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United States foreign policy in South Asia: The liberation struggle in Bangladesh and the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971

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University of Hawaii, 1989
UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY IN SOUTH ASIA: THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE IN BANGLADESH AND THE INDO-PAKISTAN WAR OF 1971

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

DECEMBER 1989

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ABSTRACT

During the 1950s and 1960s, the United States policy was to maintain regional stability in South Asia through a balance of power between India and Pakistan. The chief features of the policy were military and economic assistance to India and Pakistan alike and the use of that assistance to prevent war and encourage nation-building in the aftermath of independence. The policy also aimed to entice the two governments into the alliance system through which the United States sought to contain the communist superpowers. If the policy succeeded, the United States would have to give little attention to an area peripheral to American national interest. Thus the American leaders entered into a military alliance with Pakistan to contain both the Soviet Union and China. But this alliance did not mark a client-patron relationship because Washington refused to act as Pakistan's guarantor against Indian aggression. The United States wanted to use India to contain China because of India's size, resources, manpower, and hostility toward Beijing. Thus, although India refused to ally itself with the United States, Washington was still concerned to maintain equitable relations with India.

Richard Nixon perceptibly altered this policy. The objective of maintaining regional stability and the balance of power remained, but Nixon and his advisors believed this could best be achieved by leaning toward Pakistan. This change had global implications for and relevance to the evolving pattern of the Cold War. Nixon wanted to make a rapprochement with China, which he believed would serve American national interest. This rapprochement was made through
Pakistan; and first the Pakistani role and then the rapprochement itself reduced India's importance to the United States and raised that of Pakistan. When the civil war broke out in Pakistan, Nixon tilted further toward the military regime in Pakistan, for by that time India was pursuing a closer relationship with the Soviet Union. Indeed, to Nixon the civil war became at heart an attempt by a Soviet client state India to destroy Pakistan.

To protect Pakistan, the United States played an important role in the crisis that developed as a result of the civil war. It provided relief aid for the East Pakistani refugees who flooded into India, and privately urged the Pakistani government to compromise with the Bengali dissidents. It urged both India and Pakistan to refrain from hostilities and used economic aid to try to pressure India not to attack either East or West Pakistan. Finally, after Indian forces entered East Pakistan and West Pakistani forces retaliated by bombing and invading India, the Nixon administration decided that India intended to dismember West Pakistan, and to prevent that it sent a naval task force into the war zone. However, a number of factors acted as restraints on this policy. These included opposition from the public, the State Department, and Congress, all of it prompted by concurrent protest against Nixon's Vietnam policies and by the fact that Nixon's South Asia policy failed to take into account the moral and ethical aspects of the crisis there.

The Nixon policy failed because the United States refused to use the influence it might have had on Pakistan, and the tilt toward Pakistan destroyed whatever influence America might otherwise have
had on India. Thus, the Indians contravened American policy by intervening in the Pakistani civil war, and was successful in doing so because that policy failed to take into consideration the basic regional factors involved: the civil war grew out of the brutality of the Pakistani army in East Pakistan, and of the legitimate rights of the Bengali people, and out of the pragmatic and strategic interests of India in the subcontinent. The civil war was not, as the Nixon administration seemed to think, an episode in the Cold War. It was instead a fundamental development in subcontinental affairs. As such its resolution could come only from within the subcontinent.
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The Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 and the liberation of Bangladesh are the most important events in the history of South Asia since the partition and independence of India and Pakistan in 1947. The war changed the geographic and political structure of the South Asian peninsula, as the divided nation of Pakistan was dismembered and what had been East Pakistan became the new country of Bangladesh. That development destroyed Pakistan's hope for military and economic, and therefore political and diplomatic, parity with India, and the latter emerged as the dominant power in the subcontinent.

The United States played an important role in this transformation. Throughout the crisis that culminated in the Indo-Pakistan war of December 1971, the United States supported Pakistan, opposed India's growing ties with the Soviet Union and its support of the Bangladeshi dissidents; and eventually sent a naval task force to the Indian Ocean, ostensibly to deter India from destroying West Pakistan in the interest of promoting Soviet influence in the subcontinent. Despite the great impact of American policy on the Bangladeshi liberation struggle and on the Indo-Pakistan war and its resolution, the United States' role in the crisis was soon forgotten by most Americans, and therefore has not attracted much attention from historians. This dissertation is the first comprehensive study of that role.

A brief survey will illustrate the current state of the scholarly literature on American policy during the crisis. A few American political scientists and journalists have studied United States-South Asian relations generally and have touched on the liberation struggle in
Bangladesh and the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 in the overall context of those relations. A few other American scholars have briefly treated specific aspects of America's role in the liberation struggle and the war of 1971. With little understanding of subcontinental culture, politics, language and psychology, and with limited access to subcontinental archives, however, these scholars have produced studies that at best are incomplete and imbalanced and at worst positively distorting.

South Asian scholars have done no better. The few research works they have produced on the subject have focused on the interaction of the superpowers without sufficient attention to the details of American policy, and they have made little use of American archival sources. Further, their works are marred by intrusive national biases. What is needed is a study that overcomes these limitations, one that rests on American and South Asian sources, that mutes national biases, and treats the subject in international context. I have tried to make such a study in this dissertation.

In doing so, I have made extensive use of sources from the United States and South Asia, and I have tried to reconstruct and assess the impact of American policy and actions in South Asia during the 1971 crisis. I have found that America's role in the crisis was much more important than previous studies have suggested, and that the impact of America's actions was much greater than has been previously revealed. My findings therefore challenge conventional views that America's role in the crisis was secondary and largely reactive, that that role was a continuation of the traditional American policy that favored Pakistan over India, and that American policy was guided solely by President
Nixon's personal bias against India and in favor of Pakistan. I believe all of these views are incorrect.

In my opinion, American policy in South Asia as elsewhere has always been guided by perceived national interest. South Asia's importance in American policy thus varied over the years as perceptions of national interest changed. One major change in those perceptions came with Nixon's assumption of the presidency. Consequently, Nixon's policy toward South Asia during the crisis of 1971 was different from that of previous administrations before 1969. That change is one of the reasons for the significance of my subject.

In accomplishing this dissertation my task has been greatly facilitated by the recent opening of some of the presidential papers of Richard M. Nixon at the Nixon Material Project in Alexandria, Virginia. In addition, the publication of memoirs by the two architects of America's South Asian policy in 1971, Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, has shed new light on my subject. I have used Kissinger's detailed discussion of the "tilt" toward Pakistan, which remains the principal sustained defense of the policy, as a point of departure for examining the origins and implications of the controversial South Asian policy of President Nixon during 1971. These memoirs, and other sources that are now available, offer for the first time the possibility of a comprehensive assessment of American policy in the Bangladesh liberation struggle and the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971.

One of the most important of those other sources is in the archives of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, D.C. In 1973, the Carnegie Endowment commissioned a detailed study of American policy during the Bangladesh crisis, the purpose of which was
to explain the nation's failure to respond to the human consequences of the Pakistani civil war. The study produced a detailed dissection of the processes and implications of American foreign policymaking during the Bangladesh crisis, and was informed by a previous inquiry into American policy in a somewhat similar tragedy—the Nigerian civil war over Biafra. Carnegie researchers interviewed more than a hundred senior officials from the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Department, the National Security Council, and the Agency for International Development. The documents they produced ran into thousands of pages, most of them unfortunately now lost. Those that survive, however, are an important source of information on American policy during the 1971 crisis.

So also are the papers of Washington Post reporter Jack Anderson. These papers include Pentagon, State Department, and National Security Council summaries of meetings of the Washington Special Action Group (WSAG), which formulated and oversaw American policy during the crisis, as well as an assortment of confidential cables and intelligence reports. Other valuable sources I have used include Department of State Bulletins, various reports of the Secretary of State, presidential reports to Congress on foreign policy, weekly compilations of presidential records, public papers of President Nixon, and various records generated by Congress.

Among the mountains of relevant American government documents generated by the crisis, the most important include the report of the Commission on the Government for Conduct of Foreign Policy and relevant National Security Council Study Memorandums. In addition, there is a wealth of material in the National Archives in Washington, much relevant
information in such compendia as Keasing's Contemporary Archives and
Facts on File, and in the New York Times, the Washington Post, and other
newspapers of national importance.

A number of officials of the Nixon administration have written
memoirs and other accounts of the 1971 crisis that provide important
information on Nixon's policies and policymaking. In addition, I
interviewed several officials who were connected with policy formulation
during the 1971 crisis. These interviews provided me with some
evidence not available in documentary sources and helped me cross-check
material in those sources.

In Bangladesh the most important source on the crisis is the rich,
informative collection of records compiled and published by the
government in sixteen volumes. These volumes provide detailed
documentary evidence on the relations between the United States and the
Bangladesh government-in-exile and on the latter's relations with India.
Also useful are records of the publicity and propaganda efforts of the
Bangladesh government, of that government's cabinet decisions with
regard to foreign policy, its press releases concerning the crisis,
records of the activities of its representatives at the United Nations
and in the United States, and assorted field reports of other Bangladesh
officials abroad. In addition, the papers of the Bangladesh League of
America and other records of American aid to and concern over the
refugees and the plight of the Bengali people in 1971 have also proved
helpful.

The Indian sources I used include a wide variety of government
notes, memorandums, and statements concerning the crisis, various
reports and speeches of Indian officials, two volumes of documents on
the war compiled by the Ministry of External Affairs, the debates in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha (respectively the lower and upper houses of Parliament) during 1971, annual reports of the Ministry of Defense, documents concerning economic aid and refugee relief received by India, and other reports on foreign policy of the Indian government. These documents provide detailed information on India's foreign policy during 1971, the debates and controversies regarding that policy within India, and the interaction between the American and Indian governments during the crisis, including records on the role of India during the war itself.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to consult official Pakistani materials, which are not generally available to scholars outside Pakistan. I have tried to compensate for this lack by going through Pakistani newspapers and journals, both government and otherwise, and these have provided me enough details to recreate and make sense of the policy of the government in Islamabad during 1971. I have also had no access to government archives in the Soviet Union and China; instead, I have accepted, like other diplomatic historians, press publications in these countries as reflecting official policies.

Despite the abundance and richness of the source materials I have had access to, there are still important problems in reconstructing the history of America's role in the Bangladesh liberation struggle and the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971. Some records remain classified and unavailable to the researcher, and a great deal of the available material is self-serving, propagandistic, or otherwise unreliable. Yet the available sources are so extensive and of such a nature that the classified materials are unlikely to change the basic configurations of
the story, and the materials of questionable reliability can be neutralized by careful use through a method analogous to the technique of triangulation used in land surveying. In that method, one maps out the terrain of possibilities by a series of imperfect but intersecting measures. This approach, which has a parallel in psychology and some of the social sciences, lacks scientific precision, but it does promise to yield approximate truth. In any case, the study of diplomatic relations is not yet an exact science, and with due allowance for the fact that other scholars may offer other overall interpretation of the subject, I believe my account is the approximate truth about America's role in the international crisis which preceded and the war through which Bangladesh won its national independence. Whether or not that is indeed the case, only further research in now classified or otherwise hidden sources will one day tell.

Having said that, I hasten to add that in a study of a subject such as mine not everything that one would like to know is in the sources. Even if every scrap of paper engendered by the 1971 crisis were available to me, there would still remain issues and influences of an intangible and an interpretative nature that cannot be resolved or pinpointed precisely. I speak of matters of personality, motivation, bureaucratic structure, and leadership—the ability to exercise power, the ability, that is, to translate personal or institutional authority into achievement. It is a truism to say that these things—even more than national interests, actual or perceived—oil the machinery of the conduct of foreign policy. Yet it is notoriously difficult to sort such things out, either in the formulation or the execution of policy; it is equally difficult to assign them (and the more concrete matters of
national interest) a place in a hierarchical ranking that "explains" the foreign policy of a nation in any crisis, event, or development. Indeed, on the basis of my study of the policy and acts of the several players in the South Asian crisis of 1971, I believe it is impossible.

Consider, for example, the question of what "explains" the policies of Nixon and Kissinger in the South Asian crisis. I believe the answer first and foremost lies in their world view, their strategic thinking, which was molded by their intellectual convictions and experiences during the Cold War, especially as those convictions and experiences were modified or reinterpreted by the emerging realignment of the superpowers. Certainly this is what they said at the time, and what they repeated in their memoirs. But just as certainly other things were involved which they were less eager to talk about, then and now. One of the most obvious of these was the personality conflict between Nixon and Indira Gandhi, including the history of their personal relationship, and the ways in which their dislike for each other reinforced the policy differences that drove them still further apart. Equally obvious was the distinctive policymaking structure Nixon and Kissinger developed to exclude their critics or advocates of alternative policies and to produce policy recommendations that agreed with their own views. Did Nixon follow the policies that he did because the bureaucracy he built recommended them? Or did he build a bureaucracy to produce the kinds of policy recommendations he wanted? I think the latter is clearly the better formulation; but "proof" in such matters is as elusive as it is in the play of personality.

Yet these things require further comment. For example, if Nixon had organized a more open, multiple-advocacy bureaucracy and involved
himself more directly and openly in its operations, that definitely would have had an impact on his policies, but again, only if he had been more open to persuasion. It was the absence of openness on Nixon's part, both in specific policies toward the subcontinent and in his failure to inform policy formulators of the China factor in subcontinental policy, that prevented the kind of healthy debate that might have produced a more satisfactory and successful policy. Nixon seems to have been unfamiliar with the policy alternatives contained in State Department position papers, but there is no evidence he would have accepted them had he been fully conversant with them. In this instance, at least, Nixon was not hostage to the bureaucracy; rather the bureaucracy was the creature of the president.

At first glance, this might seem to suggest that Nixon and Kissinger were in full control of American policy in the South Asian crisis. But that is true only on the level of abstract policy pronouncement. On the much more meaningful level of policy control and implementation, they had only the most limited command. By 1971 the "imperial" presidency, which Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and others have said emerged in the 1960s, was already limited by public and congressional criticism, by opposition to American involvement in Vietnam and elsewhere, and by the widely perceived need to set limits on presidential prerogative in domestic as well as foreign policy. The full impact of these factors coalesced after 1971, in the aftermath of Watergate and the American pull out from Vietnam. But repeatedly during the South Asian crisis Kissinger and Nixon complained that public or congressional opinion, the law, or the fear of exposure inhibited their actions in the subcontinent in ways they thought detrimental to the
national interest. What Nixon and Kissinger controlled, then, was policy formulation. But in very meaningful ways, from which Pakistan suffered and India and Bangladesh benefited, the two leaders could not do what they wanted to do in South Asia.

Divisions similar to those within the American establishment also existed within India and Pakistan, but with far different consequences for the crisis in South Asia in 1971. In India, Mrs. Gandhi's conduct of affairs enhanced her popularity enormously, and the only opposition she had to contain was one demanding that she be more aggressive. That opposition was completely neutralized by what she eventually did. In Pakistan things were more complicated. In 1971, this nation was ruled by a classic military dictatorship facing classic kinds of opposition. In West Pakistan, the opposition came from non-Punjabi ethnic groups in Beluchistan, Sind, and North West Frontier Province, groups who saw the military actions in East Pakistan as suppression of ethnic rights and who feared that a similar fate might befall them. This fear, however, was not organized; nor was it publicized, because of strict press censorship. There were also divisions within the military, though these too were unpublicized and in fact became known to outsiders only after the war was over and junior officers forced Yahya out of power. Unlike such democratically elected leaders as Nixon and Mrs. Gandhi, Yahya Khan had little to worry about from public opinion, at least as long as his policies in East Pakistan seemed to work. One of the things that sustained his government after the 1971 crisis began was the unanimity among West Pakistanis that under no circumstances must East Pakistan be allowed its independence. Throughout the crisis, this consideration governed Yahya's and the Pakistani military's actions. This explains
why Yahya could not compromise even if he had wanted to, and why the army was willing to fight in East Pakistan until it was totally defeated. So while internal division forced Nixon and Kissinger to moderate their policies in the crisis, the fear of such decision forced Yahya to pursue the most rigid and uncompromising policies to the end.

These considerations lead inevitably to the troublesome matters of moral choices in the foreign policy of nations and to equally troubling factors of the historian's—my own—biases. One of the most generally accepted principles of international law is the right of a nation to defend its own interests, and in this less than best of all possible worlds one must accept the fact that the superpowers will defend as best they can their clients and alliance systems. But other nations and peoples have rights too, including the right to resist oppression and to govern themselves. All of these factors were involved in the South Asian crisis of 1971 in sometimes conflicting ways, and the way the historian sorts them out will inevitably force him to make choices, some of them ultimately moral, and thereby reveal his "biases." My own choices and biases reflect the following judgments: the civil war in East Pakistan was the result of wholesale oppression and violence against the East Bengali people and against their legitimately elected government. The Bengali people had the right to resist their oppressors, and the only way to do this involved their secession from Pakistan and creation of their own independent nation. Doing this did not threaten any legitimate interest of any superpower. Yet Nixon and Kissinger were too wrapt up in the Cold War and in their strategic initiatives with China and the Soviet Union to understand this. They therefore reacted to the civil war and the Bangladesh war of liberation
as if those events were episodes in their strategic chess match; and those who suffered from their actions were the Bengali people.

Readers will therefore note that I have been critical of Nixon and Kissinger and of Pakistan on the one hand and sympathetic to India, the Soviet Union and Bangladesh on the other. This is the result of the above judgments on the issues at stake in the liberation struggle and the Indo-Pakistan war, and of my own conclusions about what was necessary to solve the crisis equitably and justly. My readers must of course judge these issues for themselves, including the extent to which basic matters of human rights were involved; and only insofar as they agree with me will they be inclined to accept my conclusions. I have repeatedly insisted that India and the Soviet Union acted on the basis of their perceived national interests and not out of humanitarian concern for the suffering or the rights of the Bengali people. Their interests, real and perceived however, led them to support what I believe was the "right" side in the conflict, and I have generally defended their actions during the crisis. But this too is a result of my basic judgments about the issues involved in the crisis.

In this study, I have tried not only to tell the story of America's role in the South Asian crisis of 1971 but to shed light as well on the foreign policy of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger. Their foreign policy revolved around their perceptions of America's national interests in a period of superpower realignment. Their purpose was pragmatic in the sense that they were concerned to define and follow the national interest; but the policies they pursued were often colored by an ideology that grew out of Cold War anti-communism and assigned to the United States a continuing role of international policeman. If the best
results of their policies were revealed by the simultaneous detente with the Soviet Union and the rapprochement with the People's Republic of China, some of the worst results were reflected in what they did in South Asia in 1971. My study cannot therefore serve as an overall evaluation of Nixon and Kissinger's stewardship of American foreign policy; but a study of their South Asian policy can, and I believe my study does, shed light on some of the limitations of their overall foreign policy. Where they thought it necessary for larger purposes, my study suggests, they were willing to ally themselves with one of the most repressive governments in the world, to look the other way while an act that had some of the characteristics of genocide was taking place, and to try calculatingly to subvert the efforts of the Bengali people and their duly elected government to resist and throw off their oppressors. This is, I repeat, not the whole truth of Nixon and Kissinger's foreign policy, but it is a part of the truth, and any overall assessment of their policy must take it into account.


According to Virginia Babin of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, when the Carnegie office was moved from New York to Washington, most of the boxes containing the Bangladesh papers were either misplaced or lost and that the Endowment no longer has the materials. Most probably the Endowment is not prepared to reveal the sensitive papers because the people who were involved with the American policy in the 1971 crisis in Bangladesh, India, and the United States are still alive.


For example, see Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., *On Watch: A Memoir* (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, Ltd., 1976).

Notable are Christopher Van Hollen, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State; Admiral Thomas A. Moorer, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Chief of Naval Operations, U.S. Navy; Bruce
Laingen, State Department's representative to the National Security Council; and K. B. Lall, Principal Secretary of the Ministry of defense, Government of India.

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND: 1947-1969

South Asia had low priority in American foreign policy during the 1950s and 1960s. This was because it had little importance for American strategic or economic interests. Even after the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947, American policymakers considered the area part of the British sphere of influence, and wanted little to do with it. This indifference gradually changed during the Cold War, as American leaders became increasingly convinced that the Soviet Union had designs on the area, which bordered both the Soviet Union and China. Accordingly, American leaders came to see the region as another strategic bulwark, or potential bulwark, against communist expansion.

Even then, the Cold War only tangentially affected South Asia. This was mainly due to India's insistence on non-alignment and to the reluctance of American cold warriors to involve themselves directly in the region. Ironically, though, Washington's military-security policies were important contributing causes of conflicts within the region, even in the early years following independence. By the 1960's, as the United States became ensnared in Vietnam and the Soviet Union and China split, these factors plus the appearance of inter-continental ballistic missiles altered the geography of superpower conflict, and Washington's strategic interest in South Asia again diminished.

America's strategic policy then as now grows out of specific interests and objectives, and it is necessary to note these interests in order to explain why South Asia was not of strategic significance to the
United States throughout the post-World War II era. The national interest of the United States focuses on the preservation of the American nation, including its economic wellbeing and political and cultural ideals. Toward this end, the objectives of American foreign policy since World War II have been, first, defense of the continental United States, implying prevention of nuclear war by deterrence or accommodation with adversary powers; second, stable economic growth, implying access to world markets and raw materials; and third, military and political containment of potentially hostile powers, implying a system of global military alliances with friendly nations.

American foreign policy revolved around these intermeshed objectives. The priority assigned to the defense of Western Europe and Japan illustrates this fact. These two areas are at once democratic societies, first lines of defense against Soviet expansion, and regions of vital economic and technological significance to the United States. South Asia had no similar significance for the nation. Only denial of the region to an adversary influenced American calculations there.

In contrast, Southeast Asia and Southwest Asia were perennial areas of concern to American policymakers, for a number of important reasons. Prior to the withdrawal from Vietnam in the early 1970's, the United States viewed military involvement in Southeast Asia as a basic element of containment strategy against China and as consistent with an American involvement in East Asia that reached back to the nineteenth century. Additionally, Southeast Asia was a source of otherwise scarce strategic minerals such as columbium, tantalum and tungsten. Furthermore, several Southeast Asian countries were politically aligned with the United States, and their preservation served American interests that had been
defined long before 1971. Southwest Asia was of even more concern to
Americans, and for two reasons simply stated: oil and Israel.

In contrast, the South Asian region possessed no natural resources
of vital importance to the United States, nor did it have the economic
power of Japan or Western Europe or the military potential of China.
Underdevelopment made both India and Pakistan dependent on American aid,
and in neither of these countries was there any direct threat from
communism. Nevertheless, South Asia was the heartland of non-communist
Asia, and the military forces of India and Pakistan were the largest in
a vast geographical expanse. And lying between Southeast and Southwest
Asia the two nations controlled vital communication lines on land and in
the Indian Ocean. With two million square miles of territory and
one-fifth of the world's population, the region had an intrinsic
significance, especially in the kind of global politics practiced by
Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger.

American policy reflected this significance throughout the Cold War
era, and its objective was always stability in a region that was
notoriously unstable. The source of instability was of course the
centuries-old hostility between the Hindus and Muslims, now divided into
India and Pakistan, a hostility American leaders feared the Soviet Union
and/or China might try to exploit. Sino-Soviet competition, they
worried, especially after those nations split in the 1960's, might play
itself out in the subcontinent to the detriment of the balance of power
between India and Pakistan.

To achieve its objectives in the region during these years, the
United States used economic and military as well diplomatic means.
Sizable programs of development and food aid maintained a visible
American profile in both countries in the region. Military assistance to India as well as Pakistan maintained parity between these rival regional powers. The intent of these policies was to preserve the status quo in the region without discriminating between the successive military regimes in Pakistan and the struggling democratic governments in India.

These policies made both countries increasingly dependent on American food and economic aid, and on American military assistance as well. Washington believed that dependence would insure its own continued influence in the region and thus lessen chances of war there, while also reducing opportunities for Chinese or Soviet initiatives in the area. Essential to this policy were American neutrality in regional conflicts and equity in the treatment of India and Pakistan; and the result was an intricate set of bilateral relationships with each of the subcontinental states.

When Richard Nixon became President in 1969, his administration continued to pursue these traditional objectives, but he changed the means of achieving them. Specifically, he "tilted" American policy in Pakistan's favor. This change resulted from his decision to view the South Asian situation, like that in all other areas in which American and Soviet interests were actually or potentially at odds, from a geopolitical viewpoint, a viewpoint that necessarily reduced the significance of the purely regional aspects of that situation. In traditional American policy before 1969, India had been important to the containment of China. Nixon reduced that importance just as he altered the American relationship with Pakistan. In power political terms the latter relationship became one of client and patron, though previously
Washington had acted as guarantor to Pakistan only in case of aggression by communist countries. Now, Nixon committed the United States to support Pakistan against Indian aggression. This decisive change inevitably increased America's role in the region, for it involved the United States as a partisan in subcontinental politics.

To understand the significance of this change, and of Nixon's policy itself, it is necessary to examine the earlier policy that he changed. When the British decided to partition India and create an independent India and Pakistan, the American ambassador to India, Henry P. Grady, made it clear that the United States supported the British decision and pledged American support for the policy that "Indians should be left free to work out their own destiny." A State Department press release of June 10, 1947, reiterated this view. "The agreement of all the major parties concerned with the proposal of the British government," the release read, "is a source of much encouragement to India's friends." 7

In formulating policy toward the newly independent nations of the subcontinent and toward their persisting conflict over ethnic, religious, and territorial matters, the United States government relied heavily on the advice of British officials. Washington deferred to the British as experts in South Asia, a region in which Americans had never had much involvement. American leaders thought that even after their withdrawal from India, the British should have special responsibility for the region. The United States therefore adopted a neutral posture toward subcontinental issues.

The United States was at this time searching for ways to contain communism, and in retrospect it seems astonishing that Pakistan's strategic location evoked so little attention among American cold
warriors. Pakistani leaders, on the other hand, afraid of Indian domination of the subcontinent and worried about the peculiar geographic composition of their state, had always looked to the United States for support. They realized that the United States and not Great Britain could best provide them support against Indian designs to break up their country. Consequently, immediately after independence Pakistani leaders requested American military and financial aid and offered to bind their country to the United States in the Cold War struggle against the Soviet Union. They argued that defense of the subcontinent against Soviet encroachment was in the interest of the United States as well as Pakistan. From the outset of independence, then, Pakistan thought of the United States as its primary source, potential if not actual, of military and diplomatic support against India. However, Washington felt that honoring Pakistan's request for aid would be premature, would in fact involve "virtual U.S. military responsibility" for the new dominion's defense against India, and it therefore turned down the request. But in view of Pakistan's strategic location, Washington did allow Pakistan to purchase military equipment and spare parts for its armed forces.

While Pakistan sought close relations with the United States during the Cold War years, India desired an equal, non-aligned relationship with the Soviet Union and the United States. Geographically, India was closer to the Soviet Union than to the United States, and Indian leaders had no desire to antagonize the Kremlin. Besides, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was impressed by the social and economic transformation the Soviet Union had undergone since the revolution of 1917, and he did not like American assertions of global leadership or American tendencies
to polarize the world into "free" and "unfree" parts. On the contrary, he wanted Washington and its European allies to end their colonial or neo-colonial domination of Afro-Asian peoples. American leaders were suspicious of these attitudes, and suspected that communists exercised a strong influence on Nehru and his government. Although such differences began to surface in Indo-American relations immediately after independence, they did not create a full rift. Nehru was aware of America's position as a global power and conscious of India's military and economic weakness. He desired cordial relations with the United States, but saw no conflict between that desire and his views on international affairs generally. Thus, like Pakistan, newly independent India sought assistance from the United States.

When the first Indo-Pakistan war broke out, over Kashmir in 1948, the American government had no policy toward, or any interest in, the disputed territory or whether that territory eventually went to India or Pakistan. Rather, its concern was stability. Consequently, the United States refused to permit India or Pakistan to purchase American military equipment during this war, and insisted instead that both countries accept an American-mediated ceasefire. The success of this policy of containing conflict in the subcontinent through arms embargo and diplomatic pressure led to its continuation for more than twenty years.

Soon after this first subcontinental war, the Russians exploded an atomic bomb, the Chinese accomplished their revolution under Mao Zedong, and the Korean war commenced. All these developments created what Washington perceived as new threats to American interests in Asia. One response to these threats was to establish military bases around the Sino-Soviet bloc; another was search for new allies in Asia and
elsewhere. In the context of that search, the National Security Council prepared a major policy paper, known as NSC 98/1, "The Position of the United States with Respect to Asia." The paper stated:

The time has come to pursue our objectives in South Asia with more vigor. We are now in a position to assess the attitude and policies of area governments as well as the possibilities and limitations of our influence.... The fall of China and the threat to Indo-China and the balance of Southeast Asia have added urgency to the achievement of our objectives in this region. We must henceforth accept calculated risks in attacking the problems of South Asia.... Should India and Pakistan fall to communism, the United States and its friends might find themselves denied any foothold on the Asian mainland [emphasis added].

India, too, felt the impact of the changes mentioned above. Nehru could not ignore the establishment of a powerful communist nation on India's border. During a visit to Washington in 1949, he therefore asked for military and economic aid. He refused, however, to give up his posture of non-alignment or to make long term commitments to the United States. Asserting India's independence of both superpowers and its claims to leadership of the non-aligned nations, Nehru and other Indian leaders repeatedly and to the displeasure of the United States called for China's admission to the United Nations as a step toward ending the Korean war. India also refused to sign the Japanese Peace Treaty just then concluded by the United States and Japan without third-country involvement.

