



1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh

Srinath Raghavan

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The war of 1971 was the most significant geopolitical event in the Indian subcontinent since its partition in 1947. At one swoop, it led to the creation of Bangladesh, and it tilted the balance of power between India and Pakistan steeply in favor of India. The Line of Control in Kashmir, the nuclearization of India and Pakistan, the conflicts in Siachen Glacier and Kargil, the insurgency in Kashmir, the political travails of Bangladesh--all can be traced back to the intense nine months in 1971.

Against the grain of received wisdom, Srinath Raghavan contends that far from being a predestined event, the creation of Bangladesh was the product of conjuncture and contingency, choice and chance. The breakup of Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh can be understood only in a wider international context of the period: decolonization, the Cold War, and incipient globalization. In a narrative populated by the likes of Nixon, Kissinger, Zhou Enlai, Indira Gandhi, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Tariq Ali, George Harrison, Ravi Shankar, and Bob Dylan, Raghavan vividly portrays the stellar international cast that shaped the origins and outcome of the Bangladesh crisis.

This strikingly original history uses the example of 1971 to open a window to the nature of international humanitarian crises, their management, and their unintended outcomes.

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