national scheme of things, Bengal was an add-on to the idea of Pakistan. In the post-1947 Pakistan, too, it was an add-on: welcome, but as an extra bag of goodies, not as an extra mouth demanding its rightful share of the national booty.

So here was this strange coupling, with one side perpetually getting the best of the other, and there seems to have been only one true believer in Pakistan as a democratic ideal: the ultimate odd man out -- Suhrawardy. And he got jailed regularly.

There is very little evidence that Mujib had any feelings for the Bengali-mistreating Pakistan state. The Pakistani leadership and military, historian Ayesha Jalal has remarked in her book on the Pakistan state, just went about constructing Pakistan in splendid disregard for the East Pakistani people. Reactions to Pakistani rule probably began that very inauspicious month of August 1947, when stones of disenchantment and rage pelted the face of new Pakistan through street protests. No honeymoon for this marriage, at least.

Bengal moves towards its own history

By 1948 the first thunder of the language movement was heard, and by 1952, the Dhaka martyrs meant that deconstruction was well on the way. The cluster of Bangal leftists like Toaha, Tajuddin, and Oli Ahad emerged to give the protest movement a fresh ideological face, and the new alliance between the elite Hindus and Muslims of Bengal against their common enemy, Pakistan, was logically concluded as the rainbow coalition of AL-led Jukto Front swept the ancient cobwebs of the old ethnic state away and began polishing a new one in the provincial elections of 1954.

Pakistan's desperation lay bare in the imposition of federal authority to remove Fazlul Huq, the old and by then increasingly moth-eaten Tiger of Bengal, on charges of having wanted the "independence of East Pakistan." This was in an interview given to a New York Times reporter with a dubious reputation. Huq had perhaps lost a step to old age, but he was still capable of understanding what constituted treason -- he was advocate general of East Pakistan, for God's sake -- the quote thus seems unlikely.

Did Pakistan's authorities restore sanity or insanity by reinstating Huq, sans his election partners, and making him the home minister to boot? The man who was an alleged traitor was put in charge of catching traitors in an increasingly surreal Pakistan.

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The only loyal Pakistani

Amidst this bedlam, Suhrawardy soldiered on, doing his best to rescue Pakistan. During his reign as a coalition partner ruling over Pakistan, he and his colleagues bartered away much of the militant demands of the East Pakistani nationalists -- the list is long and this is not his tale -- and paid the price by splitting his party into the pro-Left anti-US National Awami Party (NAP) and the centrist Suhrawardy-led pro-US Awami League.

Till his last breath it was Pakistan. Even at Kagmari, the venue where the party met and split in 1957, and Mujib physically brawled with the lefties. In 1958, when under Gen. Ayub Khan martial law was imposed in Pakistan, he remained the loyal lieutenant of Suhrawardy, who was still seeking Jinnah's posthumous approval as a soldier of Pakistan though Pakistan had decided to go full military.

Suhrawardy was a believer in parliamentary democracy and constitutions and consensus, but Jinnah was never fond of such irksome obstacles, and after Pakistan's birth never proved he had serious instincts about what ailed Pakistan and now ails Bangladesh more and more every year -- a beloved dysfunctionality called political democracy.

When did Pakistan, as it was born in 1947, start dying? In 1958, by many if not most reckonings, as the military, no longer happy that they were upholding the raison d'etre of Pakistan (active hatred of India and all that comes with it) wondered why it shouldn't also do the rest.

The best interest of Pakistan was the best argument to take over, and when the civilian rulers had no clout, only the army was left behind. In this case, the army was eager, willing to take charge and then teach the "bloody civilian politicians," as the crowd cheered that true patriotism always lies with military power.

The civilian politicians had laid the ground and the military spread the seeds -- and the conclusion was inevitable. The East Pakistanis who were active before 1947 and the new blood that came afterwards all decided it was enough. They began to look for the other path, the older and the original road once more. The journey taken together had come to both a real and metaphorical end.

The Inner Group

Moazzem Chowdhury had been plugging on since 1947 with a small group that he had formed called the "Inner Group," consisting of three others and existing largely on the support of Indian intelligence. His mind was made up. A "Subhash Bose" model would have to work.