These attitudes encouraged Pakistan to exploit the differences between India and the United States. During the Korean war, Pakistan became a more and more dependable friend of the United States. Except on the issue of declaring China the aggressor in that war—Pakistan did not want to offend so powerful a neighbor or close off the possibility
of using China to counter the Indian threat—Islamabad supported all American initiatives relating to Korea in the Security Council of the United Nations. It also endorsed the American-sponsored peace treaty with Japan. These acts encouraged the United States government to take a more sympathetic interest in Pakistan and its problems with India.

The coming of the Republican Party into power in January 1953 furthered this development. During the 1952 presidential campaign, Republican leaders often spoke of strengthening American ties with Pakistan by increased military and economic assistance and by improved commercial relations too, and after the election the new administration acted to implement these promises. Delegations of diplomats and military experts from the two countries exchanged visits, and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles went to Pakistan in May 1953 to explore the feasibility of a closer alliance with Islamabad. Dulles believed that military forces should be built up in non-communist countries bordering the Soviet Union, and during his visit he became convinced that Pakistan's participation in that policy was essential. He was especially impressed by the Pakistani leaders' desire to "resist the menace of communism as their strength permits."

A visit by Vice-President Richard Nixon cemented the new policy that grew out of Dulles's new convictions. After his return to the United States, Nixon impressed upon President Eisenhower the necessity of cultivating Pakistan as "a counter-force to the confirmed neutralism of Jawaharlal Nehru's India." In the climate of goodwill this statement reflects, Pakistan requested military aid from the United States, and Eisenhower promptly approved the request. Accordingly, in May 1954
Pakistan and the United States signed a Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement, and thereafter Pakistan joined the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) as well as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO).

The apparent harmony signaled by these developments obscured the significantly different objectives the two countries had in forming the alliance. Although Pakistani leaders accepted the anti-communist purposes of the alliance they made, other considerations were more important to them. The alliance, they hoped, would give them a relationship with the United States that would bind the latter to come to Pakistan's assistance against threats from India. As always, in other words, Pakistan was more concerned about India than about communism. As Muhammad Ayub Khan, then President of Pakistan, later wrote:

From the day of independence, Pakistan was involved in a bitter and prolonged struggle for her very existence and survival.... The cause of our major problem is India's inability to reconcile herself to our existence as a sovereign independent state.... By 1954 Pakistan was compelled to align herself with the west in the interest of her security.22

The Pakistanis' confidence that the new alliance could be made to serve their regional purposes was based on calculation. The American role in other client-patron relationships was that of guarantor. When its client states faced threats, the United States had pledged to give them diplomatic and if necessary military assistance.23 Doing so would demonstrate the United States' will and capacity to assist its allies, thus preserving the alliance system by showing the reliability of the guarantees on which it rested. But the United States honored this system only within its Cold War context and thus had an entirely
different view of its alliance with Pakistan. Washington's understanding was that the United States would come to Pakistan's aid only as a guarantor against communist attack or subversion and not against India. To the United States, therefore, its relationship with Pakistan would not hinder cordial relations with India. The Pakistan alliance, in the view of American policymakers, in no way affected India's security.

The United States, therefore, took steps to assure India that despite its alliance with Pakistan it remained neutral concerning Indo-Pakistani affairs. The aim of these assurances was to convince India that America's objectives remained what they had always been, stability and peace in the subcontinent. The Pakistani alliance was aimed at one threat to that objective, communist encroachment, and at nothing else. President Eisenhower, therefore, assured Nehru that "the U.S. decision to give arms aid to Pakistan [was] not directed in any way against India." He pledged that in case of any aggressive use of American-supplied arms against India, he would, in accordance with his constitutional authority, take immediate "appropriate action both within and without the United Nations to thwart such aggression." He also suggested that if India requested military aid, Washington would give the request "most sympathetic consideration."

This proposal was made to accomplish certain goals. First, Eisenhower wanted to insure that aid to Pakistan did not drive India to the Soviet Union. Second, he hoped that that aid would alter Nehru's policy of non-alignment and nudge him toward the Western camp. Toward that end, Eisenhower increased economic aid to India. However, neither his aid nor his assurances were altogether effective. Indian leaders
felt that the assurances against Pakistani aggression were vague at best and that the offer of military assistance to India served American interests more than India's. The press, opposition leaders, and public opinion in India shared these views. The anti-American feeling that swept India at this time was so strong that many Americans took note of it. "There is one issue upon which perhaps ninety five percent or more of the Indians are united in opposition of the United States," Ambassador George Allen noted at that time. "It is the question of military aid to Pakistan." Indian reaction to Pakistan's membership in SEATO and CENTO was also bitter. This is evident from a Nehru speech:

> It is clear that the approach of military pacts like the Bagdad Pact and SEATO is a wrong approach, a dangerous approach and a harmful approach. It sets in motion all the wrong tendencies and prevents the right tendencies from developing.... Moreover SEATO and the Bagdad Pact apart from being basically in the wrong direction affects us intimately. In a sense they tend to encircle us."

The new relationship between the United States and Pakistan prompted policymakers in New Delhi to rethink Indian policy. India had already welcomed the Soviet Union's post-Stalin policy of peaceful co-existence with other nations, and Indo-Soviet relations had been improving while Indo-American relations deteriorated. The change was reflected in growing cooperation between India and the Soviet Union in economic and military matters. At the same time, India established closer relations with China by concluding, in 1954, the Panch Sheel agreement concerning a disputed border in the Himalayas. Further, to counter Washington's criticism, Nehru began exploring the possibility of bringing together the non-aligned countries of the world. The result of his efforts here
was the Bandung Conference of 1955 and creation of the non-aligned movement.

Soon, however, there began an improvement in Indo-American relations. Several factors contributed to the change. One was the deterioration of Sino-Indian relations, which encouraged India to look to the West. Another was the simultaneous crises of Suez and Hungary, which led Nehru to reassess his attitude toward East-West relations. During the Suez crisis Washington's policy was more agreeable to India than to Britain and France, America's principal NATO allies, or to Israel as well. The United States' role in ending the fighting and effecting a withdrawal of allied forces from Suez surprised and gratified Indians, who considered the United States a defender of old-line imperialism. Concerning Hungary, Nehru's condemnation of the Soviet invasion was not as strong as his denunciation of British and French aggression in Suez. Yet, Nehru, a liberal and a democrat, was shocked by the wantonness of Soviet oppression and brutality in Hungary.

There remained, of course, points of disagreement. Dulles's joint statement with the Portuguese foreign minister in December 1956 that Goa was a part of Portugal was bitterly resented in New Delhi. India was also concerned when in March 1959 the United States concluded a bilateral defense agreement with Pakistan pledging to "take such appropriate action, including the use of armed forces, as may be mutually agreed upon in order to assist the government of Pakistan at its request." American officials assured New Delhi that this pledge was governed by the Eisenhower Doctrine, which was concerned solely with aggression by communist countries. They also assured the Indian leaders
that military aid to Pakistan had been given only in conformity with the
agreement of 1954 and that the United States had no intention of
providing Pakistan with additional military aid under the new
agreement. Nehru was "satisfied" with this assurance, which he
reported to Lok Sabha, the Indian Parliament, on March 13, 1959, and
with further assurances that there were no secret clauses or
supplementary provisions in the new accord.

Nehru's reaction demonstrated the success of recent American policy
concerning India. The success, however, was due more to Nehru's
mounting problem with China than to his satisfaction with American
actions. Sino-Indian relations had deteriorated following military
clashes on the Himalayan border in the summer of 1959. Nehru needed
support against the Chinese and knew that Washington was prepared to
provide such support. Eisenhower's visit to India in December 1959
further improved relations. The joint communique issued at the
conclusion of that visit stressed the "common ideals and objectives" of
the two nations and emphasized their "strong ties of friendship". A
new era in Indo-American friendship began, and came to fruition in the
Kennedy administration.

John F. Kennedy was a critic of military aid to Pakistan but a
supporter of aid, especially increased economic assistance, to India.
He had taken this stand well before his election to the presidency. In
March 1958 he had observed:

Let us not be confused by the talk of Indian neutrality. Let us
remember that our nation also during the period of its
formative growth adopted a policy of non-involvement in the
great international controversies of the 19th century.... Our
friendship should not be equated with military alliances or
voting the Western ticket. To do so only drives these
countries closer to totalitarianism or polarizes the world in such a way to increase rather than diminish the chances of local war.

Regarding the utility of regional military pacts, he had said on another occasion:

Little is accomplished by forcing the uncommitted nations to choose rigidly between alliance with the West or submission to international communism. Indeed it is our self interest not to force such a choice in many places specifically if it diverts nations from their energies in programs of real economic development and take-off.34

Kennedy's attitude toward India was shared by others. According to Chester Bowles, Kennedy's first ambassador to India, "It was bad arithmetic to alienate 360 million Indians in order to please 80 million Pakistanis who are split in two halves and divided by 1000 miles of Indian territory."35 Senator J. W. Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, suggested that American military aid to Pakistan was excessive and that American policy forced India to divert much-needed funds from economic development to military purposes.36 Such statements signaled a new emphasis on the United States' relationship with India and a concomitant lessening of ties with Pakistan. Subcontinental issues became relatively more and matters of international communism relatively less important influences in America's South Asia policy.

Apart from the admiration of Kennedy and others for a "free India," other important considerations were reshaping American policy. These included the growing East-West detente, the now-open Sino-Soviet split, and heightened tensions over the Sino-Indian boundary clash. During this period the Soviet Union like the United States became concerned to
contain China, and in the policy of both nations India was to play an important role in this containment. The Soviet Union wanted to use India to harass China, while the Kennedy administration wanted to make India an alternative to China as an Asian model of development, one that was democratic and capitalist rather than closed and communist. This was to be accomplished through massive American aid. An economically successful India, Kennedy believed, would replace China as spokesman for the newly emerged countries of Asia. Advances in nuclear technology abetted Kennedy's policy. The development of inter-continental ballistic missiles and of the Polaris submarine reduced the value of military bases at the periphery of China and the Soviet Union. It thereby reduced Pakistan's strategic importance to the United States.

The Kennedy administration therefore provided increased economic assistance to India in the form of long term development loans at low interest rates. It also encouraged other western nations to provide similar support. In the summer of 1961 the World Bank organized a consortium that committed $2.2 billion for the first two years of India's third five year plan, including $1.45 billion from the United States. Simultaneously, the Kennedy administration granted military aid to India under the Mutual Security Act for aid to neutrals.

The Pakistani leadership was dissatisfied with this new policy. During a visit to the United States in July 1962 President Ayub Khan expressed this dissatisfaction. He said, "If any arms aid is given to India, Pakistan would feel insecure and it will put a tremendous strain on [Pakistan's] friendship with the United States." During the visit, Ayub asked Kennedy to use his influence to get India to peacefully resolve the Kashmir issue. Kennedy was not reassuring. The President,
as Ayub put it, "was not in a position to play an active role in the matter." Islamabad thus saw its most important ally unwilling to confront India on its behalf, and many Pakistani leaders felt betrayed by their friendship with Washington, which had alienated both the Soviet Union and China.

To Ayub Khan the American policies, rather than reflecting respect for Pakistan, took Pakistan for granted, and disregarded its most vital interests. Ayub therefore initiated a policy he called "bilateralism," by which he sought equitable relations with both superpowers without endangering Pakistan's relations with any third power, especially China. This required a delicate balancing of Pakistani political realities with the realities of big-power politics. Dissolving the military relationship with the West and substituting a similar relationship with China or the Soviet Union would be difficult, Ayub knew, not least because the Pakistani bureaucratic and military elites were strongly pro-Western and anti-communist. Also, he realized, Pakistan needed American development aid. The only option open to Pakistan, he concluded, was to stay within the Western bloc while establishing closer contacts with China and the Soviet Union.

In 1961 Pakistan began negotiations with China on the disputed borders of Kashmir. Chinese leaders were eager to cultivate Pakistan's friendship to gain a foothold of influence in the subcontinent in the face of their growing problem with India. They therefore settled their border dispute with Pakistan and recognized Pakistan's sovereignty over all of Kashmir. In the same year, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto visited the Soviet Union and concluded a trade and assistance agreement. Moscow too wanted friendly relations with Islamabad as a
preliminary to detaching Pakistan from its Western allies.

In October 1962 serious Sino-Indian fighting broke out in the Himalayas. Initially, the United States gave little attention to the dispute because of the Cuban missile crisis, which was much closer to home. After that crisis subsided, however, the United States turned its full attention to the Sino-Indian border war. It pressured Islamabad not to attack India while the latter was fighting China, but the Pakistani leaders enjoyed the Indian setbacks and made no promises. Instead, they tried to persuade the United States to withhold military aid from India. The force of the Chinese attack surprised India, however, and the Indian government appealed for American military assistance. In response, Washington dispatched a squadron of C-130 military transport aircraft to India and ordered an American naval task force to proceed to the Indian Ocean. These actions were followed by an agreement to provide whatever assistance India needed for defense against Chinese aggression.

The American aid, actual and promised, had no effect. China attained its territorial objectives in a few weeks and declared a unilateral ceasefire on November 21, 1962. The brief war had great impact on India and on Indo-American relations. The Indian army had been routed, and it was clear that even with American military aid, the Indians could not drive the Chinese out of the disputed territories. The military debacle and territorial losses were overshadowed, however, by political fallout from the encounter. India's policy of non-alignment was shaken and the Indian people were shocked by awareness of their own weakness, now revealed to the world. With the defeat went whatever pretense the nation had to challenge China for leadership of
the third world, and with it too Kennedy's hopes for that challenge.

After the war, Pakistan began to lean toward China. Impressed by the ease of China's victory, Pakistani leaders began to feel that China could be a more reliable ally than the United States. Thus, two countries who had had little use for each other in the past found grounds for rapprochement born of common hostility for India and fear of diplomatic isolation. This development created a strain on American-Pakistani relations despite Pakistan's attempt to convince the United States that "normalization" of its relations with China did not run counter to American interests in South Asia. On the contrary, Pakistani officials argued, their rapprochement with China would achieve one of SEATO's principle aims, to prevent Chinese aggression against Pakistan. They also argued that Pakistan could serve as a bridge between China and the United States, an argument the Nixon administration later put to good use. 45

At the time, however, American officials were unimpressed with this rationalization. Thus, the signing of a Sino-Pakistan air transport agreement in August 1963 led to suspension of a $4.3 million American loan for improvement of Pakistani airports; and when Pakistani diplomats hinted at the prospect of a defense pact with China, the United States cautioned Islamabad that such a deal would risk its ties with the West. 46 The United States also used its influence to suspend the meeting of an Aid-to-Pakistan Consortium on the eve of Pakistan's third five year plan, pending completion of proposed discussions with Pakistan on its relations with China. 47 Pakistan's change of position on two other issues also had significant impact on America's relations with its erstwhile ally. In 1960 Pakistan had declared its willingness to send
troops to Indo-China (Laos) if required to do so by its SEATO obligations. Now, however, President Ayub Khan stated his unwillingness to intervene in any military conflict between the United States and China over Vietnam. Similarly, Ayub reversed Pakistan's position on China's admission to the United Nations. Between 1954 and 1962, Pakistan always voted against admission, but from 1963 onward voted consistently for admission.

In spite of these developments, American officials worked hard to preserve American influence in Pakistan. They repeatedly assured Islamabad that Washington would take every precaution to ensure that American military supplies provided to India for use against China would not be used against Pakistan. At the same time, the United States attempted to get India to compromise the Kashmir issue, using military aid as a lever. Washington realized that unless such regional problems were solved equitably, the subcontinent would remain a volatile region and thus open Pakistan to further Chinese influence. It was at American initiative in November 1962 that New Delhi and Islamabad agreed to new efforts to resolve the Kashmir dispute. This initiative was evidence of the earnestness with which the American government sought to maintain good relations with both subcontinental powers.

The result was six rounds of talks at the ministerial level between 1962 to 1965. All conventional solutions to territorial disputes, such as plebiscite, partition, and internationalization were explored, and all rejected. During the course of the talks, Pakistan signed its aforementioned boundary agreement with China, which provoked India, while the Pakistanis interpreted Nehru's readiness to talk about Kashmir as a shallow gesture designed merely to assure continued American aid.
After the talks ended, Nehru declared, "Kashmir was, is and will continue to be an integral part of India." The only tangible result of the prolonged discussions was Nehru's annoyance that the United States had used aid to pressure his government on an issue he considered uncompromisable. Indian leaders were also angry over America's willingness to supply arms to both New Delhi and Islamabad, a willingness they interpreted as an attempt to fuel an arms race in the subcontinent. The paradox of the United States' arming India (against China) while counting Pakistan its most "allied ally in Asia" continued. In an effort to balance and achieve equal influence in the two countries, the United States followed a policy that pleased neither.

Preoccupied with Vietnam, the United States in the late 1960s saw its influence in subcontinental affairs diminish. This opened the way for the successful penetration of China and the Soviet Union into subcontinental politics, a development the United States resisted but could not prevent. China continued to court Pakistan with military and economic aid, and the Soviet Union drew closer to India, while also pursuing improved relations with Pakistan. The United States had little room to maneuver in these developments, since both India and Pakistan were dissatisfied with American policy. The American weakness became explicit in the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965, in which the United States, unable to influence either side, suspended military aid to both. People's Republic of China, in contrast, aligned itself with Pakistan, mobilized troops on the Himalayan border, and sent threatening diplomatic notes to India. The Soviet Union, in further contrast, pressured both India and Pakistan to conclude a ceasefire and successfully mediated the dispute in the 1966 Treaty of Tashkent.
This treaty was a Soviet diplomatic coup. For the first time, India and Pakistan accepted Soviet arbitration of their disputes, and for the first time the Soviet Union decisively affected regional politics. The rise in Soviet influence directly reflected the dissatisfaction of both nations with the United States. Pakistani leaders felt that despite their military alliance, the United States had not only failed to come to their assistance in time of need but had in fact withheld all assistance from them. Indian leaders felt that in spite of repeated assurances, American military aid to Pakistan had in fact been used against their country and Washington did nothing to prevent it.

Despite their reduced influence, American policymakers were loathe to abandon the region. Still engaged in the struggle with communism, the United States wanted a strong India to balance and contain China; but it did not want India to be the dominant power in the subcontinent. However, Pakistan's growing friendship with China on the one hand and persisting Sino-Indian tensions on the other limited American alternatives. Pakistan could be restrained in its pro-Chinese policy only if the United States stopped economic and military assistance to India, but as long as containment of China remained a major objective of American policy Washington was not prepared to do that. Faced with this dilemma, in 1966 the United States conducted a systematic review of its political, economic, and military policies toward the subcontinent. As a part of this review a number of State Department and White House officials visited India and Pakistan. In both countries they constantly stressed "Indo-Pakistan amity and understanding" and urged Islamabad and New Delhi to create regional groupings to work out joint approaches to economic, political, social, and security problems.
This represented another major evolution in American policy. Two
decades of involvement in the region had made the United States realize
that its security interests there were at best secondary because there
was no communist threat to the region. Furthermore, military alliances
only heightened regional tensions and threatened stability, thereby
creating openings for the very thing they sought to prevent, penetration
of the influence of Moscow and Beijing into the area. Economic
cooperation might reverse this effect, not only removing Chinese and
Soviet influence but easing military tensions as well.

In February 1967 Washington announced a new foreign aid program. It
emphasized, among other things, self-help, multilateralism, regionalism,
agricultural development, balance of payment, and efficient
administration. The new element was regionalism. "The future of many
countries," read the document, "depends upon sound development of
resources shared with their neighbors." American aid to India and
Pakistan was to be guided by this principle. Pakistan valued China's
friendship more than India's, and opposed the American plan. India was
also unprepared to cooperate with Pakistan. Still, its reaction to the
new American initiatives was far milder than its response to proposals
for similar regional groupings had been in the mid-1950's.

In April 1967 the Johnson administration inaugurated a new arms
policy for India and Pakistan. The purposes of the policy were to limit
arms acquisitions by both countries, restrain military expenditure,
reduce the possibility of military confrontation, and encourage
resource allocation to economic development. Toward those ends, the
Military Assistance Advisory Group in Pakistan was terminated as was the
Military Supply Mission in India, and all military aid was subjected to
careful, continuing review. The new policy called for shipment of military equipment only in exchange for cash, and for the supply of lethal spare parts and replacements only on a case-by-case basis.

The new policy proved unsuccessful. India received military supplies from the Soviet Union as did Pakistan from China, but the impact of American policy was much greater on Pakistan than India. This was because India had relatively small quantities of equipment that required American spare parts, while Pakistan, which had once depended solely on American military assistance, had vast quantities of such equipment. With the new arms policy, the special relationship between the United States and Pakistan therefore ended. It was at this juncture that Richard Nixon became President.

Nixon's views concerning America's role in South Asia were not altogether different from those of preceding administrations. Stability remained the chief concern, but the strategic global situation had changed and regional considerations accordingly evolved. Specifically, basic superpower relationships were realigned. The Soviets and Chinese had split, and the United States sought to exploit that split by vigorously pursuing new relationships with both communist powers. Inevitably, the altered superpower relationships affected South Asia. After the Sino-Soviet rupture, Moscow considered China to be its principal rival in Asia and saw India as a potential ally against its communist rival. Thus, both Moscow and Washington sought to contain China through India. President Nixon saw in the Sino-Soviet rift an opportunity to change the balance of power in favor of the United States, with the United States playing an intermediary role between China and the Soviet Union. Consequently, Nixon muted ideology and
sought rapprochement with China. As a result, India no longer served as an American counterbalance to China, and its strategic importance to the Americans was diminished. By the same token Pakistan's friendship with China enhanced its significance. Nixon calculatedly used this friendship in his approaches to China, and he thus deviated from the traditional American policy of giving equal importance to Pakistan and India. Again global concerns had triumphed over regional considerations among American policymakers.

During the crisis that led to the Bengali war for independence, the Nixon administration pursued global rather than regional ends. As a result neither the economic and political problems of India nor the brutality of Pakistani army actions in East Pakistan, nor even the Bengali right of self determination, was of primary concern to American policymakers. Instead, the Nixon administration saw the crisis as an attempt by India, a Soviet client, to destroy regional stability by establishing Soviet influence in the subcontinent. This was the time of American withdrawal from Vietnam, and the Nixon administration did not want to lose further credibility by refusing to come to the aid of another ally—Pakistan. The tilt toward Pakistan thus made global sense, but its implications for the stability of the subcontinent generally and for Bengali independence specifically were ominous indeed.


7 *Department of State Bulletin*, vol. 16 (22 June 1947), pp. 1249-50.


9 In October–November, the government of Pakistan made a request for American financial assistance over a period of five years to acquire a wide range of military weapons. It sought $170,000,000 for the army, $75,000,000 for the airforce, and $170,000,000 for the navy. See "Pakistan's Request for U.S. Military Assistance to the Department of State, 1947," *Foreign Relations of the United States* (Department of State), vol. 6 (1949), pp. 25-26.

10 The text of the memorandum requesting the aid is in Winthrop W. Aldrich to Under Secretary of State Will Clayton, 8 October 1947, 845 F.51/10-1747, Record Group 59, National Archives.
11 "Need for SANACC Appraisals of Possible United States Military Interests in South Asian Region."

12 Memorandum from Assistant Secretary of State George C. McGhee to Coordinator for Foreign Military Assistance Programs Lloyd Berkner, 13 July 1949, 845 F.24/7-1349, Record Group 59, National Archives.


14 Memorandum from the Secretary of State to President Truman, 11 March 1948, ibid., vol 5, pt. 1 (1948), pp. 496-97.


20 U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Agriculture, Wheat Aid to Pakistan, 1953: Hearings Before Committee on Agriculture, 82nd Congress, 2nd sess., pp. 6-17.


29 In a news conference, Dulles declared Goa to be a Portuguese territory and he strongly opposed any use of force by India to settle the dispute over Goa. He also accused Soviet leaders (Khrushchev and Bulganin had recently visited India where they received a warm reception by the Indian leaders) of inciting Indians to use force to settle the dispute. See Department of State Bulletin, vol. 33 (19 December 1955), pp. 1007-08.


31 Nehru, India's Foreign Policy, pp. 472-73.

32 Ibid.


36 Ibid., pp. 57-58.


40 Ayub Khan, Friends Not Masters, p. 139.


45. Z.A. Bhutto, "Bilateralism: New Direction."

46. In a statement, Under Secretary of State George Ball noted, "We very much hope President Ayub will not carry relations with Red China to a point where it impairs a relationship which we have. What it reflects in terms of an attitude is something about which we are very much concerned... We are watching this relationship with great attention." Quoted from R. K. Jain, US-South Asian Relations, 2:288.

47. Ibid., p. 254.


53. Ibid., p. 34.


55. Ibid., vol. 56 (20 February 1967), pp. 295-301.

56. Ibid., vol. 54 (28 February 1966), pp. 320-341.


CHAPTER II

TILT TOWARD PAKISTAN: 1969-71

The Nixon administration's tilting of American policy in South Asia in Pakistan's favor occurred before the Bangladesh war began. The war was thus not the cause of the tilt; but to understand Nixon's policy during the war and toward South Asia generally it is necessary to understand its origin. Despite assertions to the contrary, Nixon assumed the presidency with no set notions about India and Pakistan. Some of his critics have suggested that from the outset, Nixon was biased in favor of Pakistan and thus prejudiced against India because of the treatment he received during a trip to the subcontinent in 1964 following his California gubernatorial defeat. On that trip, Nixon was largely ignored in official circles in New Delhi, but welcomed with lavish hospitality and high respect in Islamabad. He was accordingly impressed by the Pakistani leaders, including Aga Muhammad Yahya Khan, whom he met for the first time, and the experience, say his critics, conditioned him to favor Pakistan in South Asian affairs.1

His critics also argue that Nixon personally disliked Indian policy and that that too encouraged his tilt toward Pakistan. Certainly he believed that the high regard some leaders of the Democratic Party, Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, for example, had for India, was "a prime example of liberal soft-headedness." Certainly also he considered India's claims to be the neutral, moral arbiter of world affairs not only inaccurate but also far out of proportion to India's strength in international affairs. He also believed that India sought hegemony in the subcontinent at the expense of Pakistan, the United
States' "most allied ally" in the struggle against communist aggression. The American arms embargo against India and Pakistan was therefore, in his view, not evenhanded policy. On the contrary, it was injurious to Pakistan but not to India, which received all the arms it wanted from socialist countries or its own manufactories.  

Some Nixon critics point to Nixon's personal dislike for Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi as a factor in shaping his policies toward India. Nixon considered Mrs. Gandhi, the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, to be full of moral pretentions which she used to hide a cold-blooded practice of power politics. He was therefore highly suspicious of her "duplicitous attitude," which he considered of no use whatsoever in his efforts to disengage from Vietnam. In contrast, the military leaders of Pakistan were quite congenial to Nixon. He was comfortable with men like Aga Muhammad Yahya Khan, who, unlike the Indian leader, acted on a free and frank assessment of national interest. Finally, Nixon desired Pakistani support in his effort to establish contact with China and was willing to pay a significant price to insure that support.

Nixon's personal feelings were thus important; but they were by no means the sole reasons for his South Asian policy. In fact, at the outset of his presidency Nixon sought good relations with India as well as Pakistan. With India, he wanted to open a new dialogue because, in his opinion, in the past "America had failed to understand India's problems or her views." In a letter to Mrs. Gandhi shortly after his election to the presidency, Nixon stated:

I hope this letter will begin between us a candid dialogue in which you will feel free to write me your thoughts and concerns.... This administration will conduct its affairs with India with an open mind and in a spirit of friendship and
candor. Our people share, after all, a most fundamental bond—the commitment to a genuine working democracy. There is no more solid basis for cooperation and mutual respect.7

Nixon followed up these generous sentiments by appointing a personal friend, former Senator Kenneth Keating of New York, his ambassador to India. Ambassador Keating, he told the Indian Premier:

carries with him a clear understanding of my friendship for the people of India. I have sensed for myself India's great weight and importance, and above all we want to understand India's aspirations and convictions.... The success of Ambassador Keating's work in India are [sic] synonymous with my wishes for the steady growth of the close ties between us.8

The wording of this letter was couched in diplomatic rhetoric; but appointing a close friend as his ambassador indicated Nixon's desire to improve Washington's ties with New Delhi. This desire was part of Nixon's fundamental commitment to giving American foreign policy a basic Pacific and Asian emphasis. Thirteen months before his election, the new President had stated this commitment in an important policy paper. "Both our interest and our ideals propel us westward across the Pacific," he had written, "not as conquerors but as partners." Any discussion of Asia's future, he also wrote, must ultimately focus on the role of four giants: India, the world's most populous non-communist nation; Japan, Asia's principle industrial and economic power; China, the world's most populous nation, and the United States, the greatest Pacific power.9 As this suggests, India had a basic role in Nixon's political calculations, at least in the initial stages of his presidency.

In May 1969 Nixon's Secretary of State, William Rogers, visited India to discuss "a number of important interests of the United States"
with Prime Minister Gandhi. The Indian government welcomed his visit. In New Delhi, Rogers tried to create "a new sense of awareness of the fundamental goodness of the United States" policy toward India. In discussions with Indian leaders, he expressed hope for improved Indo-Pakistan relations, while informing them of the United States' treaty responsibilities toward Pakistan. Two months later, President Nixon followed up Roger's visit in the course of a tour of five Asian countries, including India and Pakistan. During the trip, he enunciated a new policy toward Asia. He said:

In the past our policy had been to furnish the arms, men, and material to help other nations defend themselves against aggression.... But from now on we would furnish only the material and the military and economic assistance to those nations willing to accept the responsibility of supplying manpower to defend themselves.

