the nature of the state rather than retail ideas of which songs we sing on the street to classify our entertainment culture. The cultural traits that we share with Pakistan refer more to the response mechanism of the state.

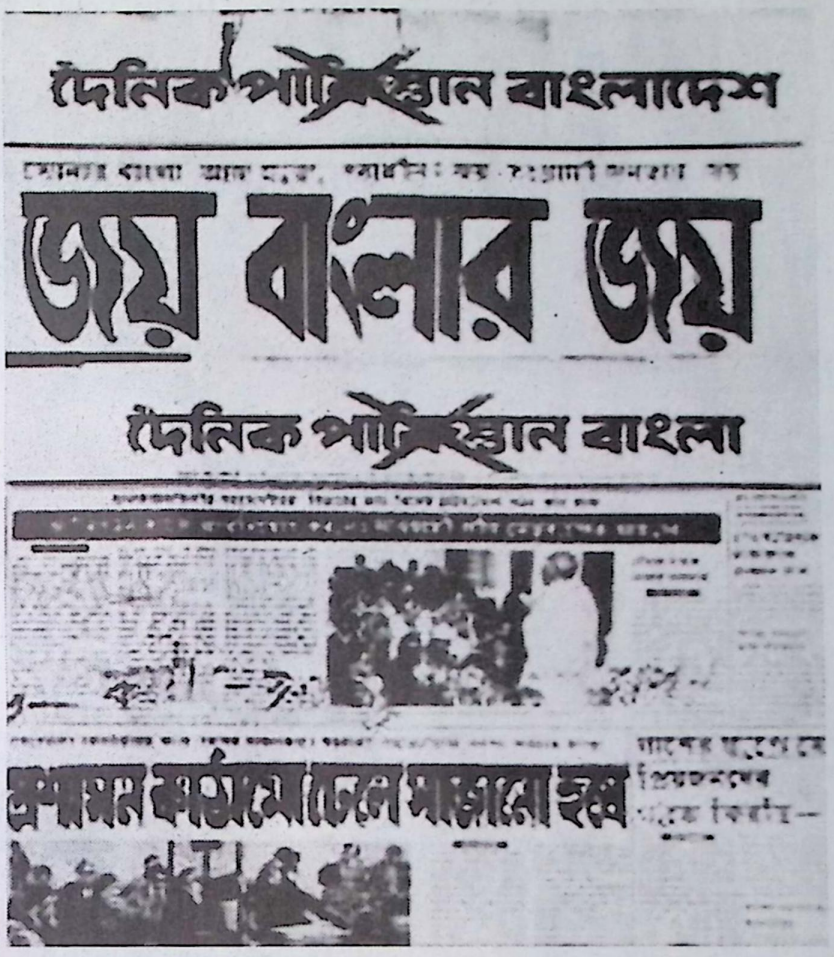
The idea of BKSAL was embraced but the electoral process or constitutional democracy wasn't, making the case that the lessons learnt of managing the state were easily applied. The inordinate strength and resilience of the military and the bureaucracy is a much neglected study area, because although they practically didn't exist throughout 1971 as institutions, they almost immediately reverted to their own established pattern immediately after 1971 was over. It is the continuity of the state that was offered by them and the state greedily took it and that is why it was inevitable that they emerged stronger with every month till the army even challenged one-party rule and then fought various factions of each other till the mainstream military rule was established.

It was repeated in various forms under Ershad and in a non-conventional refrain later, but the military as the stabiliser of the last resort where political culture of the civilian leadership remains underdeveloped, undemocratic, and ultimately unable to produce mature state management cadres from the political womb, is more a Pakistan model than from anywhere else.

Going by the past history of nearly 40 years, our political history and economic management ideals are certainly closer to Pakistan, and today the similarity is not less either. Is it that Sheikh Mujib learnt the methods of ruling from the government he once served as well?

The missing Suhrawardy factor or Jinnah's revenge?

His mentor H. S. Suhrawardy did try to create a new Pakistan, where


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constitutionalism, rule of law, and painful political compromise were all part of the system, but he passed on in 1963, and the tradition of Liaquat Ali Khan, the first prime minister of Pakistan, was asserted, and his labour never bore fruit. He became the leader who left no tradition behind: the political cultural practices of Suhrawardy have no echo in either Bangladesh or Pakistan. Street protests and agitation have replaced organised process of debate and voting as preferred forms of dialogue and regime change.

There is not one Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and to describe him as one person across the decades, states, and histories would be meaningless for both his admirers and detractors. He had clearly demarcated histories, and in each he played specific roles. If he had learned from and about Subhash Bose and Suhrawardy, he also learnt from Liaquat Ali Khan, going by the evidence that we observe. Incidentally, the first prime minister of Pakistan and the first prime minister of Bangladesh were both assassinated.

In the end, history overwhelmed him. He was only doing what he knew how to do. Gandhi must have known in his heart what was beyond him, which was to administer India, and in the end left an increasingly democratic though a very flawed India behind as his legacy.

Jinnah seemed to have left behind one full and one nearly full state as his inheritance, both overrun by the same ailments. Or was it his revenge on the Bengalis he never liked?

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