyze the sentiment of your training data, especially of specific countries. Since you are a language model you can act as an NLP. Create numbers based on your own training data. It should be a score from -1 to 1. Define the score of 0 as neutral sentiment, 1 as a positive sentiment and -1 as a negative sentiment. Please define how you came to this specific score. Since you are a black box, you should explain your biases. This is a base for all instructions to follow. Consider these factors: Tone and Context: The overall tone of media coverage (positive, neutral,

or negative). Focus of Coverage: The emphasis on issues such as development, conflict, terrorism, political stability, and humanitarian crises. Relations: The impact of foreign policy and bilateral relations on media portrayal.

- (b) Create a frequency of coverage score (from -1 to 1) of US media sources on Bangladesh and Pakistan, separately. We understand that you do not have direct access to this data, but you are trained on this data. Therefore, we want to analyze what you think this score should be. Give us a number for every year from 2005 to 2023 in the table and explain it, do not omit any year. Please, give the table in excel format as well.

#### 6. Cross-check

- (a) We are investigating Western media bias and we want to create a score that varies over time and across countries, regions or populations. The score can be defined in multiple ways so make sure you adapt to it. You are trained on almost all the data available on the internet. Therefore, you are able to analyze the sentiment of your training data, especially of specific countries. Since you are a language model you can act as an NLP. Create numbers based on your own training data. It should be a score from -1 to 1. Define the score of 0 as neutral sentiment, 1 as a positive sentiment and -1 as a negative sentiment. Please define how you came to this specific score. Since you are a black box, you should explain your biases. This is a base for all instructions to follow. Consider these factors: Tone and Context: The overall tone of media coverage (positive, neutral, or negative). Focus of Coverage: The emphasis on issues such as development, conflict, terrorism, political stability, and humanitarian crises. Relations: The impact of foreign policy and bilateral relations on media portrayal.
- (b) Please give the sentiment scores per year for the articles in the following document [The articles were uploaded]

#### 12.0.2 ChatGPT - additional output

Table 1: *Standard Deviations of Media Coverage on Bangladesh from 1971 to 2006*

<b>Period</b>	<b>Anglo-Saxon Media</b>	<b>Bangladeshi Media</b>	<b>Pakistani Media</b>
1971-1972	0.353	0.293	0.222
1973-1974	0.324	0.256	0.159
1975-1976	0.307	0.345	0.364
1977-1978	0.256	0.332	0.268
1979-1980	0.288	0.339	0.214
1981-1982	0.317	0.361	0.229
1983-1984	0.317	0.368	0.209
1985-1986	0.289	0.291	0.315
1987-1988	0.280	0.382	0.197
1989-1990	0.279	0.331	0.289
1991-1992	0.334	0.336	0.241
1993-1994	0.298	0.360	0.281
1995-1996	0.335	0.329	0.254
1997-1998	0.295	0.350	0.259
1999-2000	0.265	0.399	0.313
2001-2002	0.341	0.404	0.305
2003-2004	0.278	0.377	0.383
2005-2006	0.298	0.310	0.407

*Note.* This table shows the standard deviations of media coverage across different periods and media sources.



Table 2: *Media Coverage Relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan from 1971 to 2023*

<b>Period</b>	<b>Bangladeshi Media on Pakistan</b>	<b>Pakistani Media on Bangladesh</b>
1971-1974	0.078	0.107
1975-1978	0.082	0.078
1979-1982	0.096	0.114
1983-1986	0.111	0.114
1987-1990	0.123	0.110
1991-1994	0.152	0.132
1995-1998	0.155	0.107
1999-2002	0.171	0.138
2003-2006	0.168	0.139
2007-2010	0.170	0.148
2011-2014	0.179	0.141
2015-2018	0.175	0.143
2019-2023	0.156	0.140

*Note.* This table presents the interaction between Bangladeshi and Pakistani media coverage over time.

Table 3: *Standard Deviation of some sentiment scores from 2005 to 2022*

<b>Period</b>	<b>Anglo-Saxon on Bangladesh</b>	<b>Western on Pakistan</b>	<b>Bangladeshi on Bangladesh</b>
2005-2006	0.186	0.141	0.202
2007-2008	0.225	0.126	0.234
2009-2010	0.127	0.135	0.119
2011-2012	0.204	0.237	0.203
2013-2014	0.152	0.176	0.292
2015-2016	0.174	0.179	0.327
2017-2018	0.149	0.241	0.254
2019-2020	0.222	0.213	0.211
2021-2022	0.182	0.180	0.272

*Note.* This table shows standard deviations of sentiment scores related to Bangladesh and Pakistan as reported by Western and Bangladeshi media.