The United States, Nixon continued, would honor its treaty commitments by providing nuclear protection to its allies in case of attack, but he emphasized that his government would not make Asian countries so dependent on the United States that they could involve America in another Vietnam-type war. Under the Nixon Doctrine, in other words, the United States would help Asian countries fight internal subversion or communist aggression, but would not fight their wars for them.

Significantly for the future of India and Pakistan, this reference to internal subversion meant at the time threats from communist menace not territorial secession. But when civil war occurred in Pakistan in 1971, Nixon used this doctrine to support the Pakistani government against the secessionist Bengalis.

Nixon's meeting with Mrs. Gandhi achieved nothing tangible. A
number of factors contributed to this failure. During his years as Vice-President in the Eisenhower administration, Nixon had been critical of Indian policies and supportive of Pakistan, and not surprisingly Indian leaders suspected the new President's words and motives. Furthermore, they were suspicious of the United States' future role in South Asia in view of Rogers' discussion of Washington's treaty commitments to Pakistan. Nixon's fence-mending efforts therefore required good personal relations between himself and Mrs. Gandhi. But the two leaders lacked mutual trust and understanding, and this only complicated Indo-American relations. In spite of his assurances that "no decision had been taken to supply arms to Pakistan," Nixon failed to get his Doctrine endorsed by Indian leaders. To the latter, the Doctrine meant "arming and encouraging Asians to fight Asians, increasing U.S. influence in Asia, and cutting down to size countries like India which were friendly toward the Soviet Union."

The problem was exacerbated by Indian disapproval of Nixon's Vietnam policy. "There are tensions, both national and international, which arise from basic factors—economic, social, and political," acting Indian President Muhammad Hedayetulla said in a dinner toast in honor of Nixon. "A military solution," Hedayetulla added in obvious reference to American policy in Vietnam, "cannot remove the main causes of weakness and tension." Three months after Nixon's visit, the two governments held bilateral talks aimed at resolving their problems and "strengthening the friendship between the two countries on the basis of mutual understanding and respect for each other's positions." But these talks too failed to make any substantial progress, and the two governments could only agree to continue the talks in 1970 in New Delhi.
Although the joint statement issued after the first round of these talks spoke of strengthening friendship between two countries, the relationship in fact became more strained. Indira Gandhi's government had only a marginal majority in Parliament at the time because of a split in the Congress Party, and some of the measures her government took to win popular support were objectionable to the Nixon administration. In the summer of 1969, for example, Mrs. Gandhi's government nationalized nineteen of India's largest banks. This move paid off politically, for in the elections that followed Mrs. Gandhi won an overwhelming majority in Parliament. However, American officials were critical of bank nationalization on philosophical as well as pragmatic grounds—they thought among other things that it impeded Third World development—and when in February 1970 the Indian Supreme Court declared the Bank Nationalization Act unconstitutional, they publicly welcomed the decision. New Delhi regarded this reaction as interference in India's internal affairs, and this episode further soured Indo-American relations.

While the debate over bank nationalization was proceeding, another action by New Delhi offended Washington. In December 1970 the Indian government discovered that the Soviet Union had built a cultural center in Trivandrum, capital of the southern Indian state of Kerala, without its approval. Embarrassed, the government declared that foreign nations would be allowed to maintain cultural centers in India only in cities where they had diplomatic missions. In implementing this policy, in February 1970 New Delhi instructed the United States to close its cultural centers in Bangalore, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Patna and Trivandrum within three months, suggesting that the centers be transferred to the
the Indian government. Washington refused the suggestion, and closed the centers immediately.

The Indian government offered several reasons for closing the centers. Some officials insisted that "the order was issued not to curtail cultural contacts but to improve their quality." Others, like Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh, accused the United States of using its centers for "undesirable political activities." In response to the latter charge, Frank Shakespeare, Director of the United States Cultural Agency, told the Indian embassy in Washington that "the comments that your Foreign Minister, Mr. Dinesh Singh, made in the Lok Sabha about the American Cultural Centers in India were, in my judgment, shameful and scandalous."

Another factor that indirectly interfered with Indo-American harmony was Mrs. Gandhi's political vulnerability. After the Congress Party split, Mrs. Gandhi bested her major rival, Morarji Desai, a conservative with pro-American leanings, in a contest for control of the government. Shaken by Desai's failed attempt to overthrow her leadership of the party, she linked Desai with the American CIA, insisting in public that the CIA was attempting to subvert India's national integrity with inside help. Thereafter, a constant theme of her government's rhetoric stressed the CIA's menacing activities in India. Her fears seem to have been genuine despite her inability to document them, but she also understood the political appeal of anti-Americanism in India.

These problems were real enough, but the most important factor in the worsening Indo-American relations was Vietnam. In the early years of Nixon's presidency, India began cultivating friendship with North Vietnam, then being pressed by the United States to settle the Vietnam
war on terms acceptable to the Nixon administration. The administration was especially resentful of India's Vietnam policy, which seems to have been motivated in part at least by a desire to demonstrate India's freedom from American influence as well as by a hope of drawing United States' attention to India. Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh's statement at this time that "India [favored] strong relations with North Vietnam" was especially upsetting to Nixon, as was Singh's further remark that changes in "any U.S. laws affecting the vast American aid program to India would not alter his country's attitude."22

Stating that India's overtures to North Vietnam were "expected," Nixon instructed Henry Kissinger to have "some members" of Congress "attack statements" by the Indian Foreign Minister.23 At this point, Nixon's personal views began to play an increasing role in determining his policy toward India. Heretofore he had tried to cooperate with India and win New Delhi's support for his policies, including his policies on Vietnam. Now, he became increasingly critical of Indian leaders and policies and more and more willing to ignore Indian concerns, not only in Vietnam but elsewhere as well.

As distrust and suspicion between India and the United States were increasing, India was also shifting its policy toward the Soviet Union. The Indian leaders felt that the Nixon administration, unlike the earlier Kennedy administration, was unwilling to give India its due importance in international affairs, and it was in part this sense of neglect that caused them to begin to rethink their policies toward the Soviet Union. For reasons of their own, the Soviets were eager to develop a closer relationship with the Indians.

The Indian leadership also believed a shift in favor of the Soviet
Union would further appease its domestic critics, many of whom admired the socialist ideals the Soviets professed and the policy of "non-interference" in Third World affairs the Soviet Union ostensibly honored. Proud of their nation's ancient culture and glorious history and troubled by their present economic dependence on a nation they regarded as frankly imperialist, Indian leaders comforted themselves by turning to the Soviets, whose propaganda was more in tune with their views of world realities. Their impulses in this direction were fueled by the United States' use of aid to pressure them concerning Pakistan and other matters. Therefore, Mrs. Gandhi adopted what she called an "independent foreign policy," which emphasized closer relations with the Soviet Union and diminished American influence on India.

Previously, Indian leaders, whatever their feelings toward Washington and its foreign policies, had not openly defied the United States. Even when the two governments had serious policy differences they had an escape valve which enabled them to agree to disagree and thus continue dialogue. This escape valve had been the personal relations between Nehru and American leaders. With wit and charm, Nehru had always been able to maintain the respect and goodwill of a succession of American leaders. Furthermore, his chief cabinet ministers, Morarji Desai for example, had had good personal links with their American counterparts and this too helped keep communications open. But by 1971 all this had changed. The escape valve was closed, the goodwill on which it depended was lost, and a total breakdown of communication occurred. Mrs. Gandhi's deep-rooted suspicions of official Washington combined with her "total lack of inhibition about giving expression to pungent political views," too hastened this result.
Equally strongminded and intolerant of opposing views, President Nixon and his national security advisor Henry Kissinger were in a way mirror images of Mrs. Gandhi, and this too contributed to what happened.  

Personal pique did not by itself determine New Delhi's attitude. The backgrounds of Indian policy planners were also important. P. N. Haskar, T. N. Kaul, and D. P. Dhar were among those who most influenced Mrs. Gandhi and Foreign Minister Swaran Singh. All three men had close connections with Moscow, having served there in official capacities, and all three viewed favorably Moscow's policy toward India and India's moves toward closer ties with Moscow. However, the controlling factor shaping both Indian and Soviet policy and drawing the two nations together was the so-called "China syndrome." Sino-Soviet border clashes had occurred in 1969, and the resulting animosities between the two communist powers encouraged Moscow to see in India a potential ally against China. At the same time, New Delhi needed superpower support against what its leaders perceived as a growing Chinese threat. Accordingly, a deal was struck. Moscow increased its military and economic assistance to India, and in return enlarged its diplomatic influence over New Delhi. 

In the aftermath, Indo-American relations cooled still further, and Washington announced a "one-time limited exception" to the ban on arms sales to Pakistan. Also in the summer of 1971, the American government decided to discontinue the correspondence between President Nixon and the Chief Justice of India about American actions in Vietnam. "It may be embarrassing to the Chief Justice to be the recipient of correspondence from the President, which might be seen in India as an effort to involve the Chief Justice in an issue of
considerable political sensitivity," an American official wrote in justifying the change. But by discontinuing the correspondence, Washington was expressing its displeasure over Indian policy toward Vietnam and New Delhi's close alliance with the Soviet Union. 28

Another incident, trifling in itself, was magnified by the growing strain in Indo-American relations. In October 1970 Mrs. Gandhi had visited New York to take part in the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. The Indian foreign ministry expressed displeasure when Kenneth Keating, the American ambassador, failed to attend ceremonies at the New Delhi airport marking Mrs. Gandhi's departure on the trip. The ministry also expressed similar annoyance when no ranking American official welcomed Mrs. Gandhi at the New York airport. The Indians considered both acts intentional marks of disrespect toward the leader of the non-aligned countries. The American embassy in New Dehli explained the ambassador's failure to attend Mrs. Gandhi's departure as the result of a scheduling error, while the State Department pointed out that Mrs. Gandhi's visit to New York was a United Nations and not an American affair and as such did not require the presence of American officials to greet her. 29

While in New York, Mrs. Gandhi publicly condemned the decision to sell arms to Pakistan, and she turned down an invitation to a White House dinner. Whether the latter action was in fact connected with the decision on arms sales cannot be definitely determined. But in the Lok Sabha at the time, Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh announced that "the [Indian] Government have clearly conveyed to the U.S. Government India's strong opposition to the supply of arms to Pakistan and are in touch with them on this matter." 30 This view was reiterated in the Annual
Report of the Ministry of External Affairs for 1969-70. It stated:

The statements made by the United States Administration [on Vietnam] ... manifest an appreciation of the non-military answers to problems [emphasis added]. India hopes that this will lead to peaceful settlement of the problems in Vietnam.... India hopes that the United States will give practical effort to its new policy by forbearing from resuming supplies of arms to Pakistan. A resumption of supplies will not only start a retrogressive movement, but is bound to cause considerable misgiving in India.31

Thus, Indian policymakers related the issues of Vietnam and American military supplies to Pakistan. While Washington sought non-military solutions in Vietnam, they pointed out, it was encouraging military confrontation in South Asia.

This stance received considerable support within the United States from political leaders as well as the press. Senators William Saxbe, an Ohio Republican, and Frank Church, an Idaho Democrat, strongly criticized the decision to sell arms to Pakistan, for example.32 Similarly, the New York Times noted editorially that while already involved in one war in Southeast Asia the administration was "creating another explosive situation ... by giving military aid to Pakistan." The editorial advised the government to forego a sale that might lead to another round of conflict, and devote its diplomatic energies to resolving the issues that threatened the subcontinent with another "farcical war."33 Before these criticisms had subsided, Indian displeasure with American policy was further heightened by the announcement, that the United States would build a naval base and a joint communications facility with Great Britain on the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. Indian leaders saw in this announcement an intent to bring superpower rivalry into the Indian Ocean.34
The growing rift between New Delhi and Washington was warmly applauded and encouraged in Islamabad. Whereas Indian leaders had viewed Richard Nixon's election to the presidency with little pleasure, Pakistani leaders welcomed it. Nixon was popular in Pakistan because of his past support for the country, which he had visited five times. But initially, as already noted, Nixon showed no favor for Pakistan over India, nor did he initiate any changes in American policy toward the subcontinent. When the military replaced President Ayub Khan in 1969, Nixon administration officials at first showed no eagerness to cultivate the leaders of the new regime. Secretary of State Rogers told Congress the change of regime in Pakistan was important but not so important as to dictate changes in American policy. Washington, he said, would continue "to demonstrate its interest in keeping friendly relations with this nation of over 130 million." As soon as he took office, the new Pakistani President, Aga Muhammad Yahya Khan, appealed to Washington for arms to strengthen the defenses of his country and his own hold on political power. He made the request to both Rogers and Nixon when they visited Pakistan in 1969 to demonstrate American support for both the nation and its new government. On March 24, 1969, Rogers held talks with Yahya, who then made his arms request. Making no commitments on the subject, Rogers nevertheless assured Yahya that his request would receive due attention in Washington. Nixon's visit later in the year likewise produced no commitments on the arms question, but did result in establishing warm personal relations between the two presidents. The Pakistani president had a keen sense of the possible, and did not press what was for Nixon a sensitive issue. Instead, he courted
Nixon personally, awarding him the country's highest civilian honor, the Nishan-e-Pakistan. For his part, Nixon accepted Pakistan's rapprochement with China, which had been the most disruptive factor in American-Pakistani relations since 1962-63. This basic change in American policy resulted from Nixon's hope that Pakistan could be used as a go-between for the opening to China he was already contemplating. In fact, Nixon on this occasion asked Yahya to sound out Chinese leaders on normalizing relations with the United States, a task the Pakistani president readily agreed to, for he and his advisors thought its successful execution would assure their own friendly relations with the United States.

President Nixon was fully satisfied with his talks with Yahya, who impressed him by his simplicity and frankness. Here was a man, he felt sure, with whom he could work. This feeling would affect American policy when civil war broke out in Pakistan in 1971. Yahya used his friendship with Nixon to draw American support for his regime, and it is notable that at a time when the Nixon Doctrine called for limited disengagement from Asia, Nixon was strengthening American ties with an autocratic military government in Pakistan. Thus, ironically, detente with China contributed to the revival of an alliance originally created to contain China. This departure from traditional American policy would have significant results later on.

While Nixon was visiting Pakistan, the American ambassador in Islamabad, Joseph Farland, recommended to the State Department that the ban on military supplies to that country be lifted. Although Nixon, as already noted, made no commitment on that point, he did resolve to strengthen Yahya's hand and reward his support for American interests.
A conviction that Pakistan was losing parity with India because of the American arms embargo, while India continued to receive arms from the Soviet Union, reinforced that resolution. Following his visit, the State Department therefore announced in October 1970 that the embargo on arms shipment to Pakistan would be lifted. Immediately, Pakistan would receive, among other things, three hundred armored personnel carriers, fifteen F-104A fighters, seven B-57 bombers and four maritime patrol craft.

This decision was opposed by a number of congressmen, including Senator Fulbright. The decision, they insisted, favored Pakistan over India and was not "consistent with the government's protestations of abstinence in supplying arms to India and Pakistan." These opponents, the majority of whom were Democrats, supported the traditional policy of equal treatment of the two subcontinental powers, and through the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives, they urged the administration to remove the ban on all arms sales to India and Pakistan. The ban, they said, caused the two countries "to turn to the communist world to obtain what they considered their legitimate defense needs and ... [the] policy should be reviewed."

To counter this opposition, the administration termed its sale to Pakistan a "one time exception" to a continuing overall ban. There was no intention, administration spokesmen insisted, of renewing arms deliveries to Pakistan on an "extended and continuing basis." On the contrary, this special sale was in response to a long-standing Pakistani request, and the new "weapons were to be ... replacements of the old ones or essentially unsophisticated items." President Nixon reiterated his administration's view on this subject in his State of the
Union Message in 1971. "This modest exception [of arms variously estimated to be worth between $15 and $40 million] should not upset the military balance in the area or accelerate an arms race," he told Congress. Pakistan, which had "gradually moved from its position of close association with the United States to a complete triangular relationship balancing her contacts with China, U.S.S.R. and ourselves," might, Nixon added, be brought back to its former position.

Nixon's defense of his decision, especially his assurance that it was made to correct imbalances caused by Soviet shipments of arms to India, neutralized the opposition, which had always been partly partisan in nature. Ever since the original alliance with Pakistan in the early 1950's, American opinion had been divided on the subject, and on American policy toward South Asia generally. One group, liberals, most of them Democrats, criticized the military emphasis and the willingness to support a military regime in Pakistan. They accepted India's professed non-alignment, valued its democratic system, and thought South Asian policy should always give first priority to India. They supported generous amounts of aid to spur Indian economic advancement and to counter communist claims that central planning and political regimentation were the wave of the future. Among the notable people who shared these views in the 1970s were Senators Edward Kennedy, Frank Church, and J. W. Fulbright, and Congressman Cornelius Gallagher, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

An opposed group of conservatives, most of them Republicans, dismissed India's claims of non-alignment as hypocrisy. In fact, they insisted, the successive governments of Nehru and Mrs. Gandhi aspired to absolute hegemony in the subcontinent and were willing to subordinate
themselves to Soviet interests to achieve that goal. On the other hand, they believed, Pakistan was a reliable American ally, and one Washington must support to maintain the balance of power and stability in the subcontinent. Kissinger and Nixon both shared these views, and with their rise to power the "liberal" policies of the Kennedy–Johnson years gave way to the "conservative" policies of the Nixon years.

Once the decision to provide arms to Pakistan was secured, the Nixon administration moved further toward Pakistan. Yahya Khan as well as Mrs. Gandhi visited New York on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, but unlike Mrs. Gandhi's, Yahya's visit was a notable success. He traveled to Washington to see President Nixon, who assured him that "nobody has occupied the White House who is friendlier to Pakistan than me." Soon thereafter, in November 1970, Yahya visited Beijing, where in talks with Chinese foreign minister Zhou Enlai he discussed among other things ways of improving relations between Beijing and Washington.

As previously noted, the American decision to sell arms to Pakistan evoked sharp indignation in India. Equally sharp was Pakistan's reaction to the Indian indignation. In New York, President Yahya Khan told the press that Pakistan had the right to preserve its territorial security and do whatever it could for that purpose. "The arms which Pakistan was buying with its hard earned money," he added, "were not meant for aggressive purposes." Not surprisingly, Yahya said nothing of the internal political developments in Pakistan that were at least partly responsible for his eagerness to obtain American weapons.

These internal developments constitute the roots of the civil war that gave birth to Bangladesh; and in order to understand the real
meaning of American policy toward that war it is necessary to understand those roots. Like all Muslim nationalists in India in the late 1940s, East Bengalis had supported the struggle for creation of an independent Pakistan under the leadership of the Muslim League. Of all the provinces which went into the new nation of Pakistan, East Bengal gave the most solid support to Muhammad Ali Jinnah and his struggle to insure establishment of a separate Muslim state in the subcontinent. This support grew out of several sources, among them the strong sense of identity generated by Islamic values and symbols, the generations of religious and cultural oppression Muslims like Hindus had experienced under British rule, and the intense fear of being subordinated still further in a Hindu-dominated India. These compelling centrifugal forces encouraged all Indian Muslims to see things in terms of Hindu versus Muslim, and to overlook fundamental cultural, linguistic and ethnic differences that divided them into two disparate groups separated by a thousand miles of Hindu-land. These groups were the Bengalis of East Pakistan and the several ethnic groups of West Pakistan.

In the new nation of Pakistan, the Bengalis, who constituted a majority of the population, found themselves politically, economically, and otherwise subordinated to the West Pakistanis. This had two effects on them. First, there was a rapid decline of Pakistani nationalism in East Pakistan and a reassertion of Bengali cultural, linguistic, and ethnic loyalties. Second, Bengali political elites made urgent demands for a greater role in the government of the nation. Ruling groups in West Pakistan failed to appreciate the concerns on which these things rested, and the seeds of national disintegration were planted.

The result was a classic example of cultural and political myopia.
The elites of West Pakistan arrogated to themselves the privilege of defining and implementing national values and policies, and in the process the legitimate ethnic, cultural, and linguistic concerns of the Bengalis, to say nothing of their political, economic and security interests, were largely or completely ignored. On neither level were the demands of Bengalis accommodated, and their grievances emerged early in the history of the new nation. The inevitable result was frustration on their part, and conflict rather than unity and cohesion in the new nation.

The United States government never showed any interest in the concerns of the Bengalis, though many Americans did. As early as 1956, Hans J. Morgenthau voiced concern over "The Underlying Weakness of Pakistan." He wrote:

Pakistan is not a nation and hardly a state. It has no justification in history, ethnic origin, language, civilization, or the consciousness of those who make up its population. They have no interest in common save one: fear of Hindu domination.... The two parts of Pakistan are separated not only by 1,200 miles of Indian territory, but even more by language, ethnic composition, civilization and outlook.... If there are solutions which could assure the future of Pakistan, only extraordinary wisdom and political skill will find them and put them into effect. If there is such a wisdom and skill in Pakistan, it is not to be found among the politicians.51

Other Americans came to share Morgenthau's views. When, in the early 1960's, American Peace Corps volunteers in East Pakistan criticized the Pakistani government's policies toward East Pakistan and voiced their support for the Bengali regionalists, they were withdrawn from the country at the insistence of the government in Islamabad. Similarly, Americans who worked in East Pakistan for international agencies found their usefulness at an end when they expressed sympathy
for Bengali grievances. So numerous were such incidents that the Pakistani government became apprehensive that the CIA was encouraging Bengali secessionist sentiment.

These apprehensions fueled official Pakistani suspicions of American intentions. "To choose an identification of U.S. power with forces of public order in a recipient country," said Howard Higgins, a member of the State Department's policy-planning staff in the Johnson administration, "may complicate our relationship with those who are now out of power but will be likely to form the next government." In Islamabad, such a statement could only mean that Washington desired an "understanding" with Bengali dissidents, who obviously wanted to dismember the nation. Equally alarming in Islamabad was the recommendation of Dankwart A. Rostow, a senior staff member of the Brookings Institution, concerning American intervention in the domestic politics of developing countries. "Our aim," Rostow wrote, "should be to encourage not political stability but political evolution in a desirable direction."

Such comments led Islamabad to seek assurances that Washington was not involved in subversive activities in East Pakistan. On August 26, 1966, CIA Director Richard Helms assured Pakistan's Ambassador to Washington, Gulam Ahmad, that the "CIA was not engaged in any subversion activities in East Pakistan ... or against President Ayub and his regime." Pakistani leaders were not reassured by such statements, and American-Pakistani relations remained problematical when Nixon became president in 1969. The role of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Pakistani politics was one reason for the unease in Islamabad. Sheikh Mujib championed the cause of his fellow Bengalis and demanded for them...
greater power in Pakistani politics in view of their population strength; but he was also pro-American in his pronouncements on foreign policy. Back in 1954-56, just prior to the coup that brought General Ayub Khan to the presidency, opposition had developed in Pakistan over the question of alignment with the United States. Mujib's party, the Awami League, had split on the issue, its pro-western faction, led by H. S. Suhrawardy and Sheikh Mujib, declaring in favor of an American alliance. Mujib never deviated from this stance, which by 1971 West Pakistani leaders had come to consider further evidence of CIA support for Bengali secessionist sentiment. 56

In February 1966 Sheikh Mujib announced his "Six Points" program, and declared that "the time has come for making East Pakistan self sufficient in all respects." The Six Points called for establishing a federal form of government, with the federal government controlling defense and foreign policy and leaving domestic matters to separate federated provincial governments; creating separate currencies or fiscal policies for the provincial governments to stop the movement of capital from one province to another; limiting the taxing power to the provincial governments, which would remit shares of their revenue to the federal government; empowering each provincial government to make its own trade agreement with foreign countries and control its earned foreign exchange; and allowing each of these governments to maintain its own militia. 57

The Six Points thus envisaged a lose federation with the provincial governments sovereign in most matters. The ruling elite of the existing government saw at once that these proposals would destroy the present Punjabi-dominated power structure. President Ayub Khan thus denounced
Mujib's proposals and the autonomist movement that produced them, and declared that to keep the nation intact his government would accept the challenge of a civil war if forced to. In January 1968 Ayub had Mujib arrested and charged with conspiracy to bring about the secession of East Pakistan with Indian help. The arrest confirmed Mujib as the most prominent and popular leader of East Pakistan, just as the publicity the government gave the conspiracy case spread word of the Awami League and its Six Point program. In the summer of 1969, popular uprisings occurred in both West and East Pakistan, but for different reasons. In the West the uprisings were directed against Ayub's autocratic rule, whereas those in the East protested Ayub's rule as an instrument of West Pakistani domination.

In the face of violent mass movement, on March 26, 1969, Ayub declared martial law and handed over power to General Yahya Khan, commander-in-chief of the army. East Pakistanis saw the return of martial law as an indefinite postponement of their demands for autonomy, and were determined to resist. Recognizing the strength of this determination, Yahya announced a series of concessions, the most notable of which was a promise to hold National Assembly elections on the basis of population rather than regional parity. This offered the Bengalis of East Pakistan prospects for realizing one of their basic hopes, forming a majority in the National Assembly by virtue of the fact that they were a majority of Pakistan's population. Yahya's concessions, however, did not include the most important Bengali demand, regional autonomy for the East.

In the elections, which were held in December 1970, the Awami League in East Pakistan and the People's Party in West Pakistan emerged
victorious. In fact, the Awami League won all but two of the 162 seats in the East and thus an absolute majority in the 300-seat National Assembly. The People's Party, led by Z. A. Bhutto, won the second largest number of seats, eighty-one; but so pronounced was the regional polarization in the nation that all the Awami League seats were in the East and all the People's Party's were in the West.

The Awami League's victory surprised the existing government and its supporters, who had assumed the League would at best win a bare majority in the East. This result would have made it possible to exclude the autonomist party from power, or if the League joined a coalition government, force it to withdraw the demands contained in the Six Points. In either case, this would have neutralized the League. With his absolute victory, however, Sheikh Mujib declared that the upcoming National Assembly would adopt a new constitution on the basis of the Six Points. This alarmed the ruling elite.

The election results made a confrontation between East and West Pakistan inevitable. The Awami League owed its victory to its championship of Bengali rights. Its major constituencies were students, professionals, and rising bourgeois groups who wanted a more equitable share of political and economic power. Interestingly, the People's Party found its greatest support among similar groups in the West, especially students and petty bourgeois groups who were likewise excluded from political and economic power by the ruling elite. The two parties could not cooperate, however, because the constituencies of each regarded those of the other as obstacles to achieving their own objectives.

Leaders of the armed forces, most of them Punjabis, were an elite
group with high salaries and entrenched privileges which the Awami League now threatened. East Pakistani representation in the army was minimal, and for Bhutto and his People's Party to accept a constitution based on the Awami League program would destroy their popularity in Punjab, the Party's power base and economically the most developed province in the country. In fact, the People's Party program centered around promises to maintain a strong central government and a powerful army. For these reasons, the military junta and Bhutto and his party acted together to prevent the Awami League from coming to power and adopting a new constitution.

The result was a constitutional crisis. Following the election, Bhutto declared emphatically that no constitution would be acceptable that did not have the consent of the People's Party and therefore of Punjab and the military leaders. Soon after the election, he met with Mujib, who refused to share power in the new government, and Bhutto in turn declared the Six Points an unacceptable basis for a new constitution. To pressure Mujib, he said publicly on February 28, 1971, that West Pakistani members would boycott the National Assembly until Mujib bargained on the Six Points. He also asked Yahya Khan to postpone convening the National Assembly or to withdraw the 120-day time limit within which the Assembly had to meet following the election. This postponement was required, he said, to enable him to continue dialogue with "elder brother Mujib." 64

On March 1, 1971, two days before the scheduled opening of the National Assembly, Yahya postponed the session. He cited the unwillingness of Bhutto and his party to participate, and urged the political leaders of East and West Pakistan to compromise their
differences and agree on a new constitution. The postponement caused vigorous protest in the East, where the government was accused of conspiring to deprive Bengalis of their rights and where Mujib was under pressure from radicals within his party to declare independence. The military also put pressure on Mujib. To impress on the Sheikh the necessity for restraint and compromise, Yahya ordered troops moved from the West to the East, and replaced the moderate governor of the East with a martial law administrator of tough reputation.

Mujib's room for maneuver was restricted by these and other factors as well. Within the Awami league, radicals were gaining the upper hand as increasing number of students and workers reacted to the government's intransigence by declaring themselves unwilling to accept anything short of independence. Faced with these compounding pressures, Mujib opted for a middle course, rejecting alike the radicals' demand for independence and the military's insistence that he give up the Six Points. Instead, he launched a non-violent mass movement, which enabled him to oppose the military with his strongest weapon, popular support, and thereby to bring his own pressure on the government and the army to negotiate on his terms.

