Mohammad Sajjadur Rahman

Bachelor of Social Sciences (B.S.S.) Honors in International Relations from the University of Dhaka; Session: 1997-98 – 2000-01; Degree Awarded: 2003.

Master of Social Sciences (M.S.S.) in International Relations from the University of Dhaka, Session: 2001-02, Degree Awarded: 2005.

Master in International Policy Studies (MAIPS): Monterey Institute of International Studies; Monterey, California, USA; Specialization: Terrorism Studies; Session: 2008-09; Degree Awarded: 2009.

Fromson Fellow Mohammad Sajjadur is engaged in researching and writing his dissertation, *Against Freedom: Understanding the "Anti-Liberation Forces" in Bangladesh's War of Independence.* His project examines different narratives about the East Pakistani loyalists, widely referred to as "collaborators," who supported Pakistan's counter-insurgency operations against Bengali freedom fighters in 1971. Rahman argues that the post-war construction of the image of the collaborator as the "enemy within" depended upon many "silences" about the violent birth of Bangladesh.

Local groups, popularly known as "Razakar" (member of a paramilitary group) and "Muktijuddho-birodhi Shokti" (anti-liberation forces), collaborated with the Pakistani army to commit atrocities. Over the last four decades, pro-Pakistani loyalists were seen as ideologues of Islamist parties betraying fellow Bengalis in the name of Islam. Yet, this image obstructs a more nuanced understanding of wartime collaboration, as well as the multilayered and ambiguous motivations of the collaborators. The so-called secular-liberal narrative cannot explain why some non-Muslim indigenous groups opposed the pro-independence Bengali guerilla forces. In fact, the East Pakistani loyalists belonged to a variety of professional backgrounds and political parties, including secular ones. The current historiography of the 1971 War does not explain why pro-state collaboration occurred or provide insights into how the legacy of the idea of collaboration shaped the politics of denunciation and justice in post-war Bangladesh.

Rahman addresses the gap in the literature of 1971 War that mostly focuses on the heroism of the Bengali freedom fighters. While the Bangladeshi state has never denied the mass atrocities, academic research on this topic remains inadequate. Rahman also considers the post-war period when political leaders questioned whether to prosecute the collaborators. As a multidisciplinary project, *Against Freedom* deepens understanding of wartime collaboration, but also contributes to memory politics, transitional justice and the process of historical production.

Rahman's research included a trip to the US National Archive in Maryland to explore documents related to the US position on the trial of the collaborators. His interest in this sub-topic emerged as a result of finding detailed policy discussions within the British diplomatic community. As British officials discouraged trying the Pakistani war criminals, Rahman decided to examine additional domestic and international responses to trials held from 1972 to 1973. A number of previously unnoticed memoirs written in Bangla by alleged collaborators between 1976 and 1990 offer additional valuable perspectives to the project.

Rahman has already published his research widely. Thanks to a CGS-Square Fellowship from the Center for Genocide Studies, Dhaka University, he will contribute a paper on British viewpoints on the local tribunal as a fellowship requirement. His co-edited book, *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Bangladesh* was published in 2016. His second co-edited book *Neoliberal Development in Bangladesh: People on the Margin* is scheduled to get published soon.. He also wrote two chapters for the forthcoming edited volume *Islam in its Plenitude*. Finally, Rahman is a senior advisor to a creative project focusing on the digital recreation of the events of the liberation war.