In early March, Yahya offered to convene the National Assembly and to confer with Mujib, but by this time violent clashes between the army and the Bengalis had occurred in Dhaka and elsewhere, making compromise now virtually impossible. On March 7, Mujib announced four conditions for joining the National Assembly, the crucial one being immediate transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people in East as well as West Pakistan. Simultaneously, the Awami League launched a non-cooperation movement that placed Sheikh Mujib in complete control of
everything in East Pakistan except Yahya Khan's menacing army. 66

Mujib's de facto assumption of power resulted in what amounted to a parallel government in East Pakistan, a development that forced Yahya to act. On March 15, he came to Dhaka, and after lengthy negotiations with Mujib, agreed in principle to Mujib's four conditions. On March 20, the two rivals agreed on a draft proclamation which outlined an interim arrangement for the transfer of power. The proclamation called for an immediate end to martial law and transfer of power over domestic affairs to the federated provincial governments envisioned in the Six Points, but postponement of the transfer of power at the national level. It also provided for division of the National Assembly into two committees to draft separate reports, on the basis of which a new constitution would be framed. East Pakistan was to be granted autonomy on the basis of the Six Points, but the degree of autonomy for the four provinces envisioned for West Pakistan was left to those provinces to decide for themselves. 67

Bhutto rejected this arrangement, calling it a "massive betrayal of West Pakistan." 68 Mujib and other League leaders therefore ended all negotiations with Bhutto, and the pressure on them from within the party to declare independence mounted. The League's non-cooperation movement was already nearly a month old and it had become increasingly difficult for Mujib to keep it non-violent. On March 23, the League presented Yahya with a new draft proposal which again called for East Pakistani autonomy on the basis of Six Points, and pressed for its quick acceptance. Tazuddin Ahmed, General Secretary of the League, warned that unless the proposal was accepted within forty eight hours it would be too late. 69 Thus challenged, Yahya on March 25 ordered his army to
suppress the Bengali non-cooperation movement. Immediately, civil war—the Bangladesh war of national liberation—spread across East Pakistan. Mujib was again arrested, while other League leaders fled to India.

The Nixon administration had paid little attention to East Pakistan while this crisis was developing. The reason for this was Yahya's promises of free elections and a new constitution that would redress the political and other tensions underlying the crisis. In Washington, these promises were accepted at face value, despite the concerns of Americans on the scene. Some officials at the United States Agency for International Development as well as the State Department believed East Pakistan was receiving less than its fair share of the aid that went to Pakistan. Their statements to this effect were again taken in Islamabad as evidence that Americans were "interfering" in Pakistani affairs and that "Washington was actively backing the secessionists in Dacca." 70

Continuing this pattern of reaction, the Pakistani government press accused the American Consul General in Dhaka, Archer Blood, of working against Pakistan's national interest; while ever since the National Assembly elections, Pakistani intelligence services, both civilian and military, had spread reports about "grand American designs" to encourage secession in East Pakistan. 71 Pakistani intelligence officers were especially concerned over American economists associated with the Pakistan Planning Commission, who frequently criticized economic conditions in East Pakistan. Commenting on this situation, the New York Times reported from Rawalpindi that, "in Pakistan, the United States is a villain." Although Ambassador Farland was a strong supporter of Pakistan, the Times noted, "[he] is regularly portrayed as a CIA agent
subverting Pakistan's interests—often in favor of India." Even former ambassador Benjamin H. Oehlert, Jr., who even in December 1971 advocated military support for Pakistan, was not immune from slanderous criticism in the Pakistani press. 72

Neither Pakistani officials nor American officials in Pakistan were at this time aware of Nixon's effort to open contacts with China or of the imperative need this created for friendly relations with the Pakistani government. Nixon and Kissinger wanted the opening to China carried out in absolute secrecy, for they feared a premature leak of their effort might jeopardize its success. Hounded by criticism of his Vietnam policies, Nixon desperately wanted a dramatic diplomatic coup that would not only surprise the nation but constitute a major personal and policy triumph as well. And failure, he knew, of a publicized effort would be devastatingly embarrassing. Yahya cooperated fully in Nixon's effort. He kept his own Ministry of Foreign Affairs and even his closest military advisors ignorant of his activities on Nixon's behalf, just as he bypassed diplomatic channels and personally relayed messages from Beijing to Kissinger. The American State Department and even Secretary Rogers were similarly excluded from any knowledge of the process by Kissinger. 73

Under these circumstances, the widespread criticism in Islamabad of American policy and personnel in connection with the East Pakistan crisis was especially ill-timed. It was also embarrassing for the critics when they later learned of Washington's strong support for their government. But such criticism was nothing new. On the contrary, it represented a continuation of Pakistani suspicions that first developed in the mid-1960s regarding the activities of American personnel in East
Pakistan. The flame-up of this criticism at this sensitive point fueled the suspicions between Pakistani and Americans at several levels of government as well as between American officials in Pakistan and those in Washington.

It also contributed to Washington's misunderstanding of the crisis in East Pakistan. Even after the Pakistani elections, senior officials in Washington did not understand that the Awami League's absolute majority in Parliament would likely lead to a constitutional crisis and even to civil war. In the winter of 1970-71, the National Security Council undertook three studies of America's role in the subcontinent. Two of the studies dealt with the implications of Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean, while the third analyzed long term policy toward India and Pakistan in light of America's changing relations with the Soviet Union and China. None of the studies touched on the impending crisis in East Pakistan.

In December 1970, Joel Woldman, a specialist in South Asia at the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, did however write a paper on that crisis. Woldman predicted the military regime would use the army to try to suppress the autonomy movement and the Awami League, and warned that that effort would lead to civil war and make the secession of East Pakistan inevitable. Moreover, he argued, the civil war would bring India into the crisis, attract serious attention in the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China, and have major consequences for American interests in South Asia. Woldman's analysis was ignored. The Nixon administration, wrote one of its critics, "in part could not see, and in part did not want to see, the human and diplomatic ruin in South Asia until it was too late."
Once it became aware of the impending crisis, the White House hoped for a political settlement, one that would neither disrupt Pakistan's role in the China opening nor destabilize the country. The administration was disappointed when negotiations between the army regime and the Awami League stalemated. From mid-March, the CIA and other agencies alerted Washington to military preparations against the dissidents. The administration suppressed these warnings, either hoping or suspecting that after negotiations between the regime and the Awami League failed, army action would restore stability. Given the precariousness of American-Pakistani relations at the moment and the delicacy of the negotiations with China, Washington was determined not to pressure Yahya Khan or to encourage his opponents. This is one reason the Bengalis had no forewarning of the army's move against them and for their surprise at the ferocity of the assault.

As this suggests, the Nixon administration had no interest in, or concern over, the nationalist movement among the Bengalis or the merits of its demands. It was not so much that the administration opposed the movement as that it was concerned to preserve stability in Pakistan in order to further American interests. The Bengali movement threatened those interests, and when the army acted in East Pakistan the administration acquiesced. It refused to exert pressure of any sort on Islamabad, which it might well have done in view of the recent resumption of arms sales. The Senior Review Group, which monitored American policy during the early phase of the crisis, decided on March 6, 1971, not to intervene nor to exert American influence to prevent Yahya Khan from acting militarily. This amounted to a policy of "massive inaction" on the part of the Nixon administration.
The administration also decided that Yahya's military actions in East Pakistan would not jeopardize its broader interest in the subcontinent, the maintenance of peace between India and Pakistan. As late as the middle of March, T. N. Kaul, the Indian foreign secretary, told Ambassador Keating that India wanted Pakistan to remain united, an assurance repeated by L. K. Jha, the Indian ambassador in Washington, to Kissinger on March 17. This assurance was accepted with no inquiry into the dynamics behind the situation developing in East Pakistan because the last thing Washington wanted in early 1971 was a crisis involving Pakistan. "In the year of uncertainty on Vietnam, the opening to China, and the evolving relationship with the Soviet Union," Henry Kissinger later wrote, "there was almost nothing the Administration was less eager to face than a crisis in South Asia." Consequently, Joseph Farland, the American ambassador, advised Mujib not to look to Washington for support in his conflict with the Pakistani government.

American policy in the crisis thus hinged on global not Pakistani considerations, East or West. A basic realignment among the superpowers was in motion, and in view of that the Bengali problem appeared to Washington as no more than an annoying sidelight. The history of the crisis sheds much bright light on the realpolitik of Nixon and Kissinger. Both men had clear preference for military dictatorships in the Third World, for such regimes were easier to deal with than struggling democratic movements, which always seemed to them potential breeding grounds for anti-American radicalism. They never understood the nature of the Bengali movement, and in their ignorance allied the United States against one of the most important movements of nationalism and self-government in the Third World since World War II.


3 Nixon, Memoirs, p. 531; Kissinger, White House Years; p. 879; and Kalb and Kalb, Kissinger, p. 258.

4 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 849.

5 According to Roger Morris, a staff assistant to Henry Kissinger at the National Security Council, American policy toward Pakistan was "hostage to its China diplomacy." See Morris, Uncertain Greatness, p. 215. Tad Szulc holds the same opinion. According to him, since William Roger's visit in May 1969 an opinion emerged in the White House that Pakistan might be a more reliable partner in South Asia than India. This was never said publicly, but it was consistent with Nixon's appreciation of the South Asian situation. See Szulc, The Illusion of Peace, p. 132.

6 Nixon to Indira Gandhi, 11 January 1969, WHCF CO India 66.

7 Ibid.

8 Nixon to Indira Gandhi, 24 June 1969, ibid.


10 Nixon to Indira Gandhi, 10 May 1969, WHCF CO India 66.

11 Henry H. Perkins to Nixon, 1 June 1969, ibid.


13 U.S., President, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States (Washington D.C.: Office of the Federal Register, National


15 This is the view of T. N. Kaul, then Foreign Secretary of India and one of the chief policy advisors to Indira Gandhi. See Kaul, The Kissinger Years, p. 32.

16 Szulc, The Illusion of Peace, p. 132.


19 Ibid., pp. 257-58.

20 Director, USIA, Frank Shakespeare to Minister for Political Affairs, Embassy of India, Washington D.C., Maharajakrishna Rasgotra, 18 June 1970, WHCF CO India 66.

21 Kissinger has admitted that American officials in New Delhi did occasionally contact Indian leaders, but it was not for "fulfilling a Washington designed strategy but was a natural activity in a country with free institutions." See Kissinger, White House Years, p. 849.


23 Ibid. According to Kaul, in the summer of 1969 Kissinger cautioned him that "India should not criticize the U.S. policy towards Vietnam in public;" see Kaul, The Kissinger Years, p. 53.

24 Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 879-80.

25 For a discussion on how foreign policy priorities were formulated under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, see Nirod Saha, The Indira Era (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1986), pp 72-96.


28 Ibid.


30 Dinesh Singh's statement in the Lok Sabha on American military


32 Indian Express, 16 October 1970.


34 Ibid., 16 December 1970.


37 In a press statement on May 25, 1969, Rogers affirmed that the question of resumption of arms supplies to Pakistan was "under consideration." See R. K. Jain, US-South Asian Relations, 2:308-09.

38 This is a statement of G. W. Choudhury, who was a minister in Yahya Khan's cabinet and a close advisor to the general. See "Reflections on Sino-Pakistan Relations," Pacific Community 7 (January 1967): 264. Choudhury's statement is supported by Secretary Rogers' report on American foreign policy for 1969-70, wherein Rogers recognized the United States' relationship with Pakistan to be on a "bilateral basis." He also affirmed that the United States respected Pakistan's desire to follow an independent course in foreign relations. This meant American endorsement of Pakistan's unofficial alliance with China. See A Report of the Secretary of State to the Congress, 1969-70.

39 Nixon's "special relationship with President Yahya Khan" is described in a memorandum from Jeanne W. Davis to Rose Mary Woods, 4 February 1971, WHCF CO Pakistan 115.

40 Hindustan Times, 28 January 1970.

41 Congressional Record 117:10133, 10500. In a statement to the Lok Sabha, Foreign Minister Swaran Singh informed the members of the Parliament of the number of military items (as reported by Washington to the Indian government) to be sold to Pakistan. See Foreign Affairs Record (November 1970), pp. 224-25.

42 Times of India, 28 March 1970.


44 Ibid., 9 October 1970.

vol. 64 (22 March 1971), pp. 385. Also see Nixon to Yahya Khan, 3 March 1971, WHCF CO Pakistan 115.


47 From early January 1970, the Pakistan government started hinting about Pakistan's role as a mediator in improving Sino-America relations. Muhammad Sher Ali Khan, the Minister of Information and National Affairs in a speech on January 30, 1970, stated, "there is even a realization that Pakistan's friendship with China could be useful in building bridges between the East and the West." See Pakistan Horizon 1 (1971), p. 12.

48 Hindustan Times, 23 October 1970.

49 For an analysis of the crisis between East and West Pakistan, see Jackson Robert, South Asian Crisis: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh: A Political Analysis of the 1971 War (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975); and Sucheta Ghosh, Role of India in the Emergence of Bangladesh (Calcutta: Minerva Press, 1983).


54 Ibid.


57 Critics argued that Mujib's proposal for substantial control of the economy by the provinces would split West Pakistan into an undefined number of separate communities, leaving East Pakistan by far the most populous federal unit. A central government wholly concerned with defense and external affairs would have little influence on the overwhelming authority of the federal units. Further, critics pointed out that the Six Points proposed a lose federation which would lead to dismemberment of Pakistan instead of integration. For the Six Points, see Bangladesh Liberation War: Basic Documents, 16 vols. (Dhaka: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1982), 2:259-275.

58 Sheikh Mujib on several occasions hinted that the Six Points were
negotiable. But the Ayub regime turned a deaf ear to this and began to malign him. See ibid., p. 279.

59 Government Press Note: Agartala Conspiracy, Ibid., pp. 298-301. Mujib was subsequently released from jail and the Agartala conspiracy case dropped in February 1969 in the face of tremendous popular demand.

60 Text of President Yahya's address to the nation, ibid., pp. 495-500.


62 Even a week before the election, the intelligence agencies reported the Awami League would win a maximum of 80 seats. See Anthony Mascarenhas, The Rape of Bangladesh (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1971), pp. 56-60. Choudhury, then unofficial constitutional advisor to Yahya, commented, "There is no likelihood of any one single party emerging from West Pakistan or East Pakistan." See The Pakistan Society Bulletin 31 (September 1970): 46-56. Military officials were also of the opinion that the Awami League's overwhelming victory was not expected by the junta. See Siddiq Salik, Witness to Surrender (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp 14-15.

63 For an understanding of how the divergent constituencies of the three political actors, Mujib, Yahya, and Bhutto, limited their capabilities for negotiations, see "Elite Crisis: An Analysis of the Failure of Mujib-Yahya-Bhutto Negotiations," paper presented by Raunq Jahan at the national seminar on Pakistan, Columbia University, 12 February 1972.

64 Bhutto's declaration in Peshwar and press conference in Karachi, Basic Documents, 2:632, 640.

65 Yahya appears to have taken the decision to postpone the session without giving due consideration to the likely consequences, hoping to pressure the Awami League. Moreover, there is evidence suggesting that he acted without adequate consultation and followed the hardline advocated by Bhutto. See "Conflict in East Pakistan: Background and Prospects," paper prepared by Edward Mason, Robert Dorfman, Stephen A. Marglin, CO Pakistan 115, WHCF.


69 White Paper on the Crisis in East Pakistan.


72 Ibid.

73 Szulc, The Illusion of Peace, p. 132.


75 Morris, Uncertain Greatness, pp. 213-14.

76 Ibid., p. 214.

77 In the SRG meeting, Under-Secretary of State Alexis Johnson expressed the opinion that Washington should try to discourage Yahya Khan from using force in East Pakistan. But he could not press the point after Kissinger cautioned SRG members to keep in mind Nixon's "special relationship" with Yahya Khan. See Van Hollen, "The Tilt Policy Revisited," p. 341.

78 Informal Notes, Senior Review Group meeting, 6 March 1971, ibid.

79 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 852.

80 Ibid., p. 842.

81 Mujib often expressed his preferences for a British-style democratic state. This, however, complicated problems for him. What friends he had in the Western democracies belonged to liberal wings of the Democratic Party in United States and the Labor Party in England.

82 According to G. W. Choudhury, Mujib had a false notion about American support for his movement. The American Consul General at Dhaka, Archer Blood, and a group of American economists sponsored by the Ford Foundation and working in Dhaka, pledged sympathy and support for the Bengali cause, which were personal views, not those of the American government. In Choudhury's view, Blood was unaware of Nixon's sympathy for Pakistan and Yahya Khan's role in Nixon's China policy. He also asserts that Blood's connections with Mujib were known to authorities in Islamabad. His role emboldened Mujib not to compromise on the issue of one Pakistan. It is true that to some extent Mujib was encouraged by sympathy of officials of the Dhaka consulate but it is not correct to say that this was the cause for his uncompromising stance toward the military government. See Choudhury The Last Days of United Pakistan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), p. 120.
Chapter III

SUPERPOWER JOCKEYING: MARCH-APRIL 1971

The birth of Bangladesh coincided with and became enmeshed in a major transformation in superpower relationships. The balance of power established after World War II had been bipolar, and neither the emergence of China nor the Sino-Soviet split of the early 1960s altered that fact in any fundamental sense. Through all these changes, each of the three powers pursued its own interests in international affairs; and that pursuit, in the early 1970's, led to new changes, the United States and China drawing closer together, thus isolating the Soviet Union. The Bangladesh crisis was the episode that revealed the meaning of this new alignment.

Each of the superpowers was involved in the crisis, for the new alignment caused each of them to be increasingly concerned with power relationships in South Asia and thus with the rivalries between India and Pakistan. Pakistan wanted to use the crisis to cement its ties with China and the United States and thereby neutralize India's superior power in the subcontinent. It thus encouraged these two superpowers to treat the crisis as a domestic difficulty forced on Pakistan by Indian meddling. This in turn helped these two superpowers to see the crisis as an episode that threatened to expand Indian power in the subcontinent at the expense of Pakistan, now a central strategic ally of both the United States and the People's Republic of China. The exodus of refugees from East Pakistan into India, which commenced on a very large scale as soon as the army acted against Sheikh Mujib's non-cooperation movement, heightened Indo-Pakistani tensions, and these in turn
encouraged the Indian leadership to look to the Soviet Union for help.

Once the crisis was well underway, Nixon announced the success of his opening to China, and India and the Soviet Union signed a mutual security treaty. This raised the level of superpower involvement. When the first signs appeared of India's likely success and Pakistan's likely failure, the narrow strategic thinking of Nixon and Kissinger caused them to reduce the whole affair to a matter of Soviet-backed expansionism at the expense of a key American ally that threatened vital American interests and the new opening to China.

When the Pakistani military moved against the Bengalis on March 25, the American response was cautious. Officially, the government announced its neutrality in what it described as an internal affair of Pakistan that must be settled by the Pakistanis themselves. This view of the crisis as an exclusively internal affair of the Pakistani government and people was consistent with Nixon and Kissinger's view of Pakistani affairs specifically and subcontinental and strategic affairs generally, and their subsequent actions were congruent with it. And because the crisis was internal, there was, in the administration's view, no reason for outside interference, whether Soviet, Chinese, Indian, or American. Consequently, the army's bloody suppression of the Awami League and its occupation of East Pakistan brought no reprimand, not even any criticism, from the American government. The American press and public opinion were, however, quick to condemn the Pakistani action as well as the stance of the Nixon administration.

That stance can be traced in the series of official statements made early in the crisis. On March 26, the State Department announced it was "watching developments [in East Pakistan] closely with concern.""
the government of Pakistan expelled all foreign journalists from Dhaka, the response was similarly muted. On March 31, reporting on the expulsion, a State Department announcement said:

A high ranking official of the Embassy in Islamabad had expressed our concern to a ranking official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.... While we recognized that there was censorship in effect, we felt that the legitimate news gathering functions of American journalists had been unduly restricted.2

If this statement showed no concern for the brutal actions of the Pakistani army, which were by now widely publicized in the international press, it also included no support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan, both of which were now at stake in the East.

Three days later, on April 2, the State Department expressed concern for the "reported loss of life, damage and hardship suffered by the people of East Pakistan."3 This concern was a response to widespread criticism in the media and in Congress of the administration's seeming indifference to the growing tragedy in East Pakistan. It also indicated a shift in policy from hands-off neutrality to friendly concern for the wellbeing of Pakistan East and West. On April 5, the State Department expressed hope for the restoration of "peaceful conditions" in East Pakistan and offered to provide any assistance "that might be requested by the government of Pakistan."4

By this time, the administration's policy was already under criticism in the press and elsewhere in part because it was American weapons that were being used against the civilian population in East Bengal. The New York Times, Washington Post, and Baltimore Sun, for example, published eye-witness accounts of army atrocities in Dhaka, and
growing numbers of American citizens appealed to Congress and the administration to take immediate measures to stop the violence. Congressional leaders also urged the administration to act. The administration sought to deflect this criticism without changing its policy. The State Department expressed its concern "if American weapons were used in circumstances such as these," and denied that the administration had ignored the situation. "Since the beginning of the present crisis," a spokesman said on April 7, "we have on several occasions expressed concern over the loss of life and damage which have occurred in East Pakistan, and we have expressed the hope that peaceful conditions will be restored." Despite such statements, the criticism mounted, focusing now on the issue of arms sales to Pakistan. The State Department promptly declared that the United States had had no "on-going military assistance program with Pakistan" since 1965, and that the "one-time exception" announced in October 1970 was still under discussion "in terms of specifications and prices."

On April 13, the Department issued a lengthier statement concerning American policy and actions. The United States was making efforts to resolve the crisis, the statement said, and was sending 300,000 tons of food grains to East Pakistan. Although the statement did not specify what efforts the United States had made or was then making, Pakistani newspapers were reporting that, "apart from the reserved posture at the official level and hostile attitude at the unofficial level, Washington ... through different ways and means [has] exerted pressure on Pakistan to stop its military operations in East Pakistan." This reflected a clear shift in American policy. The United States was now urging restraint on Pakistani military action in East Pakistan.

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It was also more actively working to ease the situation. In mid-April the United States joined an international humanitarian effort to relieve the suffering in East Pakistan, and sought to use arms policy to pressure Islamabad. "No arms have been provided since the beginning of the crisis," the State Department stated, "and the question of deliveries will be kept under review in light of developments." This implied an embargo of all arms shipments unless the military junta showed restraint in the East. In fact, this threat was of limited weight. As the State Department itself said, under the foreign military sales agreement made with Pakistan in 1966-67, only "a very modest quantity of such items as communications, medical and transport equipment" had been sold to that country; and all the spare parts and ammunition Pakistan had received were for arms provided prior to the 1965 embargo. No more than ten to fifteen percent of the material had been ammunition, though this policy had continued in effect since the outbreak of the fighting in East Pakistan. Washington, the State Department suggested, had only limited responsibility for the weaponry the Pakistani army was using against the Bengalis.

Under the pressure of criticism, then, the administration gradually shifted its policy. By the end of April the policy of inaction adopted by the White House in early March had given way to a new policy, pushed by the State Department, of gradual dissociation from the Pakistani government. These two policies, so different in their purposes and concerns produced inconsistencies in application that are best explained by the differing angles of vision in the White House and the State Department.

Many officials at the State Department were shocked by the ferocity
of the army’s action in East Pakistan, and from the outset were sympathetic to the Bengalis. They were also influenced by public criticism of the administration’s handling of the crisis, and to them the silence in the White House amounted to moral insensitivity. Washington should at the minimum dissociate itself from the Pakistani regime, they believed, and put pressure on Yahya to cease the repression in the East. The State Department’s handling of the crisis in March and April reflected these attitudes, which encouraged a reassessment of the entire range of American relations with the Islamabad government.

This reassessment was made by an Interdepartmental Group consisting of representatives from the State Department, National Security Council, Defense Department, Agency for International Development, Central Intelligence Agency, and the United States Information Agency. The group concluded that:

Pakistan army’s action in East Pakistan had reinforced the relative priority of U.S. interest in India, which had already been apparent because of India’s greater size, resources, and political, strategic, and economic potential. In contrast to the deteriorating situation in Pakistan ... India seemed to be, moving into a period of new political stability.... India merited greater U.S. attention in terms of U.S. interests.12

These conclusions and recommendations were discussed in a meeting of the Senior Review Group on April 19, but they had little influence in reshaping American policy because of Nixon and Kissinger’s relations with Yahya Khan and their preoccupation with the opening to China.

The President and his national security advisor continued to insist that the crisis and its resolution were internal affairs of Pakistan, and that the United States would do what it could to help a friendly government but would not attempt to impose any solution on that
government. Instead of considering the situation at least partly moral in nature, the two men let themselves be guided by concerns that were calculatingly geo-political. As Nixon said at the time:

We have a deep interest in ensuring that the subcontinent does not become a focus of great power conflict. We will try to keep our activities in balance with those of other major powers concerned. No outside power has a claim to a predominant influence. 13

This meant that the nature and extent of American involvement in South Asian affairs would be based on balance-of-power principles. To avoid any justification for Soviet, Chinese, or Indian intervention in the crisis, the United States would itself forego intervention. Thus, neither army brutalities nor refugees to India, no matter how widespread the one and numerous the other, affected White House attitudes.

Nixon and Kissinger saw State Department efforts to change American policy during the crisis as evidence of that “traditional Indian bias” which, in their view, had too long shaped American policy toward the subcontinent. They believed that State Department officials had deliberately given low classification to cables from Dhaka and New Delhi describing the brutality of the army in order to assure their wide circulation and in that way increase pressure on the administration to act against the Yahya regime. They also felt that the Department, again deliberately, made “small shifts” in interpreting presidential directives, thereby “vitiating the course Nixon had set.” 14

Institutional rivalry thus added to differences of opinion between the State Department and the White House to further confuse the administration policy. The resulting air of suspicion and distrust was present at all levels, but it came to be especially pronounced amid the
growing dismay with which American diplomats in Dhaka observed the brutal realities around them on the one hand and the seemingly cynical indifference of Washington to those realities on the other. In the midst of the crisis some twenty of these diplomats addressed an almost unprecedented message of dissent from American policy to their superiors in Washington. Led by Archer Blood, the Consul General, the group cabled their disgust in a collective "Dissent From U.S. Policy Toward East Pakistan." They told Washington:

With the conviction that U.S. policy related to recent developments in East Pakistan serves neither our moral interests, broadly defined, nor our national interests, narrowly defined, numerous officers ... consider it their duty to register strong dissent with fundamental aspects of this policy. Our government has failed to denounce the suppression of democracy. Our government has failed to denounce atrocities.... Our government has evinced what many will consider moral bankruptcy, ironically at a time when the U.S.S.R. sent President Yahya a message defending democracy, condemning the arrest of a leader of a democratically elected majority party, incidentally pro-West, and calling for an end to repressive measures and bloodshed [emphasis added].

The dissidents then urgently requested the administration to "redirect" American policy toward the crisis. Many in the State Department agreed with the dissidents and offered petitions of their own with the same end in view. Among those signing such petitions were Howard Schaffer, Craig Baxter, Douglas Cockran, Anthony Quainton, Townsend Swayze, and Andrew Kilgore.

Some non-career diplomats, among them Kenneth Keating, Nixon's ambassador to India as well as his personal friend, expressed sympathy with the petitioners' views. In a cable from New Delhi, Keating told the administration he was "deeply shocked at the massacre" of the Bengalis, and urged the government to deplore "this brutality" promptly
and publicly, and to suspend all military deliveries to Pakistan. 17 American diplomats in Islamabad were less outspoken than the dissidents, but they too were unhappy over differences between administration pronouncements in Washington and the instructions sent to them in private for dealing with the Yahya government. In a confidential cable to Secretary Rogers, the embassy reported "taking a hard line with the government of Pakistan" only to have these private remonstrances undermined by "public statements" about Washington's evenhanded neutrality in the crisis. 18

Kissinger, Rogers, and others heard the dissenters and even assured them the administration encouraged "internal debate," but they ignored their pleas and excluded dissidents from the policymaking process. 19 They turned instead to advisors such as Joseph Farland, the American ambassador to Islamabad. Farland, a one-time agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation was in 1971 an influential diplomat and an experienced intelligence operative. 20 By the time of the crisis in East Pakistan, he had developed "an extra-ordinary relationship" with Yahya Khan, and strongly supported the Nixon-Kissinger handling of American relations with Pakistan. He was one of the few people who knew about the opening to China Nixon was then making through Yahya, and he too was committed to sacrificing other things for the success of the China policy. He therefore opposed the Awami League and its autonomist movement, and dismissed reports of "army excesses" in East Pakistan as Indian press exaggerations. 21 The reports Farland sent from Islamabad were thus the opposite of those coming to Washington from the consulate in Dhaka, and not unexpectedly, the White House accepted the advice it wanted to hear just as it rejected that which it did not want to hear. 22
While Farland's influence grew, that of Archer Blood, the most strategically-based critic of administration policy, was eclipsed altogether after he signed the aforementioned protest. At Nixon's expressed direction, Blood was transferred from Dhaka to a routine job in the State Department, where he became "an outcast in the eyes of Nixon and Kissinger while something of a hero in the eyes of the professional diplomatic establishment." Blood was replaced at the consulate in Dhaka by a soon-to-retire career foreign service officer whom White House officials considered an organization man who would not make waves. Some of the lesser foreign service officers who signed the petition criticizing American policy were also transferred, and though Ambassador Keating was not dismissed from his position in New Delhi, he was made aware of the President's displeasure with his criticisms of American policy. According to Kissinger, Nixon ridiculed Keating for having been "taken over by the Indians." With their critics in the State Department thus silenced, Richard Nixon and his national security advisor Henry Kissinger assumed full control of American policymaking toward South Asia by the end of April. They worked mostly in secret and almost exclusively through the National Security Council and its agencies, especially the Washington Special Action Group (WSAG), chaired by Kissinger. In doing so, they ignored the now open opposition to their policies in Congress, the media, and public opinion generally, and the less open, but nearly unanimous, opposition of the State Department bureaucracy as well. "On no issue—except perhaps Cambodia," Kissinger later reported, "was the split between the White House and the departments so profound as on the Indo-Pak crisis in the summer of 1971. On no other problem was there
such flagrant disregard of unambiguous Presidential directives."\(^{25}\)

Even after Nixon and Kissinger assumed direction of American policy toward Pakistan, their problems with the State Department remained. The Department continued to act "on its own to preempt the decisions," they complained, and its statements on the crisis did not accurately reflect administration intentions. A staff member of the National Security Council warned Kissinger that the Department "was moving from a posture of detachment to one of dissociation from the Pakistan government." One reason Kissinger gave credence to this warning was the fact that the embargo on arms sales to Pakistan, which the State Department had announced as soon as the army acted in the East, had, in Kissinger's words, been announced "without clearance from the White House."

Throughout April, Kissinger's major task was, again in his own words, "to get control of the governmental process, with two objectives; to preserve the channel to Peking and to preserve the possibility of a political solution in Pakistan.... The preemption of Presidential prerogatives goes far to explain Nixon's (and my) attitude later that year."\(^{26}\)

Later, in meetings of WNSAG and other groups during the crisis that developed after India intervened in East Pakistan, Kissinger repeatedly reproached some of the participants for their failure to carry out clearly defined presidential directives and desires.\(^{27}\) Such failure helps to explain why Nixon and Kissinger removed some of the American diplomats from South Asia. The difficulties Nixon and Kissinger had in getting their directives implemented were compounded by the bureaucratic structure of the State Department. There, the agency with jurisdiction over the crisis was the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs. As
its name suggests, the bureau was a hybrid, with responsibility for two areas that had little in common except geographical proximity. Moreover, the bureau was in the hands of Middle Eastern experts, who knew little about South Asia and who gave most of their attention to the Middle East. Thus, Joseph Sisco, the Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asian Affairs in 1971, was a veteran diplomat with extensive service in the Middle East but not in South Asia, and this fact limited his usefulness in the Bengali crisis.

Further complicating the ability of the bureaucracy to deal with the crisis was Nixon’s decision at the outset of his presidency to bypass the State Department on matters he considered sensitive or important, and center control of those matters in the White House. There, within the National Security Council, Nixon and Kissinger created what amounted to an alternative ministry of foreign affairs. I. M. Destler has summarized the system as it related to regional affairs as follows:

To support the NSC and strengthen central management of foreign policy issues, a network of general inter-agency committees were established. The Johnson administration’s IRA’s [Interdepartmental Groups], with State’s Assistant Secretaries remaining as Chairmen... These State-chaired groups reported... to the Kissinger-chaired NSC Review group.... Another change was that the main role of the regional groups was not operational coordination... but overseeing the preparation of NSC policy papers. These were then examined by the Review groups.... After appropriate revision, the most important papers were presented to the President and the National Security Council.\(^{28}\)

This system involved many people in the bureaucracy in the preparatory stages of policymaking but excluded them from crucial levels of decision-making.\(^{29}\) A number of officials in the South Asia bureau, for example, participated in the policy studies called for in National
Security Study Memorandums (NSSMs) on South Asia. On November 9, 1970, Kissinger promulgated NSSM 104, which called for "an assessment of possible Soviet naval threats to U.S. interests in the Indian Ocean area and the development of friendly naval force and basing alternatives consistent with varying judgements about possible threats and interests over the 1971-1975 period." Thus began the Nixon administration's planning of long-term American policy toward South Asia. While Defense Department officials studied military and naval aspects of the subject, as directed by NSSM 104, other groups in the State Department and National Security Council, in response to NSSMs 109, 110, and 113, explored political, economic, and other aspects of future policy, including contingency plans in a number of areas. Among the results of their work was a "Contingency Study" on East Pakistan secession.30

The preparation of these studies, as Alexander George has noted, reflected the limited role that Henry Kissinger's bureaucratic organization assigned the bureaus and bureau heads in the State Department. Simply put, the input of these agencies and experts was restricted to the earliest stages of policymaking. The studies and recommendations they prepared went to various NSC committees chaired by Kissinger, where policy options were explored and then presented to the President by Kissinger. Thus, the State Department's chief regional experts, principally the Assistant Secretaries and their aides, whose access was to the Secretary of State and not to the White House, found themselves largely outside the decision-making process. The Interdepartmental Groups they headed functioned largely to coordinate the work assigned to them by the White House, another way in which their traditional role of policy advocacy was now limited.31
The gap between the White House and the regional bureau was further accentuated by the secretiveness surrounding the decisions and structuring of Nixon's policy toward China. The regional bureau of the State Department failed to grasp the administration's perception of the South Asian crisis in terms of American-Soviet-Chinese relations. As an organization, the State Department had no knowledge of the China policy nor any idea of the White House's view of the role and relationship that South Asia had in that policy. As a result, State Department officials made recommendations concerning American policy in South Asia without any idea of the administration's actual concerns. Kissinger has written:

The problem was accentuated by the anomaly that some long-forgotten State Department organization had placed the subcontinent in the Near East Bureau, whose jurisdiction ended at the subcontinent's eastern boundary; it excluded East Asia and any consideration of China. Senior officials who might have been conscious of China's concerns had been excluded from the opening to Peking. Hence, there was no one at State who felt fully responsible for the 'China account' or even fully understood its rationale—this was one of the prices paid for our unorthodox method of administration. In interagency debates my office was not frequently accused of an obsession with protecting the trip to China.... Because of this reason, not a single bureaucratic analysis of India-Pakistan during this period seriously addressed the impact of our conduct on China.32

Still further complicating this system as it relates to South Asia was direct presidential involvement in the decision-making process, which was intermittent and crisis-oriented. This posed several problems. The President intervened in policymaking without always bothering to coordinate his decisions with responsible officials or reconciling the decisions with existing short and long term goals. In 1970, for example, at Nixon's instigation, the administration made the
"one-time exception," earlier discussed, to the standing policy of embargoing the sale of military equipment to Pakistan, with serious repercussions on its relations with India. Although the administration justified the sale as an attempt to counter Pakistan's growing dependence on China, the decision hardly fit into its overall South Asian policy. Again, it was presidential intervention that led to the tilt toward Pakistan and the consequent antagonism of India, and the President also dictated the policy of neutrality toward Pakistan's actions against the Bengali dissidents despite recommendations to the contrary by officials on the scene and in the face of world wide protest.

More important, policy formulation and execution suffered from the secretive nature of Nixon's approach to government. The problems this created stemmed from the fact that the foreign affairs bureaucracy was never sure of the President's intentions or of the extent of his interests in a given matter. It is one thing to make policy when the President's position is known, as Morton Halperin has noted, but it is quite something else to do so when "the degree of Presidential involvement" is unclear. During the 1971 crisis, Nixon was explicit about Pakistan being "something that he cares a great deal about." Yet, the nature of his concern was unclear to most of the interested officials, and they could not therefore reconcile it with the nation's long-term interests in South Asia. As one official commented, "the problem was not the fact that policy was made in response to a crisis.... The problem was that these particular policies did not really provide any direction." Kissinger himself has admitted that "the handling of the India-Pakistan crisis reflected deep divisions
within our government that were compounded by Nixon's indirection in conveying his views.35

The South Asian crisis brought these discontinuities in policy formulation to the surface. Without proper access to Nixon and Kissinger, officials at the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs felt isolated and frustrated. In varying degrees all of those in the South Asia section were critical of Nixon's policy, especially the reluctance to pressure the Pakistan government to stop its military repression in the East. According to one of these officials, there was "an orgy of second guessing in the Bureau as those of us at the time sought some rationale for the South Asian policy. I have never had the feeling of isolation from the logic of policy as bad as then."36

This problem too had its personal dimensions, not the least of which was the personality clash between Henry Kissinger and Secretary of State William Rogers. According to Kissinger:

Unfortunately—to the credit of neither of us—my relations with Rogers had deteriorated to the point that they exacerbated our policy differences and endangered coherent policy. He was likely to oppose any recommendation of mine simply as an assertion of prerogative; I tried to bypass him as much as possible.37

Since Nixon took an essentially passive role in NSC meetings, those meetings served to make "explicit the philosophical differences" between Rogers and Kissinger and to aggravate their personal animosities. According to Kissinger, Nixon was unwilling to overrule his close friend Rogers in the meetings, and when policies following Kissinger's recommendations rather than decisions made in the meetings were later implemented, Rogers got the impression that Kissinger was working to
thwart the President's intentions. The result was bureaucratic stalemate. Again, according to Kissinger, "White House and State Department representatives dealt with each other as competing sovereign entities, not as members of the same team, and the President sought to have his way by an indirection that compounded the internal stresses of our government." 38

Nixon and Kissinger also faced problems from Congress. In a resolution introduced on April 15 by Senators Walter F. Mondale, a Democrat from Minnesota, and Clifford P. Case, a New Jersey Republican, the Senate called for suspension of "all American military assistance" and cancellation of "all licenses for military sales to Pakistan until the conflict in East Pakistan is resolved." 39 A number of congressmen pressed the White House and the State Department to clarify American policy and to condemn the actions of the Pakistani army. In a letter to the Secretary of State, Democratic Senators Mondale and Edmund S. Muskie of Maine joined Republicans Edward W. Brooke of Massachusetts and Mark O. Hatfield of Oregon in voicing their concern about the "recent bloodshed in East Pakistan" and criticizing the administration for in effect condoning the military action by its "official silence." 40 All such criticisms reiterated the fact that it was American arms being used by the Pakistanis against the civilian population of East Pakistan. 41

The White House responded by repeating the now familiar defense of its policies: the military equipment provided to Pakistan was in accord with the agreement of 1959; that equipment was intended for the defense of Pakistan against threats from the Soviets and Chinese; and for the latter reason it had been delivered to army units in West Pakistan only. But, the administration insisted, it could do nothing to stop the
government of Pakistan from transferring the equipment from one of its provinces to another; and to try to do so would be intrusion into that government's internal affairs. As to the Senate resolution urging a halt to all military sales to Pakistan, the administration insisted that such sales as were planned were necessary to "maintain a constructive bilateral political dialogue and to help ensure that Pakistan is not compelled to rely increasingly on other sources of supply." 42 However, to placate its critics, the administration assured Congress that no arms had been sent to Pakistan since the outbreak of the civil war and none would be sent while the crisis there continued. 43

At the end of April, the administration tried to convince Congress that the crisis was over. David M. Abshire, Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Affairs, told Congress at that time that conflict in East Pakistan had subsided as the government had succeeded in extending its control over the chief population centers and much of the countryside there. "The present official position of the government of Pakistan," Abshire stated, "is that the armed conflict in East Pakistan has actually ended and that economic rehabilitation and political accommodation are to be undertaken." He also confirmed President Yahya Khan's intention to turn over control of his government to the recently elected National Assembly as soon as possible. The stern measures advocated by administration critics would be counterproductive in the improving situation, Abshire concluded. 44 Despite such assurances, however, the administration continued to reduce the number of American civilians in East Pakistan, but insisted this was a "normal thinning out" instead of an "evacuation." 45

Nor would the administration cut off economic aid to Pakistan or try
to use aid to influence domestic policies in that country. "We have to be careful to avoid interfering in the domestic concerns of others just as we would not want them to interfere in ours," an administration spokesman told Congress blandly. Any attempt to use aid to gain leverage in Pakistan's domestic affairs, he said, would put at risk the present relationships between the two governments, which includes Pakistan's support for America's Cold War policies. Should a break occur, the current efforts to get Yahya to normalize the situation in East Pakistan would come to naught.

Concern on the latter point grew out of White House fears that the civil strife in East Pakistan could develop into an international crisis that threatened regional stability and America's national interests in the subcontinent. Yet because of Yahya's role in the China opening, the Pakistani leader was more or less immune from public criticism or private pressure by the administration. Washington adopted a two-fold strategy to deal with this growing dilemma. While privately urging Yahya's government to defuse the tension, outwardly Washington stressed its own humanitarian aid program, which now assumed sizable proportions. The hope was to use aid to restore normalcy in East Pakistan and thereby defuse the threatening international crisis and deflect the criticism of its policies in the media and Congress.

The administration understood quite early that West Pakistan's control over the eastern province could not be maintained indefinitely, and that as time passed Congress would restrict the scope of American support for Yahya's government. Thus, Washington pressed Islamabad to permit international relief agencies to undertake a major effort to relieve the suffering in East Pakistan. On April 1, U Thant, Secretary
General of the United Nations, offered to oversee such an effort and urged that his offer be accepted immediately. While affirming that the situation in East Pakistan fell within "the domestic jurisdiction of Pakistan under Article 2(7) of the UN Charter," the Secretary General told Yahya that the United Nations relief agencies "have a most useful role to play, within the context of your government, in providing emergency assistance." His offer, he assured Yahya, was "prompted purely by humanitarian considerations." 47

At this time, the Pakistani government was consolidating its position in East Pakistan through continued actions by the army, and had no desire to have outsiders watching the army in action. The regime thus responded unfavorably to the Secretary General's offer. 48 This upset Washington, which had Secretary Rogers urge U Thant to renew his offer while privately urging Islamabad to accept it. 49

At length, Washington's efforts succeeded, and on May 3 Yahya announced he would welcome a UN relief program in East Pakistan. 50 This reversal was due in part to Pakistan's dependence on American military and economic aid and to Yahya's unwillingness to go too far in offending Washington. But more importantly, the situation in East Pakistan had changed. By the beginning of May the army had completed its operation and consolidated its position in the East, and there was much less to fear from outside relief agencies. In addition, the presence of UN agencies and officials might discourage Indian meddling in East Pakistan, and the relief programs themselves might help the regime regain the confidence of the Bengali people.

This reference to Indian "meddling" reflects a growing concern in both Islamabad and Washington. As soon as the army launched its
operations against them, masses of Bengali refugees fled into India. The concern India voiced over what at once became an immense burden led Pakistani officials to issue a series of diplomatic protests against Indian "interference" in Pakistan's "internal affairs." The military regime hoped the protests would remind international opinion that the situation in East Pakistan was an internal matter and thereby discourage talk in India of intervening in that situation.

India had been too deeply immersed in its own affairs in the winter of 1970-71 to grasp at once the full meaning of what was happening in East Pakistan. Preoccupied with a parliamentary election campaign, neither the people nor the government gave the rapidly unfolding events across the border the attention they deserved. As a result, Indian leaders did not realize beforehand that Pakistan would suppress the Bengali movement, or that the ruthlessness of its suppression would drive millions of Bengalis across the border and thereby create a major problem for India. The government therefore took no action to ward off either development. The expectation among Indian leaders was that the military regime and the Awami League would reach some form of compromise, and that the situation posed no problems for India. In fact, India faced secessionist problems of its own, in Assam, where Nagas and Mizos were demanding independence, and in West Bengal, where Marxist guerrillas were creating disturbances. Both areas were near the East Pakistan border, and any Indian encouragement of secession in East Pakistan might reverberate in its own rebellious states. Thus, when the crisis began in East Pakistan, the Indian government remained neutral, officially encouraging compromise between Yahya and the Awami League. It had no developed plans for dealing with the sudden flood of refugees
or using the refugee problem for any diplomatic or other purpose.

The sheer size of the refugee influx, however, forced India to act, for the government found itself facing an enormous burden which it had no means of controlling. The increasing numbers of refugees not only taxed India's limited resources but also created problems of law and order in the already turbulent state of West Bengal, into which vast number of refugees flocked. The international ramifications of the problem thus became immediately apparent. The Indian government importuned the United States to pressure Pakistan to do whatever was necessary to halt the flow of refugees, and its importunings were reinforced by the Indian belief that Pakistan was dependent on the United States for arms and other forms of aid and thus subject to pressure from Washington. This belief encouraged the view in India that it was Washington's ultimate responsibility to prevent genocide in East Pakistan. Washington's policy of inaction was thus not only disappointing to Indian leaders but suspect as well.

Once they understood what was happening, Indian leaders were under no illusions about the outcome of events in East Pakistan if those events were allowed to run their natural course. By the last week of April, the Pakistan army had control of the major towns and had undertaken a thrust into areas along the Indian border to deny armed Bengali rebels sanctuary in a potentially friendly country. The army's victory in the towns had unleashed a sporadic guerrilla war in the countryside that promised to be prolonged, and the Indian government feared this would destabilize a region in India itself now burdened by millions of refugees and even threaten New Delhi's control of that area. And as if to confirm Mrs. Gandhi's worst fears on both of these points,
Marxist insurgents in West Bengal now acknowledged the fact of a "people's war" in East Pakistan and promised that that war would be a long one. An indefinite continuation of the East Pakistan crisis would thus, or so New Delhi feared, increase Marxist influence among the insurgents, and eventually render Sheikh Mujib's centrist leadership in East Pakistan irrelevant. In view of the dissident activity in Assam, New Delhi's alarm at such a prospect is understandable.

Mrs. Gandhi thus acted to enable her government to influence events. She had Parliament pass a resolution expressing sympathy and support for the people of East Pakistan, a sentiment that guided Indian policy for the duration of the crisis. She also permitted establishment of a Bangladesh government-in-exile in India as well as camps for training East Pakistani guerrillas. Her government then began to insist that the situation in East Pakistan was no longer an internal affair of the Islamabad regime because the refugee problem had become a pressing concern of India. Since Pakistan had created the problem, Mrs. Gandhi insisted, that nation must resolve it, which meant acting at once to insure the safe return of all refugees to their homeland. She also specifically demanded "credible guarantees for the future safety and well being of the refugees" when they returned to East Pakistan. This meant among other things that the demands of the Awami League and the results of the National Assembly elections would have to be honored.

To support this demand, India turned to the international community; but the response from Washington at least was negative. The White House misunderstood the dynamics behind the Indian demand, and saw in it an attempt to fish in troubled waters. Nixon and Kissinger believed that a sympathetic response on their part to the Indian initiative would
enhance not alleviate tensions in South Asia; it might also, they feared, jeopardize the efforts then underway to secure Soviet and Chinese acquiescence in plans to achieve a "decent interval" between American withdrawal from South Vietnam and occupation of that country by North Vietnam. Mrs. Gandhi's demands concerning the Bengali dissidents threatened that objective, or so the White House believed, and as a consequence Indo-American relations deteriorated.

India thus turned to the Soviet Union. Moscow had tried to balance its relations with the two subcontinental powers ever since the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965. The Soviet mediation of that war, which resulted in the Tashkent treaty, had significantly enhanced Soviet influence in the subcontinent. Thereafter, Moscow had generally supported the Pakistani government, though it had had good words too for Mujib after his party won the National Assembly elections. As regards India, Moscow urged the government not to take precipitate action during the crisis in East Pakistan; but otherwise the Soviet position remained ambiguous.

As India waited for Soviet policies to unfold, Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny wrote Yahya Khan on April 2 on behalf of the Supreme Soviet. He urged the Pakistani leader to adopt the "most urgent measures to stop the bloodshed and repression against the population of East Pakistan" and "to turn to methods of a peaceful settlement." He also expressed Soviet concern for "the arrest and persecution of Mujibur Rahman and other politicians who had received such convincing support" from the people of East Pakistan in the recent general elections.

Yahya Khan responded to this advice with some acerbity on April 6. He could not, he told the Soviet President, allow "anti-national and
unpatriotic elements to destroy the country." He then accused India of creating "a dangerous precedent" by interfering in a matter of concern only to Pakistan, and asked the Soviet Union "to use her undeniable influence with India to prevent her from meddling in Pakistan's internal affairs." 51 Yahya's intransigent response put Moscow in an embarrassing position. It jeopardized the decade-long effort of the Soviets to develop better relations with Islamabad; and thus in mid-April another message from Moscow, signed by Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin, assured Yahya that Moscow did not intend to take sides in the dispute. 62

Although Podgorny's advice to Yahya had pleased New Delhi, particularly its references to "repression" in East Pakistan, subsequent signals from Moscow struck a more neutral tone, and thus distressed India. This ambivalence on the part of the Soviets reflected two concerns. First, the Soviets wanted to defer any definite response to the crisis until they were sure of China's intentions; and second, they wanted to avoid giving offense to the Muslim Middle East, with which Moscow had developed close ties and which supported Pakistan strongly. Thus, Kremlin leaders avoided any talk of an independent Bengali state and supported instead a political settlement acceptable to the whole of Pakistan. The Soviet press was therefore slow to condemn the army's massacre in East Pakistan.

Moscow's concern to maintain Pakistan's unity grew out of Soviet uncertainty over the consequences of partition. Partition, Kremlin leaders feared, would undermine the stability of the subcontinent, thereby enlarging China's "capacity for mischief" while diminishing their own influence in Pakistan. 64 At this early stage, then, Soviet and Indian policy tended to converge. Neither country at this point
supported an independent East Pakistan, and both were apprehensive of Chinese intentions. But unlike the Soviets, the Indians had to deal with the rising tide of refugees, and they were determined not to let Yahya solve his problems at India's expense.

The Bangladesh crisis put the Chinese government too in an uncomfortable position, though the ultimate motives behind China's actions are unclear. According to one view, ideology demanded that the Chinese support the Bengali movement of national liberation, but the realities of international politics dictated that the People's Republic work to preserve a united Pakistan as a counterpoise to Indian and Soviet strength and influence on China's southern flank. In the end, consideration of realpolitik determined the policies of the People's Republic. The Chinese cast ideological considerations aside and supported Pakistan as the best means of safeguarding their interests and influence in South Asia. A second view of China's actions holds that the Chinese were not so much opposed to Bengali liberation as they were fearful of "Indian expansionism" backed by "Soviet Social Imperialism," the two forces that eventually came to support the Bengali struggle.

This second view hinges on Chinese perceptions of the Bengali struggle as a "counter-revolutionary" effort by bourgeois leaders to exploit the "nationality question in East Pakistan" in order to fulfill bourgeois narrow class interests with the help of "reactionary and revisionist" external backers.

These two views of Chinese motives are not mutually exclusive, are inter-related, for the second is a corollary to the first. China's perception of its national interest required supporting the military regime rather than the Bengalis, but such support had to be
reconciled with Chinese ideology and commitments to Third World liberation movements. This reconciliation was accomplished by interpreting the Bengali movement as bourgeois, reactionary, and imposed from the outside, rather than proletarian, progressive, and a product of indigenous struggle.

Such mental gymnastics grew out of China's changing perception of the world in the late 1960's and early 70's. The split with the Soviet Union had produced an intense rivalry between the two communist powers in the Third World. In South Asia, this led to an adverse relationship of China with India, which, "assisted and backed by the Soviet Union," was extending its influence there. To check Indian and Soviet expansionism, China had turned to Pakistan, with which China already had close relations by 1971. It also meant a gradual relaxing of Chinese attitudes toward the United States, a country which was not only on friendly terms with Pakistan but potentially a counterpoise of great weight against India and the Soviet Union in South Asia.

Despite these considerations, People's Republic of China did not react immediately to the army action in East Pakistan. Through March and early April, both government and media in Beijing maintained a strict silence on the subject, and China's attitude remained very much unclear. In London, there were unconfirmed reports that "Pakistani civilian and military aircraft banned from using any Indian airspace have been flying the northern route from West Pakistan over China to East Pakistan." The German Press Agency, DPA, reported on March 31, 1971, that "the Chinese press has not once commented on the situation in East Bengal.... Chinese diplomats, asked to comment, limit themselves to stating that the issue was an internal affair of Pakistan and China
did not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries." 68

This silence, which was due to disagreement and therefore indecision on the part of Chinese leaders on how best to deal with the situation, was not broken until April 4. On that day the Chinese press, in a largely noncommittal story, reported Yahya Khan's action in East Pakistan and quoted his statement blaming "secessionist elements" there for causing the crisis. 69 Three days later, the press noted a Chinese protest to India against a demonstration by Indians on March 29 in front of the Chinese embassy in New Delhi. "While flagrantly interfering in the internal affairs of Pakistan," the protest read, "the Indian government has gone so far as to connive at the wilful trouble-making by the Indians in front of the Chinese embassy." 70 As this wording suggests, China's concern was not so much East Pakistan and the crisis there as the fear that India might use the crisis to its own advantage.

Beijing's apprehensions on this point emerged clearly in its first official reaction to the crisis, which appeared in the People's Daily on April 11, 1971. The article made no comment on the crisis itself but attacked the Indian government for "open interference in the internal matters of Pakistan." It was also highly critical of the attitude of the Soviet Union as expressed in President Nikolai Podgorny's letter of April 2 to Yahya Khan. "In his message," the People's Daily reported, "Podgorny made no mention of the threat posed by the Indian reactionaries to Pakistan, but on the contrary, impudently criticized the Pakistan government." The article concluded with a pledge of "resolute" Chinese support to the "Pakistan government and the people in their struggle for safeguarding national independence and state sovereignty against foreign aggression and interference." 71
On April 12, Premier Zhou Enlai reiterated these views in a response to Yahya Khan's "frantic appeal to Peking for support as a counterbalance to Moscow's support to India." The Chinese leader repeated his government's concern about threats to the continued unity of Pakistan, and expressed hope that "Pakistan [would] certainly be restored to normalcy," for "the unity of the people of East and West Pakistan are basic guarantees for Pakistan to attain prosperity and strength."  

For seven months after these expressions of support for Yahya's government, the Chinese leadership remained silent on the issues involved in the crisis. The visit to Beijing in April of Pakistan's Air Commodore Kamal Ahmed produced no new statement of Chinese views nor a new Sino-Pakistani treaty either, although the People's Liberation Army's Airforce Commander Wu Faxian and other Chinese military leaders met with the visiting Pakistani military delegation. As tension escalated during the summer months, the Beijing press too remained largely silent on the issue. With a power struggle taking place at the top of the Chinese hierarchy, the government had little time for Pakistan's problems.  

Thus, for some months, the various interested governments reacted to the crisis according to their respective views of their own geo-political interests. During this period, none of the governments wanted the crisis to escalate, and none of them supported division of Pakistan into two separate nations. Differences of ideology and of geo-political interests, however divided the governments, and they could not act together to contain and end the crisis. That might have been impossible even if they had acted jointly, because the dynamic factor in
the crisis was not superpower self-interest but revolutionary nationalism on the part of Bengali people. If the Bengalis could keep their movement alive, sooner or later the conflicting concerns of the outside powers might—would almost certainly—cause one or more of those powers to intervene in their interest. Their chief hope lay in India; and the instruments they used to get that nation to act were the early success of the guerilla movement, which encouraged India to see in the crisis a means of dismembering Pakistan, and flooding West Bengal with refugees, which created an intolerable problem for the New Delhi government, and finally forced it to act.
CHAPTER III—NOTES


2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. See for example, John E. Woodruff, "Pakistan is Exterminating the Bengalis," Baltimore Sun, 4 April 1971; and Senator Edmund S. Muskie to Mrs. Edgar F. Rohde, 30 April 1971, Basic Documents, 13:479.

6. See for example Senator Fred H. Harris to Secretary of State William Rogers, 1 April 1971, Basic Documents, 13:280.


9. Ibid.


16. Ibid.


19. Ibid.
21 Anderson Papers, pp. 220-23.
22 Ibid.
24 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 854.
25 Ibid., pp. 863-64.
26 Ibid., p. 854.
27 See text of the WSH meeting, 4 December 1971, Basic Documents, 13:253.
32 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 865.
35 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 917.
37 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 900.
38 Ibid., p. 887.
39 For Senate Concurrent Resolution 21, 15 April 1971, See Basic Documents, 13:287-88. For the House of Representatives Concurrent Resolution 303, 17 May 1971, see ibid., :317.
40 Ibid., 283-85.

41 "The Need to Clarify the Pakistan Question," 7 April 1971, Congressional Record, 117:10132-33.

42 Suspension of Military Assistance to Pakistan.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.


47 Pakistan Horizon 24 (1971):140.

48 Ibid.

49 Basic Documents, 14:212-13.

50 Keating's Contemporary Archives (1971), p. 24685. In a telegram to ten senators, Ambassador Aga Bilaly of Pakistan urged the senators to provide "all relief needed" and help for "restoration of means of communication" in East Pakistan. He also warned them that their statements regarding the internal situation in East Pakistan were "tantamount to the use of threats to a friendly government and interference in its internal affairs." See telegram from Ambassador Aga Bilaly, 5 May 1971, WHCF CO Pakistan 115.

51 Pakistan disputed Indian claims about the number of refugees, and issued figures much lower than the Indian estimate. Most independent observers agree Indian figures were much nearer the truth than those of the Pakistanis. For the Pakistani version, see Federal Intervention in Pakistan: Refugee Problem, Basic Documents, 7:354-60; for the Indian version, see Influx of Refugees From March 25 to December 15, 1971, ibid., 8:690-703; for a neutral version, see Report of the International Rescue Committee Emergency Mission to India for Pakistani Refugees, ibid., 8:683-89.

52 For the Pakistan government's note to the UN Secretary General, 7 April 1971, and the note to the Indian government, 10 April 1971, see Pakistan Horizon 24 (1971):18-30.

53 Times of India, 9 April 1971.

55 Bangladesh Documents, 1:672.


57 Bangladesh Documents, 1:672-75.


61 Basic Documents, 5:24-27.


63 Basic Documents, 14:906-07.


70 Ibid., 16 (16 April 1971):3.

71 Ibid.:7-8.


TO BEIJING VIA ISLAMABAD: MAY-JULY 1971

By the end of April, the army's conquest of East Pakistan was complete; but the situation there did not improve. Refugees continued to flee into India and armed rebel groups began to strike from across the Indian border. The resulting volatility evidenced among other things the failure of American policy, which centered around efforts to get Islamabad to restrain its military activities in the East and to use international humanitarian aid to normalize the situation there. By May, the White House was convinced that new initiatives were necessary to defuse the widening crisis.

Those initiatives began with urgent pleas to Yahya Khan to begin restoring civilian rule in East Pakistan. The White House realized that continued repression there precluded all chances of peace, and would in fact encourage active intervention by India, which was already providing the Bangladesh government-in-exile with moral and material support. The danger of another Indo-Pakistani war was clear and present, and apparent to every one; and coming just as Kissinger was completing preparations for his secret trip to Beijing via Islamabad, the prospects of such a war were doubly unwelcome in Washington.

In a memorandum of April 19, Kissinger informed Nixon that the Pakistani government conceded the need to provide greater autonomy to the people of East Pakistan. Kissinger, however, believed that India's ongoing assistance to the Bengali rebels made the implementation of that concession impossible. India, he feared, by arming and training the rebels, hoped to keep the resistance movement alive and thus prolong the
East Pakistan crisis at the expense of Islamabad and Washington. 2

Kissinger's fears increased when, on May 18, Mrs. Gandhi publicly warned Pakistan that her government was "fully prepared to fight if the situation is forced on [India]." At the same time, Indian diplomats alerted Britain and France that India "may be forced to act in its national interest" in view of the flood of refugees, by then estimated to number three million. 3 White House concerns increased when intelligence reports from the subcontinent confirmed that since the end of April India had been permitting armed guerrilla groups to go into East Pakistan and return to sanctuary in India. These reports convinced Nixon and Kissinger that Mrs. Gandhi did not seek a peaceful solution to the crisis, but hoped to use the crisis to dismember Pakistan. 4

This assessment of the situation was incomplete as well as shortsighted. Neglecting the moral dimensions of the crisis in the interest of larger geo-political concerns, White House analysts also ignored the regional aspects of the situation, specifically the problems created for India by the repressive acts of the Pakistani government. It was not that the White House supported Yahya Khan's government out of sympathy for its military action in East Pakistan but that Yahya's assistance was just then needed to help Nixon and Kissinger accomplish something they thought was in the nation's best interest. This blinded them to the "lesser" aspects of the crisis.

In pursuing their goals, however, the two leaders in the White House still met resistance in the State Department. As the situation had deteriorated in East Pakistan, the State Department worked to disassociate the United States from the actions of the Pakistani army and government in the East. Kissinger, however, used his control of
policy formulation in the White House to neutralize this effort. On April 19, he got the SRG to agree that recent State Department actions limiting military and economic assistance to Pakistan were "interim decisions, which required formal approval of the President." Since Nixon generally followed Kissinger's recommendations on such things because the two men agreed on strategic matters, this in effect gave Kissinger control over whether these actions by State would be scuttled or not.

When Kissinger laid the State Department actions before Nixon, he repeated his characterization of them as "unauthorized," but recommended that the President ratify them anyway. This recommendation was the result not of any desire on Kissinger's part to bridle the army in East Pakistan or to placate the State Department, but of the need he perceived to respond to congressional and other public criticism of administration policy. At the same time, he insisted on continuing economic aid to Pakistan in order to induce Yahya Khan to end the civil war and begin the process of establishing "East Pakistani autonomy." These steps, Kissinger believed, would deprive India of every excuse for intervening in the crisis, and thus prevent it from achieving its objectives. Nixon approved Kissinger's recommendations, and instructed the State Department not to "squeeze Yahya at this time." The disagreement between the two sources of American policy formulation was now clear, and widely recognized.

Both sources, however, wanted to defuse the crisis, which now threatened to get out of hand. Behind the scene, Washington pressed both New Delhi and Islamabad to exercise restraint. "We have suggested privately to both governments," an administration official announced on
May 27, "that they abstain from any action or statements which might have an unfortunate impact on the subcontinent." There were several reasons for this stance. As the allusion to private suggestions indicates, the administration still insisted that the civil war was an internal affair of Pakistan and thus not a proper cause for pressing Yahya and his government. But, in deference to growing public disaffection from administration policy, it also implied a behind-the-scene effort to pressure Islamabad to moderate its actions in the East and act to defuse the crisis. By insisting that Pakistan as well as India behave moderately and responsibly, the White House hoped to create an appearance of its own impartiality in weighing the competing claims of the two countries. Above all, the White House endeavored to assure its critics that the United States was working assiduously to insure that the situation did not deteriorate into open hostilities between India and Pakistan. Behind these public appearances, however, there was little substance, for the administration adamantly refused to do any of the things that might have caused Yahya to make fundamental changes in his course of action.

To allay the threat of war, the administration worked to enlarge the United Nation's presence in East Pakistan. This, it was hoped, would appease domestic critics while also encouraging both India and Pakistan to refrain from initiating hostilities lest the one that did so jeopardize its position in world opinion. It might likewise allow the Pakistan government time to consolidate its position in the East without Indian interference. "While the UN cannot intervene in the political aspects of this situation," an administration spokesman said, "its participation in the humanitarian relief efforts ... in East Pakistan
... could be helpful in promoting peace and conciliation in the area.\textsuperscript{7}

The increasing White House pressure on Yahya Khan had some effect. By late Spring, Yahya recognized that a completely military solution to the crisis was no longer possible. International opinion had turned against his government, and continued repression in the East embarrassed the United States, Yahya's chief military, diplomatic and economic benefactor. Yahya recognized Nixon's sympathy for Pakistan, and he also understood the constraints placed on Nixon's actions by public opinion. He therefore sought to appease American opinion and in this way enable the White House to more openly support him and his government. In a press conference in Karachi, in early May, he announced his intention to turn over power to the National Assembly elected in December, and to do so as soon as possible. He also welcomed assistance through the United Nations in solving the problem in the East, and offered amnesty to all refugees who would return to their homeland.\textsuperscript{8} He did not, however, offer to accept the Awami League program or even to recognize that program as a basis for compromise.

Late in May, Nixon wrote to both Yahya and Indira Gandhi regarding the situation in East Pakistan. To Yahya, he said:

\begin{quote}
I am sure you will agree with me that the first essential step is to bring an end to the civil strife and restore peaceful conditions in East Pakistan.... I believe it is absolutely vital for the maintenance of peace in the Subcontinent to restore conditions in East Pakistan conducive to the return of refugees from Indian territory as quickly as possible.... It is only in a peaceful atmosphere that you and your administration can make effective progress toward the political accommodation you seek in East Pakistan.\textsuperscript{9}
\end{quote}

It is clear that Nixon wanted Yahya to compromise with the Bengalis, for he feared that India would use the crisis to alter permanently the
balance of power in the region. Thus, he wrote Mrs. Gandhi:

"I am deeply concerned that the present situation not develop into a more widespread conflict in South Asia, either as a result of the refugee flow or through actions which might escalate the insurgency which may be developing in East Pakistan.... We have been impressed by the vitality of Indian democracy and the strength of purpose which your government has shown in meeting its complex social and economic problems.... India's friends would be dismayed were this progress to be interrupted by war."  

This letter was a veiled warning that Nixon would hold India responsible for any escalation of the guerrilla war. Furthermore, Nixon intimated that should war break out the United States might impose economic sanctions on India by discontinuing all aid to Mrs. Gandhi's government. Although his letters to Yahya and to Mrs. Gandhi were ostensibly evenhanded, Nixon continued privately to lean toward Pakistan. As Kissinger later admitted to T. N. Kaul, "the letter to Yahya was not exactly strong; it reflected our need for Yahya as a channel to Peking."  

The two letters make it clear that the White House did not grasp the full significance of the refugee problem or recognise that any peaceful solution to that problem would have to come largely from Pakistan. Nor did it understand that New Delhi had provoked the now continuing disturbances on the East Pakistani border caused by the guerrillas to pressure Yahya Khan's military regime to come to terms with Sheikh Mujib's Awami League. Only an agreement acceptable to the League would solve the problem of the refugees and restore stability along the border. But the United States put more pressure on India to prevent its intervention in the East than it did on Islamabad to compromise with what amounted to the duly elected government of the Pakistani people.
Nonetheless, the pressure now being exerted on Islamabad did represent a change in Washington's initial policy of non-interference in Pakistan's internal affairs. Because the White House believed so strongly that war would destabilize the region to India's gain, and perhaps even trigger Soviet and Chinese intervention, it felt obliged to drop the earlier policy. Joseph Sisco cogently summarized the administration's policy after the change. Sisco told a press conference in June, that the United States supported international efforts to provide "humanitarian relief assistance to the people of East Pakistan" and "to the refugees in India." He also said that in view of the imminent danger of war, the United States had "counseled restraint on both sides." In addition, Sisco announced, Washington believed that "political accommodation in East Pakistan [was] important both to stem the flow of refugees and to create conditions in East Pakistan conducive to their return." Finally, he added, the United States would provide additional relief assistance if requested to do so.

Although this new stance acknowledged the existence of "civil strife" in Pakistan, it failed to specify its cause or to endorse the political rights of the Bengali majority within the Pakistani nation. Nor did it condemn the military action in East Pakistan. Thus, West Pakistani leaders felt free to continue the occupation of the East and otherwise guard their own interests through the established government. This is evident from Yahya's announcement in mid-May that Sheikh Mujib would be tried for treason. While international opinion widely condemned the announcement, the White House remained silent. When leaders of the provisional government of Bangladesh appealed directly to Nixon to use his influence "to stop this dastardly act and secure the
release of the Sheikh and his family," their appeal was ignored. The White House still hoped to effect a compromise between moderate Awami Leaguers and the military leadership of West Pakistan, and since any such compromise must exclude Mujib and other autonomists in the Awami League, Washington thought the threatened trial might be used to encourage moderates in the League to divorce themselves from proponents of Bengali independence or autonomy.

Trying delicately to balance public displeasure at their policy with the need to retain influence in Islamabad, Nixon and Kissinger felt it best to press Yahya to take incremental measures which, they hoped, would cumulatively defuse the crisis. They urged him again to replace the military government in East Pakistan with a civilian administration, one of the basic Bengali demands. They asked him too in effect to internationalize the crisis by making the relief effort in East Pakistan multilateral, as the Indian government was insisting. And, they urged him to grant a general amnesty to East Pakistanis, to include everyone not accused of treason or specific criminal acts, a move that was essential for any compromise effort. However, the White House remained silent on Sheikh Mujib's release, which was now the most immediate demand of the Awami League and the Indian government.

Islamabad bowed to the American pressure. On May 21, Yahya appealed to all refugees from East Pakistan to return to their homes, and on May 29 he renewed his appeal, this time offering full amnesty to all those who had been "genuinely misled" during the crisis. He also promised that all returning refugees would receive relief, rehabilitation assistance, and full protection of the law. Toward these ends, his government announced on June 1 the establishment of twenty
relief and rehabilitation centers on the main routes from India into East Pakistan; and on June 10, the Martial Law Administrator of East Pakistan repeated the pledge of a general amnesty for everyone not charged with treason.

In mid-June, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and Ismat Kitani, special representative of United Nations Secretary-General U Thant, visited Pakistan and received public assurances that the Islamabad government would cooperate fully in the repatriation of refugees. Immediately thereafter, under direction of another representative of the Secretary General, El Tawil, the relief and repatriation efforts began. On June 19, Yahya renewed his appeal to the refugees, especially members of the Hindu minority in East Pakistan, to return to their homes and reclaim their property.

Yahya capped this show of conciliation with an announcement on June 28, that civilian government under a new constitution would be restored to the country within four months. The new constitution, he promised, would guarantee maximum provincial autonomy consistent with the national and territorial integrity of Pakistan, and until it was implemented the refugee assistance program would continue under the United Nations auspices on his side of the East Pakistan-Indian border.

While the military regime was now talking of compromise and reconciliation, India soon concluded that the whole thing was little more than an attempt to deny India and the Awami League any voice in the settlement of the crisis in East Pakistan. Indian leaders insisted that the crisis there was international and involved India and Bangladesh as well as Pakistan, and that no solution would be binding that did not
have the support of the East Pakistani majority elected to the National Assembly in December. These concerns were valid ones. If Yahya succeeded in restoring civilian rule in East Pakistan without the Awami League, the entire League leadership would be stripped of its support and of its claims to political legitimacy, and stranded in India as well. Since such results would aggravate India's problems, New Delhi insisted that the Awami League and its legitimate leadership be included in the negotiations of any settlement of the East Pakistani crisis. This insistence grew as it became clear that even after Yahya announced his amnesty program few refugees volunteered to return to East Pakistan.

The possibility of confrontation and of war thus increased. The United States continued to support the military regime in Pakistan, and would pressure it only so far. But even if Washington had tried to pressure Islamabad to make fundamental concessions, the government there could not have done so and survived. The Pakistani leadership was thus in no position to accept Indian demands. A political settlement acceptable to Mujib and his followers would destroy the regime's support in West Pakistan and in the army. Thus, Yahya turned to the only groups in the East who supported his policies, the small fundamentalist religious parties, and through them sought to restore civilian rule. The lack of popular support for these parties meant that no true autonomy for the East could result from the effort.

These considerations underscored the futility of Nixon and Kissinger's policy of limited pressure privately exerted on Pakistan. Of this policy, Henry Kissinger later wrote as follows:

In the case of Pakistan it seemed appropriate because its
government was an ally that, we were convinced, was bound soon to learn the futility of its course. We undertook to persuade Yahya Khan to move toward autonomy, advising him as a friend to take steps that he would almost surely have rejected had we demanded them publicly.23

Kissinger's confidence was not shared by the State Department. There, officials like Christopher Van Hollen, Joseph Sisco, John Irwin, Alexis Johnson, and Maurice Williams, who were familiar with the situation in South Asia, were more or less certain the White House strategy would not work. They felt that the American influence on Yahya was limited because the Pakistani President had little room for making concessions. The military and the fundamentalist political parties on which his position depended would never, they felt sure, voluntarily make any concession that would lead to the break up of Pakistan.24 Since that was the case, they argued that the United States could do only one thing that offered any prospect of getting Islamabad to change its course of action, and that was to stop all economic and military aid. Such a stoppage, they believed, might result in genuine progress on the political front, without which the refugees would not return, the relief program could not succeed, India would not end its support of the guerrillas, and the prospects of war would mount.25

Yahya's decision to try Mujib for treason reinforced these views in the State Department; and the chasm between the Department and the White House grew even wider. Nixon and Kissinger would do nothing that threatened the survival of the military regime, and they had no inclination to placate India. They therefore continued to ignore the staff studies and option papers sent over by the State Department as irrelevant "to the larger Nixon-Kissinger game plan."26 Yet only the
United States was in a position to bring sufficient pressure on Yahya to get him make the kinds of concessions necessary to defuse the crisis, and while Washington withheld that pressure the crisis grew.

The concessions Yahya announced in May and June were designed to placate domestic discontent and international dissatisfaction, and to some extent at least they were successful. Prior to the announcement, the army had re-established control over most of the East, and in the West, despite conflicting pressures within the army, Yahya remained firmly in control. The prospects of a political settlement based on a constitution dictated by Yahya himself in fact strengthened the possibility of a successful alliance between the army and right-wing politicians in both parts of the nation. It also improved the chances of preserving the geographical unity of the country. 27

By the end of June, Pakistan's external position appeared to improve as well. Although China's diplomatic commitments were less extensive than Islamabad had wanted and the Chinese press remained silent on the South Asian crisis, Chinese material support to Pakistan was substantial. Seeing no immediate danger of Indian intervention and thus no threat to Chinese interests, Beijing was still reluctant to take sides with the military regime against the Bengalis fighting a war of liberation. In addition, the turmoil within the communist party leadership continued, and the People's Republic was satisfied to provide Pakistan with enough military supplies to enable the regime to contain the guerrilla problem and withstand the threat from India.

Yahya's concessions also helped the Nixon administration resist congressional and other criticism of its policies, for the administration presented the concessions as initial steps to restore
democracy to Pakistan. Similarly, the concessions brought a softening of attitudes in the Soviet Union, which welcomed the decision to restore civilian rule in Pakistan. Thus, when Indian foreign minister Swaran Singh visited Moscow in June, he failed to get Soviet support for Indian actions in the crisis. Instead Moscow advised India to allow Yahya Khan sufficient time to normalize the situation in East Pakistan. 29

As the superpowers in effect marked time while they awaited the results of Yahya's reforms, the relief effort got underway. Though organized and administered through the United Nations, the program operated on terms acceptable to Islamabad. As the efforts commenced, New Delhi found itself under increasing international pressure to permit United Nations observers on its side of the border. 30 On July 19, Secretary General U Thant sent an aide-memoire to the Indian government to that effect. "Border clashes, clandestine raids, and acts of sabotage appear to be becoming more frequent," Thant told both New Delhi and Islamabad, "and this is all the more serious since the refugees must cross this disturbed border if repatriation is to become a reality." The next day in another aide-memoire the Secretary General asked the Security Council to take up the situation in East Pakistan, and attempt to reach "agreed conclusions as to measures which might be taken." 31

Islamabad welcomed Thant's proposal to post international observers on both sides of the border, hoping to use it to prevent guerrilla activities by the Mukti Bahini (the Bengali army) and to restrict Indian interference in Pakistan's internal affairs. Thant's proposal put India in an awkward position, and the two nations reversed their positions on international involvement in the Bangladesh crisis. 32 India's negative reaction to the Secretary General's proposal thus worked to Pakistan's
advantage, winning for the latter country increased international support and the prospect of greater economic assistance. Moreover, the prospect of China's imminent admission to the United Nations further brightened Pakistan's international safeguards.

It is reasonable to assume that it was Pakistan's success in these matters that led Indira Gandhi to send her foreign minister to the Western nations in mid-summer to clarify and defend her position in the crisis. In Washington, Swaran Singh met President Nixon and Secretary of State Rogers, both of whom voiced concern over the refugee problem and indicated a desire to see a political solution to the crisis. New Delhi, however, did not receive a clear picture of American intentions, although Washington assured Singh that no further shipments of military stores to Pakistan would be allowed, even under past authorization.

A few days after Swaran Singh's return to India, the American press reported that three Pakistani freighters, Padma, Sunderbans, and Kaukahla, had left New York after March 25, the day the army moved into East Pakistan, carrying military supplies, and that a fourth freighter, Kaptai, would soon leave the same port with military equipment on board. In response to queries about the shipment, senior State Department officials explained that the items came from the Defense Department's excess stocks and "were shipped as a result of confusion within the Administration as to how the three-month old ban on shipments of military equipment to Pakistan could be applied." Kissinger later defended these and similar shipments by saying that:

All the equipment in question had been purchased under licenses issued before the ban and was thus legally out of control; and
that the third freighter had sailed four days before the State
Department's suspension of licenses went into effect. . . . We
could convince no one that we simply had no mechanism to track
down the licenses already issued, nor that the amount of
'seepage' was minuscule and could affect the military balance
neither on the subcontinent nor in Bengal.37

Yet during a visit to India in July, Kissinger told Foreign
Secretary T. N. Kaul, the number-two man in the Indian foreign ministry,
that the White House had been unaware of any arms shipments to Pakistan
after the ban was imposed. The White House, he stated at that time,
"was taken as much by surprise ... as [the Indian] Foreign Minister" by
news of the shipments in the New York Times. But, he assured the
Foreign Secretary, "nothing has moved which makes any difference to the
military situation either in East Pakistan or even less to the balance
between Pakistan and India."38

News of these shipments created commotion in Congress and in the
press. In the Senate, Edward Kennedy accused the administration of
deception and "complicity" in the Pakistani military action that led to
"six million refugees and countless civilian deaths."39 Congressman
Cornelius Gallagher, a Democrat from New Jersey, also remarked, "The
current policy, which has allowed arms to continue to be shipped ... in
spite of the ban ... is bureaucratic ineptitude which will become, in my
judgment, diplomatic catastrophe."40 The New York Times was equally
outspoken:

The admission that aid is continuing ... undermines the
credibility of the United States government at home and abroad.
The public, members of the Congress and at least one vitally
interested foreign government (India) had been led to believe
that all military assistance ... would be held in abeyance
until there was a political resolution of the crisis in East
Pakistan. The exposure of this deception is likely to be
particularly damaging to United States relations with India.41
The *Times*’ revelation of the shipments was all the more important because of the history of the issue. Congress had repeatedly denounced the administration for allowing such shipments before the "brutalities in East Pakistan had ceased." Back in May, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee recommended suspension of all American aid to Pakistan and in June, the Senate passed an amendment to the International Security Assistance Act of 1971 prohibiting "all military assistance, and all sales of military equipment" to Pakistan until "the majority of the refugees in India [were] repatriated to East Pakistan." 42

Kissinger has argued that the credibility gap created by news of the arms shipments was due to the State Department’s "precipitate action" in banning the shipments without consulting the White House, and that the administration had no intention of shipping arms to Pakistan once the embargo was imposed. 43 His arguments, however, are contradicted by records from the period. The total amount of weapons shipped to Pakistan was substantial and the shipments continued after the ostensible embargo. A General Accounting Office report released on February 4, 1972, revealed that $3.8 million worth of Munitions List articles had been exported under valid licenses. In addition, as the Senate Subcommittee on Refugees learned later:

Department of Defense agencies, despite departmental directives issued in April, continued to release from their stocks spare parts for lethal end-items.... The U.S. airforce delivered to Pakistan about $563,000 worth of spare parts between March 25 and mid-July 1971 on priority basis using the Military Airlift Command. Some of these spare parts were needed to place inoperable aircraft, such as F-104's, into operable condition. 44

Furthermore, in late August administration officials discovered that
the Defense Department had signed contracts with Pakistan for military supplies worth $10.6 million after the arms embargo had been imposed. The State Department did not revoke outstanding licenses, for goods worth $3.6 million, until November 8. It was that action that finally ended the flow of arms to Pakistan.

There were several reasons for the continuing arms sales. At one level, there was a disagreement between the State Department and the Defense Department concerning spare parts. When State Department officials spoke of an arms embargo, they had in mind a complete embargo, including spare parts. The Defense Department, however, felt that countries, especially friendly ones like Pakistan, which purchased American weapons had a right to expect to be able to get spare parts for the lifetime of the weapons. At Defense, then, an embargo did not include spare parts unless that was specified, and thus the shipments to Pakistan were in that Department's view legitimate.

But there were more fundamental factors behind the continuing shipments which, as already noted, were not ended until November, 1971. Even then, Henry Kissinger questioned the wisdom of the decision in NSAG meetings, clearly indicating that supplying limited amounts of arms to Pakistan had been the United States' policy all along. The administration rationalized the policy of not revoking licenses that had already been issued by suggesting that "this would be a political sanction, and that it would not be in keeping with [the United States] efforts to maintain a political relationship with the government of Pakistan, looking toward the achievement of certain foreign policy objectives of the United States." The real reason for the continued arms shipments, then, was that the White House thought the shipments
would enable the administration to maintain leverage over Pakistan.

Several things are clear. First, despite the formal embargo, the White House was aware of the continued shipments. Second, the White House misled Congress, the public, and the Indian government regarding the actualities as well as intentions of its arms policy. Third, the continued supply of arms demonstrated White House acquiescence in if not support for the policies of the military regime. This last factor does much to explain why Islamabad felt little pressure to negotiate a genuine political settlement of the crisis.

Indian reaction to news of the arms shipment was bitter, particularly because the news came after Kissinger's assurances on the subject to Swaran Singh. The Indians had expected the flow of arms to Pakistan under the "one time exception" to be stopped once the United States became aware of the real nature of the Pakistani military activities in the East, which had been accomplished with American weapons. The revelations about the continued flow of weapons thus further poisoned Indo-American relations. New Delhi now had clear evidence that the Nixon administration would not pressure Pakistan regardless of the impact of Pakistani actions on India.

By mid-summer, then, a combination of factors produced a growing pessimism among Indian leaders. India's inability to convey to the rest of the world the seriousness of the refugee problem convinced New Delhi that there was little hope of decisive action by anyone outside India to end that problem. The Indian government thus felt compelled to change its own approach to the crisis or risk a stalemate in which the Pakistani army solidified its control over East Pakistan, Yahya continued his uncompromising attitude toward the Awami League, the flow
of refugees grew even larger and more burdensome, and the international community looked on in apathy. Vital national interests were also forcing changes in Indian policy. Indian leaders found intolerable the prospect of an indefinite occupation of East Pakistan by a repressive military force, a situation that would enable Pakistan to threaten the stability of the subcontinent whenever it pleased. With that consideration in mind Jag Jivan Ram, the Indian defense minister, told the Rajya Sabha on July 19 that "the time for a settlement within the framework of Pakistan is over." Four days later, Indira Gandhi reflected the hardening attitudes when she told the same body that her government would be concerned "only with India's interests and could not care less if [Indian] decisions alienate others." It was at this point that India began seriously contemplating the creation of an independent state in East Pakistan, a goal that explicitly required expulsion of the Pakistani army from the East and thus made war at some level a certainty.

This represented a significant evolution in Indian thinking. Even after the Pakistani army had moved into East Pakistan, India's attitude toward the Awami League, the provisional government of Bangladesh, and the guerrillas operating from Indian soil was inconsistent and makeshift. In the early months of the revolt, India had stripped the guerrillas of their heavy arms and discouraged their use of sanctuaries on Indian soil. But by the end of June, this policy was reversed and New Delhi began supporting the Awami League directly, assisting its efforts to form a provisional government and secure international recognition, and providing military assistance to the guerrillas. This enabled the guerrillas to increase their harassment of the Pakistan army
and its collaborators, and enabled India to influence the guerrilla movement or at least to prevent objectionable groups, specifically extreme leftists, from gaining ascendency among the rebels.  

There was also talk within and without the government in India that war with Pakistan would be less burdensome than the cost of absorbing some ten million refugees, the number New Delhi expected to be in the country by the end of 1971. This too encouraged India to prepare for war. In mid-summer Mrs. Gandhi instructed General Sam Manekshaw, her army chief of staff, to formulate contingency plans "for an armed action for the specific purpose of enabling the refugees to return to their homeland." She gave him four to six weeks to complete his plans.

Henry Kissinger has argued that in the summer Mrs. Gandhi prepared a plan for a lightning "Israel-type" offensive to immediately take over East Pakistan, and has claimed he had convincing evidence that by that time she had already positioned her air and ground forces with that goal in mind. But, according to Kissinger, American pressure and world opinion forced Mrs. Gandhi to drop that plan. However, the reality was more complicated than Kissinger's version of things suggests. Although India had decided to prepare for war by mid to late July, Mrs. Gandhi had not yet closed the door on negotiation. She wanted to reserve war as a last resort, not only because she had no desire for war but because her military advisors believed an attack on Pakistan at this point was too risky. They feared Chinese intervention, the possibility of other countries providing military aid to Pakistan (particularly the United States), uncertainty of resupplying the Soviet weapons on which the Indian army depended, and the possibility that West as well as East Pakistan would have to be occupied to bring the war to conclusion.
Thus, while India prepared for war, its diplomats worked actively to solve the problem peacefully. The government acted to focus world attention on the refugees and on the fact that the repressive actions of a military dictator had made them refugees. It also demanded international "guarantees" for the "future safety of the refugees," and Indian participation in an international settlement of the crisis. It made clear that the release of Mujib and his involvement in the settlement process were non-negotiable issues. It also renewed its earlier efforts to persuade Moscow and Washington to pressure Yahya to release Mujib and hand over power to him.

It is clear in retrospect that this position left little room for diplomatic maneuver. The Indian leaders knew the military regime in Islamabad would never negotiate meaningfully with Mujib and his followers, but they were insistent that without such negotiations no settlement would be acceptable to India. Furthermore, they knew that short of war American backing would enable the military regime to survive indefinitely. Their only course of action was thus war. But as a self-proclaimed champion of peace and non-violence, the Indian government could not initiate hostilities without damaging its international image, which had always been a source of Indian influence in world affairs. Thus, New Delhi undertook a calculated campaign, involving diplomatic initiatives as well as guerrilla harassment, to provoke Islamabad into a clear act of aggression against India.

Although by June, the military in Pakistan had strengthened its position at home and abroad, events quickly undermined that position. Yahya's attempts to encourage moderate elements in the Awami League to cooperate with his government had little or no effect. The Bangladesh
leadership had been deeply divided by disputes between pro-Indian, pro-American, and pro-Chinese groups, but their complete dependence upon Indian support held them together and neutralized their factional tendencies. India's increasing political and material support caused all of the factions to resist Pakistani overtures.

By this time India's help in training the guerrillas also began to bear results. The guerrillas began to make successful raids on major cities controlled by the Pakistani army, and prospects for greater success during the upcoming rainy season kept hopes alive for an early victory. The growing effort of the guerrillas further strengthened Bengali solidarity, even though it also provoked intensified repression of the civilian population by Pakistani forces. Wherever the Mukti Bahini destroyed communication, industrial, or other facilities, the army took severe action against the local population. The flow of refugees, which had fallen sharply in June, thus began to mount again by the middle of July, and the crisis intensified as the Indians expected that it would.

International opinion also began to turn against Islamabad. The World Bank's Pakistan Aid Consortium decided to terminate development aid to Pakistan when its fact-finding mission, the so-called Cargill team, issued a report strongly critical of the military regime. This decision and the report itself, in turn, affected bilateral relations between Western nations and Pakistan and the aid these nations extended to Pakistan. Thus, the British, Swedish, Dutch, and West German governments suspended aid programs in July, 1971, and in the United States congressional and public opinion moved more and more against any support for the military regime of President Yahya Khan.
Washington's refusal to join other members of the World Bank Consortium in stopping all aid to Pakistan produced another round of criticism of administration policy. Not surprisingly, the administration ignored the criticism, and focused instead on adapting its policy to the new circumstances that prompted the Cargill report. After other Western nations suspended aid to Pakistan, the administration announced that American economic and technical assistance would be withheld until a new assessment of the situation was made, "taking into account the present situation" in East Pakistan. At the same time, the administration announced that it would continue to push a previously declared program of economic assistance valued at $188 million for fiscal 1972, and that humanitarian relief for East Pakistan would be increased. One reason for this announcement was the uncertainties expressed in the Cargill report:

Just as at the time of the mission's visit all the major elements in the situation appeared to reinforce each other in making early normalization impossible to envisage, it is conceivable that a major improvement in one of them may have a snow-ball effect. Thus it is possible that the railways will function better than the mission thought likely, and that, if in addition the carrying capacity of the coastal fleets is increased considerably and the country-boats reappear, the physical constraints to recovery could be reduced considerably, and thus incentives for renewed economic activity will be strengthened to the point where psychological constraints lose some of their powers.

Uncertainties of this sort prompted the administration to announce that the United States "would not condition future economic assistance to Pakistan on a political settlement in East Pakistan." Rather, decisions to provide or withhold "development assistance would be made on the basis of development criteria." Meanwhile, the administration
recognized that resumption of "military sales on a normal basis would ... increase [the United States] influence with the martial law administration." Nevertheless, "economic aid" would not be used to acquire leverage over the Pakistani government. "By not suspending aid for political reasons," the administration said, "we stand to retain influence whereby we should be able to continue the dialogue we have had with Pakistanis—expressing our concern over developments in East Pakistan, counseling restraint, recommending a genuine political settlement reflecting the sentiments of the people and urging the cooperative implementation of an international relief program." The administration's actions again compromised these professed goals. Islamabad continued to pursue its own purposes, and before the Sino-American breakthrough occurred, Sheikh Mujib was already on trial for treason against the Pakistani nation and its people.

That breakthrough in Sino-American relations had a major impact on the subcontinental crisis, and explaining the breakthrough is necessary to understanding the crisis. When the civil war in Pakistan broke out, the United States had two channels of communication to Beijing, one through Pakistan and the other through Rumania. Of the two, the White House preferred the former because of Pakistan's closer relationship with China. Yet secret notes concerning the possibility of high level American contacts with China were sent through both channels.

In the early spring of 1971, Aga Hilaly, the Pakistani ambassador in Washington, delivered an unsigned, hand-written note to Kissinger inviting a high-level American envoy to China, and from that time Washington used the Islamabad channel alone. A number of factors contributed to this decision. First, the fact that the message had come
through Pakistan rather than Rumania suggested that the Chinese preferred to negotiate through Pakistan. Second, the visit of a high-ranking American to China via Pakistan would be easier to arrange in secret because the subcontinental crisis required the frequent presence there of high level officials, including Kissinger, to deal with the ever-changing situation. Finally, by opting for the Pakistan channel to Beijing, Nixon was offering his support for Yahya's regime. The Chinese note suggested that Kissinger or Secretary of States Rogers visit Beijing. Neither Kissinger nor Nixon wanted to bring Rogers into so delicate a matter, for in their view the Secretary had little grasp of the "geo-political stakes" involved in the opening to China.  

Early in the morning of July 9, while on an official visit to Pakistan, Kissinger affected a stomach ache, and thus freed from the inquiries of intrusive reporters went to a remote location in Pakistan where he boarded a plane to Beijing for talks with Chinese officials. Six days later, in a dramatic speech on national television, Nixon announced the results of Kissinger's visit. He himself had accepted the invitation of Premier Zhou Enlai "to visit Peking at an appropriate date," the President announced. This "action in seeking a new relationship with the People's Republic of China," Nixon was careful to add, "[would] not be at the expense of ... old friends. It is not directed against any other nation."

This assurance did little to diminish the anxiety of some world leaders, and the impact of Nixon's announcement was felt most in New Delhi and Moscow. After the announcement, the world learned for the first time of Yahya Khan's "courier role" in the several months of secret diplomacy that preceded Kissinger's visit to Beijing. To Nixon
and Kissinger, the Sino-American rapprochement was a major diplomatic triumph, and they were accordingly "grateful" to Yahya for his part in helping them accomplish it.

On his way to Pakistan and then Beijing, Henry Kissinger had stopped in New Delhi. His purpose there, he later said, was to accomplish "two partially contradictory missions." The first was to inform New Delhi that the United States was working to normalize relations with China, and second, to assure the Indian government that the United States would take seriously any "unprovoked Chinese attack on India." "If this unsolicited comment did not utterly mystify my interlocutors," Kissinger later wrote of the latter statement, "it may have given them a brief moment of encouragement—though that moment of euphoria surely ended with the July 15 announcement of my trip to China."68

Kissinger also discussed the Indo-Pakistan dispute while in New Delhi. He warned the government there that the situation along the border could erupt into a confrontation that might eventually involve even China and the Soviet Union. He emphasized the need for a peaceful settlement, and insisted that the United States was doing its part to achieve that result. He assured Mrs. Gandhi personally that the whole purpose of American policy toward Pakistan was "to retain enough influence to urge creation of conditions that would permit the refugees to go back." He also affirmed that Washington was eager to maintain good relations with India, and invited Mrs. Gandhi to visit the United States for a "fundamental review" of Indo-American relations with President Nixon.69

Kissinger later claimed that by this time Mrs. Gandhi and her ministers were not eager to solve the crisis or improve India's

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deteriorating relations with the United States. Whether or not that was true, Mrs. Gandhi for the time being ignored the invitation to Washington, accused the United States of deception regarding arms sales to Pakistan, and according to Kissinger, pressed him to cut off all military and economic aid to Pakistan. Kissinger wrote, "I left New Delhi with the conviction that India was bent on a showdown with Pakistan. It was only waiting for the right moment. The opportunity to settle scores with a rival that had isolated itself by its own shortsightedness was simply too tempting."  

Kissinger's assertions have not gone unchallenged. T. N. Kaul, the Indian foreign secretary, has provided a different version of the New Delhi meetings. According to Kaul, Kissinger gave no hint of American efforts to improve relations with China, and instead pressed Indian leaders to stop the guerrilla movement and encourage the refugees to return to East Pakistan. He also told them, according to Kaul, that the crisis had now become an Indo-Pakistan problem rather than a Bengali independence movement, and made vague promises that on his return to Washington he would work for a political settlement of the problem.

Kaul's version of the meeting seems nearer the truth than Kissinger's. The White House kept the China policy so secret that it is extremely unlikely that Kissinger would even hint at it in New Delhi before the fact, particularly since he considered India a friend of the Soviet Union and an enemy of China. Moreover, Kaul's version of Kissinger's view of the Indo-Pakistan problem is more in line with White House actions in the months preceding the New Delhi visit than is Kissinger's. It also seems evident that the Indian leaders rejected Kissinger's proposals concerning that problem not because they wanted
war but because they considered the proposals unsuitable. Furthermore, Kissinger's handling of the matter of arms shipments to Pakistan had destroyed all bases for trust between India and the United States, and the Indians would make no commitments to a man they considered so partial to Pakistan. This did not, however, mean that New Delhi had already decided on war.

The New Delhi discussions, then, achieved nothing. Indian newspaper coverage of Kissinger's visit was quite unfavorable, while the foreign minister complained publicly that he and his colleagues had been unable to get Kissinger to appreciate "India's position" regarding the crisis. Still Indian leaders hoped that the purpose of Kissinger's upcoming visit to Pakistan was to press Yahya Khan to agree to a genuine settlement of the crisis. The Indian press later reported that during his stay in Pakistan, Kissinger secretly tried to get Kamal Hussain, Sheikh Mujib's legal advisor and like the Sheikh then imprisoned in West Pakistan, to break with Mujib and the Awami League and endorse Yahya's peace proposals.

In Islamabad, Kissinger was understandably preoccupied with his impending journey to Beijing, but he had discussions with Yahya on the East Pakistan situation. He urged the Pakistani President to make new and comprehensive proposals to encourage the refugees to return home and thereby deny India a pretext for war. But, according to Kissinger, Yahya was "oblivious to his perils and unprepared to face necessities. He and his colleagues did not believe that India was planning a war, and in case of war the Pakistani leaders were convinced they would win it."

In Beijing Kissinger also discussed the East Pakistan problem with
Zhou Enlai. According to Kissinger, the Chinese leader agreed with him that India had military designs on East Pakistan, a statement that seems borne out by the fact that during the Indo-Pakistan war China joined the United States in diplomatic maneuvering against the Indian government.

The new relationship between the United States and China had an impact on American diplomacy in many areas, but nowhere was that impact greater than on the subcontinent and nowhere was it more negative than in India. Kissinger's China visit and Nixon's announcement of its results came as total surprises to the Indian government, and accelerated the deterioration of Indo-American relations. India's official reaction was sharply critical. As Kissinger observes:

India had initially welcomed Nixon's July 15 announcement with a generous statement by Foreign Minister Swaran Singh that it was a 'significant positive development.' But by July 20, India began to display second thoughts; it started to invoke fictitious Sino-American designs on the subcontinent as a pretext for its own arrangements with the Soviet Union.

In response to questions in Parliament regarding the implications of the Sino-American rapprochement, the Indian foreign minister said that India could not look upon that development with "equanimity" if it encouraged any Chinese and/or American designs in the subcontinent.

Fears of such designs were voiced repeatedly in the Indian Parliament and press. The fears rested on suspicions that the Chinese and American governments would act together in the interest of Pakistan and to the detriment of India. These fears were fed by resentment that Kissinger's brief and unproductive visit to New Delhi on his way to Pakistan and China had simply been a part of the "cover" for his trip to Beijing. In short, many Indians felt New Delhi had been used to further
a secret demarche that would create problems for India. The thaw in Sino-American relations was thus seen in New Delhi as the first step in the creation of a Sino-American-Pakistan alliance against India. 78

In Islamabad the immediate result of the dramatic development in Sino-American relations was quite different. There, it gave a temporary respite to the government's difficulties in East Pakistan and thus strengthened morale, for it also raised prospects of cooperation between Pakistan's two principal friends. The military leaders saw in this cooperation a decisive deterrent to Indian military adventures in East Pakistan. Yahya began making public statements "threatening a general war" against India, and making clear that in such a conflict Pakistan expected support from China. 79 As if to confirm these statements, China in late July sent India two notes cautioning New Delhi against meddling in Pakistan's internal affairs; and Kissinger, on returning to Washington, told L. K. Jha, the Indian ambassador, that in the event of an Indo-Pakistan war China might intervene in Pakistan's favor. And in that case, he warned, India should not look to the United States for support. 80 To Indian leaders the situation seemed ominous indeed.
CHAPTER IV—NOTES

1 Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Affairs, David M. Abshire to Senator Edward Kennedy, 15 June 1971, Relief Problems in East Pakistan and India, pt. I, June 1971, pp. 85-86.

2 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 855.


4 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 856.

5 Ibid.


7 Abshire to Kennedy, 15 June 1971.


9 Nixon to Yahya Khan, 28 May 1971, WHCF CO Pakistan 115.

10 Nixon to Indira Gandhi, 28 May 1971, WHCF CO India 66.

11 Kaul, The Kissinger Years, p. 58.


13 Basic Documents, 7:111.

14 For world reaction on Sheikh Mujib's trial, see Bangladesh Documents, 2:29-33.

15 Telegram from acting President of Bangladesh, Syed Nazrul Islam to Nixon, 3 August 1971, WHCF CO Pakistan 115.

16 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 861.


18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.


Basic Documents, 7:194-97.

Kissinger, White House Years, p. 855.

Notable among Yahya Khan’s top advisors who urged tough policies were General Sharifuddin Pirzada, Principal Staff Officer to the President; General Tikka Khan, the Martial Law Administrator of East Pakistan; and General Gul Hamid, commander-in-chief of the army. The most outspoken of the fundamentalist parties was the Jamat-e-Islami. With support from the army hardliners, this party organized a militia force in East Pakistan to counter the guerrilla activities of the Mukti Bahini. See for details, Choudhury, The Last Days of United Pakistan.

These officials were in the ranks of Assistant and Under Secretary in the State Department. See Informal Notes, Senior Review Group Meeting, 23 and 31 July 1971, in Van Hollen, “The Tilt Policy Revisited,” p. 346.

Ibid.

Basic Documents, 7:201

There are references to Chinese military assistance to Pakistan during 1971 in Dawn (Karachi), 21 May, 12 and 25 August, 29 and 30 September 1971; Financial Times (London), 29 April 1971; and International Herald Tribune, 14 and 15 August 1971.

The Soviet Union did not endorse the Indian view that only a specifically political settlement would enable refugees to return to East Bengal. It simply expressed an identical view with India concerning the “creation of conditions for the return of the refugees to their homes, the granting of the guarantees of their personal safety, and a possibility to live calmly and work in East Pakistan.” India’s stand at this time reflected an advance over its earlier attitude toward the issue of East Pakistan. India was not only thinking in terms of a political solution of the crisis but also preparing for a military response to the situation. See New Times 25 (June 1971): 12-13.


36 Ibid.
37 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 859.
38 Kaul, Kissinger Years, p. 45.
39 Bangladesh Documents, 1:556-57.
40 Ibid., 1:559-60.
43 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 859.
45 Ibid.
46 Relief Problems in East Pakistan and India, pt. III, October 1971, p. 376.
49 Ibid., 12:49.
50 Ibid., 12:56.
51 Time, 12 July 1971.
52 Ibid.
53 General Sam Manekshaw's interview with Hasnein Heykel of Al Ahram (Cairo), cited in Hindustan Standard, 19 October 1973.
55 Ibid.
56 Indira Gandhi's statement in Rajya Sabha, 15 June 1971, Basic Documents, 12:564.

59. According to foreign journalists covering events from East Pakistan, "Separatist forces continued their campaign of destroying rail lines and bridges. They were also seizing barges and destroying cargoes of jute, whose export provided Pakistan with its biggest share of foreign exchange. The army was continuing bloody reprisals against civilians where rebels were active." The Indian government reported on June 16, that "the number of East Pakistani refugees moving into India had increased after a relative lull." See Reising's Contemporary Archives (1971), pp. 24688, 24688; and Facts on File 31 (May 1971): 383.


63. Extracts from the report are cited in Times of India, 13 and 17 July 1971; Bangladesh Documents 1:515-19; and Facts on File 31 (July 1971): 606.

64. Cited in Indian Express, 9 September 1971.


69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.


72. The Indian press reported that the Indian government drew Kissinger's attention to the continued and continuous arms aid to Pakistan and demanded the stoppage of "all military and political aid to the West Pakistan regime," but that there was no "concrete indication" of American attitudes on these points. See The Statesman, 8 July 1971. Also see Swaran Singh's interview with the press, ibid., 10 July 1971.
Such was the anti-American hysteria in the Indian press that Ambassador Keating was forced to issue a public statement defending American policy toward India. Keating stated that Indian press "distortions along with mistreatments" had "led some people to leap to a false judgement that the U.S. is some way hostile to India." The ambassador cited two accusations that "had cropped up ... which served further to distort the record." One, he said, "was a false allegation that the U.S. is providing some sort of counter-insurgency training to Pakistani military forces." The other was that the United States was planning to send American troops to East Pakistan from Vietnam. See Facts on File 31 (August-September 1971):674.


Facts on File 31 (August 1971):606. Also see Raïva Sabha discussions on "Reported Threat of Pakistan to Declare War on India," 21 July 1971, Basic Documents, 12:628,638.

CHAPTER V

THE INDO-SOVIET TREATY: AUGUST-OCTOBER 1971

Indian leaders regarded Yahya Khan's war threats and the simultaneous mobilization of his army along the West Pakistan-Indian border as fallout from the Sino-American rapprochement. Emboldened by the new agreement between his allies and the support of those allies for his stance in subcontinental affairs, Yahya would, the Indians believed, continue his occupation of East Pakistan indefinitely. This meant a prolonged guerrilla war, which would likely wear down and perhaps eventually split and destroy the effectiveness of the already fractious Awami League leadership. If India did nothing about this, they reasoned, time would undermine the already precarious Indian position and insure Yahya's success.

The Indians decided therefore to act. Specifically, their government had Parliament pass an Internal Security Act authorizing preventive detention of individuals without trial; and India began exercising more direct supervision of the guerrilla forces and of the Bangladesh government-in-exile, now moved to Calcutta. In addition, the Indian army enlarged its guerrilla training program, and increased its participation in cross-border raids. The purposes of these measures were to improve security in exposed border areas, ensure unity of the Bangladesh government and Indian influence on its leadership, and increase pressure on Pakistan to settle the crisis on terms acceptable to India.

The government also sent D. P. Dhar, Chairman of the Policy Planning Committee of the Ministry of External Affairs and a close confidant of
Prime Minister Gandhi, to Moscow to finalize the details of a new mutual
security treaty with the Soviet Union and to invite Soviet Foreign
Minister Andre Gromyko to New Delhi to sign that treaty. As these
things unfolded, the government faced pressure from within India to act
on the refugee problem, which, it was becoming increasingly clear, could
only be solved by creating an independent Bangladesh through military
action and then returning the refugees to their homes. Yahya made it
clear that any action in this direction would set off a general war in
which, he tried to convince the Indians, a direct confrontation between
India and China would be the probable result. This threat was clear
enough, but less certain in New Delhi was how Washington would act if
war, with or without China, came. In two previous wars, one with China
and the other with Pakistan, in the 1960s, India had enjoyed American
support as a bulwark against China in the first one and American
neutrality in the second one, when Pakistan received support from China.
Now, New Delhi could count on neither neutrality nor support from
Washington, and this prompted Mrs. Gandhi to turn to the Soviets. As
she herself has suggested, the Indo-Soviet treaty, when it came, served
as "a morale booster at a time when [India was] very much in need of
it."  

One reason for Mrs. Gandhi's success in the opening to Moscow was
the reaction in the Soviet capital to the announcement of President
Nixon's forthcoming visit (February, 1972) to People's Republic of
China. A Pravda editorial accused Nixon of callously using anti-Soviet
feeling in Beijing to attain Washington's imperialist goals. The
Indo-Soviet treaty was thus a logical consequence of the Sino-American
rapprochement, and Moscow as well as New Delhi clearly recognized that
fact at once. No doubt Washington and Beijing foresaw it as well.

Negotiations for the Indo-Soviet treaty had, however, begun two years before Kissinger went to China, in the atmosphere created by Sino-Soviet animosity over the border dispute and the split in Mrs. Gandhi's Congress party. In June 1969 Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, had initiated a plan for the collective security of Asian nations, and invited India to join it. The real purpose of the plan was to contain China; but not yet disillusioned with its traditional policy of non-alignment and seeing no immediate threat from China, the Indian government had not embraced Brezhnev's proposal.

At that time, New Delhi feared that allying itself with Moscow would have undesirable international repercussions, particularly from the United States, and with the split in the Congress party threatening her political base, Mrs. Gandhi did not want to provoke an unnecessary political dispute. Opposition leaders like Morarji Desai, her rival for control of the government, would surely make an issue out of what would have amounted to a reversal of India's traditional foreign policy of non-alignment.

However, the Indian government had not explicitly rejected the Soviet proposal, for that too might have had undesirable consequences. Following up on its role in brokering the Tashkent treaty of 1966, the Soviet Union had improved its relationship with Pakistan by providing that country limited quantities of military equipment and economic aid. This development had created political problems for Mrs. Gandhi. The pro-Moscow Communist Party had a sizeable number of representatives in the Indian Parliament, and Mrs. Gandhi needed their support to enact her
domestic social and economic programs. She also wanted to detach Moscow from its new relationship with Pakistan for security reasons; to establish closer ties with the Kremlin would thus have multiple advantages for her. Therefore, she kept alive the possibility of joining Brezhnev's collective security arrangements and of an Indo-Soviet mutual security treaty as well.  

Sporadic negotiations for such a treaty continued over the next two years but produced no concrete results until events in 1971 redrew the geo-political map of the world and suddenly changed the diplomatic and strategic position of the two countries. Furthermore, Mrs. Gandhi was in a secure position in Parliament after the 1971 election. She was thus free to act at the same time that she felt it necessary to act.

The Soviets were also prepared to act, and not only because of Nixon's China initiative. They too were concerned about the deteriorating situation in the subcontinent, and saw in the Indian dilemma an opportunity to gain influence in New Delhi while also perhaps defusing a crisis which could threaten their own interests. Another Indo-Pakistan war would quickly drain India's limited resources, and thus waste the Soviet economic investment in that country. In Soviet thinking, the only winners from such a conflict would be those "forces beyond their borders that are striving to damage India and Pakistan by pursuing their own definite political purposes." A formal security arrangement with India might also deter the Chinese from active involvement if war came, and it might make war less likely by restraining Yahya's military posturing and encouraging him to resolve the crisis politically.

Accordingly, on August 10, 1971, Soviet newspapers gave front-page
coverage to Gromyko's visit to India and to the signing of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation. 10 The coverage included the full text of the treaty as well as a statement by the Indian foreign minister that India desired peace and stability in the subcontinent. The treaty was something of a trade off for the Soviets. It cost them very little, for Moscow's influence in Islamabad had already decreased because of what Yahya considered meddlesome Soviet statements about Pakistan's internal affairs. The Soviets nonetheless tried to minimize the effect of the treaty on Pakistan by assurances that it was not directed against any third party and by avoiding any reference to an independent Bangladesh.

The joint statement issued at the conclusion of Gromyko's trip to New Delhi clearly reflected the Soviet view of the situation in South Asia. "After a detailed discussion," the statement read, the two sides "reiterated their firm conviction that there can be no military solution and considered it necessary that urgent steps be taken in East Pakistan for the achievement of a political solution." Also, "both sides considered that all international problems, including border disputes, must be settled by peaceful negotiations and that the use of force or threat of use of force is impermissible for their settlement." 11

Despite disclaimers by both governments, the treaty did have certain features of military significance to both New Delhi and Moscow. Article VIII declared that neither country would enter military alliances directed against the other, and precluded the use of the territory of one for inflicting military damage on the other. More importantly for the growing crisis between India and Pakistan, Article IX, the operative part of the treaty, stipulated that the two countries would:
abstain from providing any assistance to any third party that
engages in armed conflict with the other party. In the event
of either party being subjected to attack or threat thereof,
the high contracting parties shall immediately enter into
mutual consultations in order to remove such a threat and to
take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and
security of their countries.

In Article X of the treaty, the two signatories assured each other that
neither had any obligations, secret or otherwise, which conflicted with
the treaty, and that neither would enter into any obligation that might
"cause military damage to the other party."

The succinct language of the treaty did not explain the context in
which the treaty might be invoked, nor did it describe the kinds of
contingencies in which the treaty, once invoked, would continue to
function. This permitted two interpretations of the wording. According
to one view, if China and Pakistan together or Pakistan alone threatened
India with "military damage," the Soviet Union would have to come to
India's assistance. According to the other, Sino-Soviet armed conflict
would oblige India to come to Moscow's assistance. The first of these
views seems acceptable and the other farfetched. Not only were Indian
military forces too weak to threaten China, but they had no ready access
to Chinese territory except in such remote areas as Tibet and Sinkiang.
Surely the treaty was made with Pakistan in mind, for it represented no
credible threat to China.

The treaty outlined three courses of action in case one signatory
but not the other came under military attack. The one not under attack
was obliged not to side with the attacking nation. It was also obliged
to take "appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and security of
[the country under attack]." But what did that mean? It suggests that
the treaty required something more than neutrality on the part of the
country not under attack, but what that something was is unspecified.
Furthermore, a "threat" to the "security" of a country is not
necessarily limited to armed conflict, in which case the meaning of the
treaty becomes vaguer still.

Perhaps this vagueness was intentional. Certainly it allowed the
two countries to interpret the treaty in ways that suited their
different interests. Perhaps also it reflected the unwillingness of
either country to pledge itself in advance to the defense of the other.
Indian leaders perceived the treaty as providing psychological and
material backing for their position in the Bangladesh crisis. The
Soviets, on the other hand, saw it mainly as the best response they
could make under the circumstances to the new Sino-American
relationship.

Still, the treaty had real meaning for the Indian government. It
was one way of responding to Henry Kissinger's warning that the Chinese
might intervene in an Indo-Pakistan war, and a clear signal to China
that such intervention might be costly. It was also a signal to
Islamabad that enticing the Chinese into the subcontinent might provoke
a Soviet response; the sheer uncertainty of this threat might have a
deterrent effect. Furthermore, the increase in Soviet arms that
followed the treaty strengthened India's military not long after Henry
Kissinger had made it clear to the Indian leaders that they would
receive no support from Washington if their actions resulted in war and
provoked Chinese intervention on behalf of Pakistan. The Indo-Soviet
treaty also provided a diplomatic and legal cover for Soviet arms
supplies to India in case an Indo-Pakistan war became an object of
concern in the United Nations or other international bodies.

For the Soviet Union, the treaty also served useful purposes. It climaxed a successful diplomatic initiative in the aftermath of the Sino-American rapprochement. It also furthered a larger strategic objective, to isolate China from the rest of Asia and compromise its stance as leader of the Third World. This, Moscow hoped, would ease Indian anxieties over the South Asian crisis, enhance Soviet influence in New Delhi, and through stepped-up supplies of military equipment improve India's sense of security.

The Soviets supplemented their diplomatic initiatives on behalf of India with increased criticism of Pakistan. On his return to Moscow, Gromyko told the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet that the treaty with India was particularly important "in the light of the situation developing south of the borders of the Soviet Union." At the same time, on August 12 Pravda carried an article blaming tensions in the subcontinent on Pakistan's military blustering rather than Indian support of the autonomists and guerrillas in East Pakistan. The New Times echoed these themes. In a typical statement in late July, its editors accused the Chinese and American governments of aiming to divide "spheres of influence" in Asia, and supported the accusation by stating that "many Asian governments, in particular the government of India, was saying so."

The treaty, however, did not imply unconditional support in Moscow for India nor an end to Soviet support for a peaceful solution of the South Asian crisis. The Soviet leaders had no desire to intervene militarily in South Asia, since that might eventuate in war with China and end the effort then underway to achieve detente with the United
States. Moreover, Moscow's stakes in Bangladesh were not sufficiently high to warrant such risks. Even at this stage, Moscow did not openly condemn the West Pakistani leadership.

The Soviets were thus especially displeased when D. P. Dhar told them in August that India might have to use force unless the crisis with Pakistan were resolved in a few months. Moscow also made clear its opposition to India's proposed recognition of Bangladesh as an independent nation, a move that would be tantamount to declaring war on Pakistan. To underscore their concern, the Soviets continued economic assistance to Pakistan, referred to "East Pakistan" rather than "Bangladesh," and called for a solution to the crisis agreeable to "the entire people of Pakistan." This ambivalence grew out of the fact that while the Soviets supported India they wanted to prevent war. Like the Americans, they too were unwilling to face up to the fact that peace could be maintained only if Yahya handed over power to the Awami League and Sheikh Mujib.

The Kremlin made its position clear to the Pakistani foreign secretary, who visited Moscow in August; and a short time later, Alexei Kosygin denounced Yahya's policies in East Pakistan as "indefensible." But the Soviets did not go beyond verbal criticism of the Pakistani government, and as late as the second half of September their representatives at the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Paris voted for two Arab resolutions supporting the Pakistani stand that the crisis was an internal affair of the latter country. Further, General Secretary Brezhnev spoke during a visit to Algeria at this time in support of preserving Pakistan's territorial integrity. Nevertheless, a slight but perceptible shift in Soviet policy toward Pakistan occurred with the
signing of the security pact with India. Thereafter, Moscow was less neutral in its dealings with the two subcontinental countries, though it was not yet a partisan of India and Bangladesh.

India, on the other hand, was now more or less convinced that it had to take unilateral military action in East Pakistan, but affirmed its intention to consult Moscow prior to doing so. By making such an affirmation, New Delhi sought to associate Moscow with its position and convince the Soviets of their influence in the subcontinent. In this way too Mrs. Gandhi sought to turn the treaty into a bona fide military alliance to be used to India's advantage in case of war with Pakistan. For the time being, at least, this amounted to a departure from India's traditional stance of non-alignment in international affairs, though as things turned out, the departure did not affect India's international image in the long run. As soon as the impending war was over, India reverted to its traditional policy of non-alignment, and in the early 1980's Mrs. Gandhi was elected chairman of the non-aligned movement.

Pakistan reacted strongly to the Indo-Soviet treaty. The government-controlled press there denounced the treaty as "not a riposte to American overtures to China" but a "deliberate move to create a situation in which India may feel free to attack Pakistan with the assurances that the Soviet commitment to go to the aid of India would provide a deterrent to any Chinese intervention on [Pakistan's] behalf." The treaty therefore had an immediate impact on Pakistani policy. On August 11, two days after the treaty was signed, the Pakistani ambassador to the United Nations, Aga Shahi, proposed to the President of the Security Council that a "good offices" team from the Council visit the border areas of India and Pakistan and try to "defuse
the tense situation there. Clearly, Pakistan wanted to prevent the Indians from using the sense of security the treaty gave them to increase border incursions.

On August 17, the Soviet ambassador to Pakistan, Aleksei Ridonove, again urged Yahya Khan to find a political solution to the crisis in East Pakistan, and to do so as early as possible. Three days later, the Soviet ambassador to the United Nations underscored the urgency his government placed on an on-the-spot resolution of the problem by India and Pakistan by announcing his country's opposition to Security Council discussions of the crisis in East Pakistan. By this time, on August 18, India had again rejected proposals to post United Nations observers on its side of the border with East Pakistan. Significantly, this rejection produced little of the adverse reaction that followed the rejection of U Thant's proposal along similar lines a few weeks earlier. India's international position was, in other words, much stronger than it had been only a short time ago.

This by itself was enough to alarm Washington, which viewed the Indo-Soviet treaty as further evidence that India was now little more than a Soviet satellite. There was therefore increasing danger of war in the subcontinent, Washington believed, and the danger was due to the increased freedom of action Soviet support gave to India. In the opinion of the New York Times, the treaty "strengthen[ed] Soviet influence in the second most populous nation in Asia—and the world—at the expense of the United States," and was thus an unwelcomed development in the midst of an already dangerous crisis. "The incredible U.S. decision to keep supplying arms aid to Pakistan in spite of the ruthless Pakistani crackdown on autonomy seeking Bengalis," the
Times editorialized, "has handed Moscow a major foreign policy coup." Newsweek was equally outspoken. "The treaty," its editorialists wrote, "reflected America's plummeting prestige and influence in the region at a time when many Indians have come to view Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger as the most important arch-villains. And in that sense, the Indo-Soviet pact could be regarded as the most important diplomatic fallout so far from Washington's current courtship of Peking." In public the Nixon administration's reaction to the Indo-Soviet treaty was low-key, but privately its spokesmen denounced the treaty as adding to the dangers in the subcontinent and complicating American efforts to reduce those dangers. These views persisted despite assurances from both India and the Soviet Union that their intentions in signing the treaty were peaceful. On August 11, L. K. Jha, the Indian ambassador, assured Secretary of State William Rogers that India's friendship with the Soviet Union implied no hostility to the United States and its allies. Similarly, the Soviet ambassador in Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin, told Kissinger that while "Moscow supported India's political goals," it "was strongly discouraging military adventures" by the Indian government. The Soviet Union, he insisted, was everywhere urging a peaceful solution to the crisis in East Pakistan.

The White House viewed these assurances as evasive if not dishonest. "For all practical purposes," Kissinger later wrote, the treaty "gave India a Soviet guarantee against Chinese intervention if India went to war with Pakistan. By this action the Soviet Union deliberately opened the door to war in East Pakistan." "The principle deterrent to a military conflict," he also wrote, had been "the fear of India's
military planners that a war of which the Soviets disapproved might dry up the Soviet supply line and encourage the Chinese to intervene. The treaty eliminated these fears and thereby objectively increased the danger of war."^31

Kissinger also believed that the treaty grew out of a Soviet desire to humiliate China. "To demonstrate Chinese impotence and to humiliate a friend of both China and the United States proved too tempting," he wrote of Soviet intentions in signing the treaty. "If China did nothing [in response to an Indo-Pakistani war], it would be revealed as an impotent nation; if China raised the ante, it risked Soviet reprisal."^32 These views were at least partially influenced by the conclusion of American naval analysts that the Indo-Soviet treaty contained "a secret protocol giving the Soviet navy base rights at Visakhapatnam" and thereby making India "a Soviet client."^33 Accepting this evaluation, Kissinger could only conclude that "with the treaty, Moscow threw a lighted match into a powder keg."^34

That conclusion is open to criticism. It is true the treaty gave India at least limited Soviet guarantees against China in a war with Pakistan, but the limitations were anything but specific and in any case protection from China was not India's main concern in signing the treaty. As Indian strategists well knew, India could open warfare in the winter when the Himalayan passes were snow-bound, and thereby neutralize the Chinese military threat. In any case, it was not China that India feared but the possibility of Sino-American-Pakistani cooperation in the event of war. Kissinger's argument that the treaty increased the likelihood of war is thus simplistic. Soviet diplomatic moves after the treaty was signed were invariably aimed at restraining
India and urging Pakistan to make a peaceful settlement with the Bengalís.

The White House believed that the treaty made war not only inevitable but imminent. With Soviet backing, Nixon and Kissinger concluded, India would immediately attack both East and West Pakistan with the objective of dismembering the nation by creating an independent Bangladesh and probably also annexing Pakistani territory in the West. These conclusions, however, seem premature. The Indians were engaged in contingency planning at this time and Mrs. Gandhi was under political pressure to act more decisively, but there is no firm evidence that by mid-summer her government had made a decision to go to war. In fact CIA Director William Belms and Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco offered assessments along just those lines at the two SRG meetings in July. Further, the CIA told Nixon in August that a source within Mrs. Gandhi's cabinet believed the Soviets had signed the treaty with India to forestall Indian recognition of Bangladesh and thus head off an act that would have made war inevitable. This report was leaked to New York Times correspondent Tad Szulc, who reported its substance in the paper on August 13. In signing the treaty, according to Szulc, the Soviets had not only prevented Indian recognition of Bangladesh but also prevented "a war between India and Pakistan."

The White House rejected these assessments, and Kissinger especially continued to explain the treaty within the frame work of his geo-political concerns. The treaty, he continued to insist, was not a reaction to Sino-American rapprochement but an Indo-Soviet device to "punish Pakistan for having served as intermediary" in arranging that rapprochement. This seems a clear misreading of the evidence. The
treaty did come in the aftermath of the Kissinger-Zhou talks, but there is no evidence in the Soviet press or elsewhere that the Soviets supported the breakup of Pakistan until that breakup was imminent and more or less inevitable. It is thus hard to accept Kissinger's assertions that the Soviet Union was encouraging India to attack Pakistan and that the crisis in the subcontinent was the result of Soviet-Indian machinations. It is more plausible to say that the Soviet Union sat on the fence as long as the outcome of events was uncertain, and endorsed the Indians' actions only when their victory seemed assured.

Kissinger's views continued to guide policy formulation. In a meeting of the SRG in early August, Maurice Williams, Deputy Administrator of AID and American Coordinator for Relief in East Pakistan, suggested that Washington urge Yahya Khan to remove his army from the civil administration of East Pakistan so that relief assistance could be facilitated. Kissinger replied, "Why is it our business how they govern themselves?" And using the word tilt for the first time, he added, "The President always says to tilt toward Pakistan, but every proposal I get is in the opposite direction." 40 Again the White House had resisted a proposal to encourage Yahya to seek a genuine political accommodation in the East.

This policy was an inevitable consequence of Nixon and Kissinger's world view, which minimized the role of Third World states even in purely regional matters and considered those states only in their relationships to major powers. To these men, then, events in South Asia were significant or not as they affected superpower relationships and were to be explained by the maneuverings or manipulations of one or the
other superpower. And since, in this view, the superpowers were successful or not in their dealings with each other only insofar as they were strong, only that is if they controlled events in which they involved themselves, a Pakistani defeat and an Indian victory in the upcoming war would be most of all an American defeat and a Soviet victory. Such an outcome would thus compromise Nixon's upcoming visits to Moscow and Beijing and kill detente with the one and rapprochement with the other. India, to continue this view, was a Soviet "client," and if it went to war with Pakistan the result would be a "proxy war" fought in Moscow's favor and against America's interest. The Soviet Union would thus have the larger responsibility for the war, for it must be held accountable for the acts of its client. Nixon's State of the World message in February 1972 clearly expressed these views. The President said:

It was our view that war in South Asia was bound to have serious implications for the evolution of our policy with the People's Republic of China. That country's attitude toward the global system was certain to be profoundly influenced by its assessment of the principles by which the system was governed.

If the United States was to have a satisfactory relationship with China, in other words, it needed to assure the latter of its ability to defend its allies against those of the Soviet Union and thus demonstrate its capacity to limit or deter the Soviet effort to encircle China. The first test of this capacity was to come in the Indo-Pakistani war. Thus writes Kissinger:

The dismemberment of Pakistan by military force and its eventual destruction without American reaction ... would have profound international reaction.... Since it was common
concern about Soviet power that had driven Peking and Washington together, a demonstration of American irrelevance would severely strain our precarious new relationship with China.42

The disagreement between the White House and the State Department over South Asia policy is to be explained in large part by the fact that State viewed the situation in regional terms while the White House saw it only in global perspective. To area specialists at State, India had interests and capabilities of its own. Any Indian decision to use force against Pakistan would be determined by those factors, the most pressing of which just now was the burden of millions of refugees forced onto India by Yahya's army and the unlikely possibility of relieving that problem peacefully. Under present circumstances, they believed by late summer, war would bring other gains for India. An independent Bangladesh meant a weakened Pakistan, a factor which in State Department thinking dwarfed the significance of Soviet influence over Indian thinking. India had had no grand design to dismember Pakistan, the area specialists concluded, but the crisis was forcing New Delhi to do something from which it would benefit significantly.43

The different perceptions in the White House and State Department at this time may be illustrated by an option paper prepared at State for the July meeting of the Senior Review Group. The paper recommended that if China intervened in an Indo-Pakistan war the United States should extend military assistance to India and coordinate its actions in doing so with the Soviet Union and Great Britain. Responded Kissinger, "Nothing more contrary to the President's foreign policy could have been imagined."44

As the prospects for war increased and debate over policy options
within the administration intensified, the differences between the White House and the State Department were embittered by regular leaks of policy recommendations and disputes to the press. The White House viewed the leaks as an effort to maneuver the administration into adopting a pro-Indian policy, and blamed the State Department for them, and in both cases that might well be true; but the effect was to further isolate regional experts at the State Department from the decision-making process in the White House. Again, the people best equipped to challenge the Nixon-Kissinger view of South Asian affairs were pushed to the background, and the result was "less policy than self fulfilling prophecy." 45

As these things distracted the administration, India's ambassador, L. K. Jha, worked to convince Washington that the Indo-Soviet treaty was not directed against American interests in South Asia. To further that effort Mrs. Gandhi wrote President Nixon a letter. Reviewing the situation in South Asia, she accused the United States of deceiving India on arms shipments to Pakistan, and insisted that the American arms policy had fueled tension in the subcontinent. She also rejected suggestions that she allow United Nations observers in the border area, and otherwise defended Indian policy in the crisis. But in an obvious effort to conciliate Nixon, Mrs. Gandhi accepted the invitation to visit Washington and review Indo-American relations that Kissinger had extended in New Delhi in July. 46

The American response to India's assurances regarding the Soviet treaty was negative. White House views remained unchanged, or if anything, they became more sympathetic toward Pakistan. Nixon personally attended the SRG meeting in August and issued directives to
increase relief aid for East Pakistan. He also ordered an immediate halt in aid to India should India attack Pakistan and an end to public criticism of Pakistan by everyone in the administration. "We will deal with the political problem in private," he said.

These directives suggested the direction of administration policy at the time. "Throughout the summer, we refrained from public denunciations but continued to express our concerns privately to all parties," Nixon later wrote. "It would have served neither Indian nor Bengali interests for us to alienate ourselves from the government of Pakistan, whose policy and action were at the heart of the problem." In consonance with these views, Kissinger passed warnings to Ambassador Jha that war between India and Pakistan would set back Indo-American relations and that Indian military intervention in East Pakistan would probably result in a cut off of American aid.

The Indo-Soviet treaty thus had a major impact on Nixon's South Asian policy. Until the treaty was signed, the administration had treated the Pakistani civil war as an internal matter of Pakistan in which American involvement was limited to privately urging political reforms. The White House had always believed that Yahya Khan would be able to normalize the situation in East Pakistan through UN relief efforts and his own political concessions to Bengalis outside the Awami League, and that such steps would preclude Indian intervention. The Indo-Soviet treaty upset all of these calculations by opening up the possibility of such intervention.

Nixon and Kissinger therefore felt it imperative to achieve some form of settlement in East Pakistan as quickly as possible. In August, the administration for the first time began to consider the possibility
of having to bring the Awami League, now officially outlawed, into negotiations for a settlement. For the first time too, the White House began to ask whether a peaceful solution was possible without agreement between the Pakistani army and the Awami League. Therefore, in a major reversal of policy, the administration began encouraging talks between the military government and the exiled leaders of the League, and urging the government to release Sheikh Mujib.

As a first step toward these goals, the White House increased its private pressure on Yahya Khan. In a letter to the Pakistani President, Nixon urged that the process of national reconciliation be accelerated through enlarging the relief program and making the concessions necessary to win the support of the representatives elected to the National Assembly in East Pakistan in the preceding December. Such measures, Nixon wrote,

> will be important in countering the coercive threat of insurgency and restoring peace to your part of the world. They will also hasten the day when the United States can resume ... the task of assisting your country's economic development which had been ... complicated and slowed by the recent events.

This letter indicated that Nixon was eager for an immediate solution to the crisis and implied that unless such a solution was forthcoming, American assistance to Pakistan would be affected. As Kissinger has pointed out regarding this letter, "Sustained economic assistance was [now] linked to turning over power to civilian authorities."52

Thus, Nixon abandoned his previous policy of non-interference in Pakistan's internal affairs. The change is best explained not by a sudden concern for the refugees or for the burden the refugees placed on India, but by Nixon's fear that the Indo-Soviet treaty had magnified the
chances of a war that Pakistan would likely lose and India likely win and as a result of which the United States would sustain a mortifying strategic defeat. Nixon and Kissinger were aware that Yahya and his supporters would resist their initiatives, and that direct contact between the government and the outlawed Awami League was impossible. They therefore offered to mediate between the two parties. Their plan was to bypass the Indian government entirely, and establish direct contact between Islamabad and the Bangladesh government-in-exile. This, they thought, would bypass any objections India might have to the contact, and produce the quickest possible results. Accordingly, Kissinger directed the consulate in Calcutta to open contact with the Bangladesh government-in-exile.

The records of the resulting contact are still classified and the full story of what was involved cannot yet be told. According to the Carnegie papers, sources with detailed knowledge of what happened confirm that a number of secret meetings took place in Calcutta and elsewhere between American and Bengali representatives beginning in mid-1971. All of the contacts, these records say, were with Khondaker Mushtaque Ahmed, foreign minister of the government-in-exile, and his political advisors, while the American representatives received instructions directly from Kissinger.

These secret negotiations were separate and distinct from less secret but other simultaneous contacts with the Bangladesh government-in-exile. The latter contacts had begun as early as June, though how they were carried out and what they accomplished, if anything, is also unclear. It seems evident that Kissinger operated at several levels and through several channels, none of which knew the
others even existed. Initially, his purpose seems to have been the general one of determining whether systematic, high level contact with the government-in-exile might eventuate in the United States acting as a formal intermediary between Yahya's government and the Awami League. Thus, at first, with the knowledge of Yahya's government, a number of junior State Department officials made contacts with both sides; but nothing seems to have come of them, and Yahya did not regard the effort as a form of pressure. 54

Kissinger made these early attempts at contact before the Indo-Soviet treaty and in belief that Yahya would be able to restore normalcy in East Pakistan; and his object was to find moderate Awami Leaguers with whom Yahya's government might work to achieve a compromise solution short of Bengali independence. The much more importunate secret contacts, after the treaty was signed, aimed to divide the Awami leadership and neutralize its autonomist and secessionist elements by making a "deal" with its small, pro-American minority. According to Carnegie sources, Kissinger's principal representative during this more crucial and ultra-secret series of negotiations was Harold Saunders, an expert in Middle Eastern affairs, but one of Kissinger's most trusted deputies at the National Security Council. Throughout the period of his involvement in the operations, Saunders kept his activities as secret as possible. He utilized only the most trusted contacts and channels of communication, and possibly less than half a dozen Americans knew of his activities at the time. 55

This secrecy was facilitated by the fact that the American consulate in Calcutta had standing instructions to avoid contact with the Bangladesh provisional government, in keeping with the American stance
of neutrality in the Pakistan civil war. Publicly, those instructions remained in effect, but Washington now secretly directed George Griffin, in the political section of the consulate, to make contact with the government-in-exile. With direct access to Saunders and Kissinger, Griffin was the key link between the two sides until Kissinger, at some unknown point in the negotiations, cut out all intermediaries and dealt directly with Foreign Minister Mushtaque. Where and when and how often Kissinger met personally with Mushtaque and/or Mushtaque's aides is unknown, but that he had contacts with them at the personal level is attested to by a number of former officials interviewed for the Carnegie study.

Whatever the form of these contacts, neither Ambassador Kenneth Keating in New Delhi nor Consul General Herbert Gordon in Calcutta knew of them. All messages and conversations concerning the contacts went through NSA and CIA communication networks directly to Kissinger and/or Saunders, and the resulting ignorance of what actually was going on caused problems for American diplomats on the scene. "While I appreciate the tactical necessity of justifying our position publicly," Keating cabled Washington on October 1, "I feel constrained to state elements of this particular story [about Kissinger's version of American contacts with the Bengalis] do not coincide with my knowledge of the events of the past eight months."57

The Bangladesh provisional government of the Awami League, with which Washington was now in contact, consisted of leaders of several political factions whose relations with each other and stands on issues changed regularly as events unfolded. Prime Minister Tazuddin Ahmed was pro-Indian in the sense that he recognized the necessity of his
government binding itself to India for the present. The refusal of the Pakistani military to accept the results of the December elections gave Tazuddin no choice in this matter; but it was the "brutal magnitude of the repression" the army undertook in East Pakistan that made him and most other Awami Leaguers adamant and unconditional in insisting that there could be no solution to the crisis short of full independence for Bangladesh. This of course more than complicated Kissinger's effort to find leaders of the League willing to negotiate a compromise short of independence. In fact, it rendered the endeavor more or less quixotic. Here Kissinger reaped the fruit of his indifference to what was actually involved in East Pakistan and what had actually happened to the people there. American concern for the Bengali people was far too little and far too late for them to worry about the effects of their struggle for independence on Nixon and Kissinger's global maneuverings. With India and world opinion on their side, victory was clearly possible by the late summer, and to compromise at that point would have been politically absurd.

Yet Kissinger found a leader willing to do just that. Among the exiled Bengali leaders, Foreign Minister Khondaker Mushtaque Ahmed, with whom Kissinger had his contacts, was exceptional. While Prime Minister Tazuddin supported the alliance with India and with it the Indo-Soviet treaty, Mushtaque was leader of a rightist pro-American faction within the Awami League leadership. This is certainly the reason Kissinger approached Mushtaque rather than Tazuddin, and the reason also that Tazuddin and the rest of the leadership were kept ignorant of the contacts. Mushtaque's most important aides and advisors, Mahbubul Alam Chasi and Taheruddin Thakur, also played major roles in the
negotiations, which led to an agreement between Mushtaque and Kissinger that called for what amounted to a return to the status quo before Yahya had sent his army to crush the non-cooperation movement on March 25. That is, Mushtaque agreed to end the guerrilla warfare and accept a settlement that would maintain the geographical unity of Pakistan on condition that the Pakistani army cease military operations in the East, withdraw to barracks, and allow new negotiations to begin. To the Nixon administration this agreement promised a reasonable, even desirable, way out of what had become an extremely difficult problem.

It was in this way that the American government attempted to split the Bengali leadership, sabotage the independence movement, thwart India, and rescue Yahya's regime from itself. The problem was that what amounted to a "deal" with a single, tiny faction of the leadership would be repudiated immediately unless stage management could present it to the world as a fait accompli. The moment chosen for that particular bit of theater was October 1971, when Mushtaque, as Foreign Minister, was scheduled to visit New York to plead the Bangladesh case before the United Nations General Assembly. There, he was to declare that Bangladesh wanted not independence but a negotiated, peaceful solution within the framework of a united Pakistan. Such a declaration before the world forum would certainly have destroyed the fragile unity of the Bengali leadership and seriously compromised if not thoroughly discredited the Bengali movement in world opinion. This event did not occur, however. The Indian government learned of the agreement with the Americans, revealed it to the rest of the Bengali leadership, and placed Mushtaque under virtual house arrest. The agreement thus came to naught and Kissinger's contacts with the government-in-exile ended in fiasco.
Kissinger's memoirs throw some interesting light not on this farce but on the other not-so-secret negotiations with the Bengalis. According to his account, on July 30, a representative from the Calcutta consulate approached Kazi Qaiyyum, who had been elected to the Pakistan National Assembly in the December elections and who had close contacts with leaders of the government-in-exile, asking him to broach to some of those leaders the question of whether there were terms short of independence on which they would resolve the East Pakistani crisis. Kazi Qaiyyum told his American contact that if Mujib was allowed to participate in negotiations leading to a settlement some of the leaders might settle for less than independence, provided Islamabad accepted the Awami League's Six Points. He also asked the United States government to encourage such a possibility. When Yahya Khan was informed of these contacts, Kissinger says, he welcomed them and even accepted Ambassador Farland's suggestion that Yahya initiate his own secret contacts with the Bengali exiles. He also assured Farland that the death sentence against Sheikh Mujib, recently pronounced by a military tribunal, would not be carried out.

Henry Kissinger's statement on the latter point is corroborated by an interview with Yahya Khan, published in Newsweek on November 8, in which Yahya said that "if the nation demands [Mujib's] release, I will do it." President Nixon has also affirmed this willingness to compromise, crediting urgent pleas from his government for saving the life of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Nixon has also affirmed the contacts between President Yahya Khan and Bengali representatives in Calcutta, and stated that by early November, 1971, Yahya had agreed to negotiate with any member of the Awami League not charged with high crimes.
including leaders of the Awami League still in East Pakistan. 63

Several factors explain this apparent change on Yahya's part. By this time, Yahya had come to realize that the brutal suppression in East Pakistan had been a blunder, and continued inflexibility on his part would probably mean war with India. On the other hand, he could not alienate the military hardliners who supported his government. Nor could he any longer entirely resist American pressure that he negotiate with the Awami League. Under these cross-pressures, he opted to buy time by opening contact with the exiled Bengalis, hoping perhaps to split the Awami League and deflect the demand for independence.

As Yahya became more flexible in form if not substance, the American contacts with the Bangladeshi exiles initiated through Kazi Quyyam played themselves out. Initially, Quyyum's efforts to arrange a meeting between his American contact and Foreign Minister Khondaker Mushtaque Ahmed were unsuccessful because of Indian surveillance of Mushtaque. Then, on September 24 at Ambassador Farland's suggestion, Yahya agreed to a meeting between an American representative and the acting president of the provisional government. 64

A day earlier, on September 23, Kazi Quyyum had told his American contact that the Indian government had become aware of his contacts with the American consulate and warned against them. With the whole endeavor thus threatened by Indian interference, Joseph Sisco proposed to the Indian ambassador in Washington that the two governments sponsor direct negotiations between representatives of Pakistan and Bangladesh without conditions. The Indian government reacted negatively, however, insisting that any negotiation include Sheikh Mujib and be aimed at immediate independence. On September 28, Foreign Minister Mushtaque
finally met with the American consul in Calcutta, but told him that talks between the Bengali exiles and the Pakistani government would be useless unless the United States used its influence to get Yahya to agree to Bengali independence and freedom for Mujib, and unless the Americans agreed to recognize Bangladesh and provide it with economic assistance. American efforts to encourage contacts between the two parties continued through October, but by then it was apparent that they would be fruitless.

By the end of October, the Indian government and press were publicly warning Bengalis against negotiations with "foreign representatives," and the efforts to mediate between Pakistan and the Bangladesh government-in-exile came to an end. The real reason for the failure was not Indian opposition, however, but the unwillingness of Yahya Khan to make significant concessions, as the administration was now insisting that he do. Mujib's life may have been spared because of American pressure, but it equally well may have been spared for other reasons. His execution would have provoked vigorous international condemnation, and inflamed Bengali indignation and passion for vengeance as well. This would have made national reconciliation even more difficult and unlikely, and Yahya already knew that he had acted too harshly in the East. Further, Yahya's agreeing to negotiate with any Bengalis not charged with high crime was largely meaningless, because virtually all bona fide Bengali leaders, including almost all of the representatives elected to the National Assembly in December 1970, were charged with such crimes.

Though these things seem apparent, the whole truth about the efforts to establish and use contacts between the Bengalis, Pakistanis, and
Americans remains unclear. Kissinger and Nixon make no mention in their memoirs of the efforts to divide the Bangladesh government-in-exile, though the subsequent restrictions on Mushtaque's powers and the animosities that surfaced between Mushtaque and Tazuddin in post-independent Bangladesh make clear that the eventual split in the Awami League leadership relate at least in part to Kissinger's effort to co-opt pro-American conservatives in the League. If Kissinger's account is true, the Americans made no effort to establish contact with Tazuddin, the most influential leader in the provisional government. This suggests again that the purpose of contacts was to split the provisional government and co-opt its pro-American elements rather than to find out and adhere to the purposes of that government.

It is also apparent that the Indian government was uninformed of the ultra-secret contacts between the Americans and the Bengalis, though Kissinger's statement that his government informed India of the contacts is probably true for the not-so-secret ones. According to the Carnegie papers, it was the Indian government that informed Tazuddin of the secret contacts, about which the Bangladeshi Prime Minister had had no prior knowledge.

The Indian government's concern over the secret contacts, about which it learned on its own, stemmed from an awareness of the fact that some of the Bengali leaders in India viewed the Indo-Soviet treaty with suspicion. The pro-Western faction in the Awami League opposed India's growing ties with the Soviet Union, and India feared that this faction might form a rival provisional government outside India. This fear was a major reason New Delhi began to assert greater control over the provisional government. Such control, New Delhi believed, would
neutralize American pressure to bend that government to America's will. These Indian fears were not unfounded. The most conservative faction of Bengali leaders believed that India was under control of the Soviets and that it was dangerous for the Bengalis to trust India if they valued their independence or their religion. A senior member of the provisional government lamented his government's dependence on India. "There is little we can do," he said. "We have to comply because we are in exile and have to depend on India for both moral and material support. We are grateful for this help, but we do not like the new trend." 68

Indian leaders were similarly worried over American efforts to influence Bengali leaders. They could not afford to let the United States shape the thinking of the provisional government. To counter American initiatives and to safeguard India's interests, New Delhi sent D. P. Dhar, Chairman of the Policy Planning Committee in the Ministry of External Affairs, to Calcutta to explain India's position to the provisional government. He might have also told the provisional government about the secret contacts between Washington and Mushtaque and might have suggested that curb be placed on Mushtaque's freedom of maneuver. In any event, Mushtaque maintained his post for a while, though he exercised no power during the last weeks before the war. The provisional government also denied him the right to represent Bangladesh at the United Nations' General Assembly in New York. 70 Instead, with the support of the Indian government, the provisional government named Muzaffar Ahmed, a pro-Indian leftist, to head the delegation to the United Nations. By this time, October 1971, the Awami League was completely under Indian influence. The Consultative Committee of the
Liberation Front, the ultimate decision-making body of the provisional government was reorganized to insure Indian domination, not only of the committee but of the provisional government as well. 71 As a result, any chance of compromise that may otherwise have materialized from Kissinger’s efforts vanished.
CHAPTER V—NOTES


2 In a speech to the Indian Parliament expressing India's apprehension of the consequences of the Sino-American rapprochement, Foreign Minister Swaran Singh said, "In this we are not alone. There are countries [obviously meaning the Soviet Union] ... who may be more perturbed than we are." For Swaran Singh's speech in Lok Sabha, 20 July 1971, see Bangladesh Documents, 1:708.

3 Intelligence specialists in the United States also confirmed this situation. They noted that Mrs. Gandhi was under pressure at home to recognize the rebels and to give the guerrillas even greater assistance in their efforts to end West Pakistani control of East Pakistan. For the intelligence report, see Tad Szulc's "Soviet move to avert war is seen in pact with India," New York Times, 13 August 1971.

4 Hindustan Times, 13 September 1971.


7 The concept of collective security implied "joint measures by states to ensure peace, to prevent or counter aggression, to be carried out through the appropriate international organization or in some other manner in accordance with international agreements." Since the Soviet Union at that time considered China as the only aggressive power in Asia, the Brezhnev plan was aimed at containing China. See K. Anatolyev, Modern Diplomacy: Principles, Documents, People (Moscow: Novosty Press Agency Publishing House, 1971), pp. 24-47.

8 Indian officials in Moscow disclosed on August 13, that the treaty had been negotiated in 1969, but its signing had been delayed at Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's request because she feared it would arouse domestic opposition. The embassy officials said the decision to put the treaty into effect had been taken in the previous two weeks when New Delhi feared a Pakistani attack supported by China. Thus, when both Jha and Dobrynin assured Kissinger that the treaty had been in preparation long before Kissinger's trip to Beijing, they were actually speaking the truth. See Facts on File 31 (August 1971):632.


10 For the text of the treaty as reprinted from Pravda and Izvestia, see Reprints From the Soviet Press 13 (September):40-44.
11 For the joint communique, see ibid.:37-39.
16 According to Morarji Desai, "The Soviet Union, which earlier had signed a treaty of friendship with [India], did not favor the recognition [of Bangladesh by India] as it did not want Pakistan to break up." See Desai, The Story of My Life, 4 vols. (New Delhi: S. Chand and Company, 1979), 3:17.
18 Dawn, 14 September 1971. Also see Bangladesh, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Crisis of the Bangladesh Movement, September 1971, p. 6.
19 Crisis of the Bangladesh Movement, p. 7.
20 Basic Documents, 14:906-07.
21 Indira Gandhi's interview with the Secretary General, World Peace Council, 30 August 1971, Basic Documents, 12:73-74
22 Pakistan Times, 14 August 1971.
24 Despite—perhaps because of—this deterioration in the Pakistan-Soviet relationship, economic discussions continued through August and September. On August 23, Pakistan took a step toward fulfilling the Soviet's "Kosygin Plan" of 1968 for open overland transit across Afghanistan into the subcontinent. Since the route was first completed in November 1969, Pakistan made use of it by exporting a consignment of chrome leather in ten trucks through this route. Pakistan had previously opposed such overland transit as that would give Moscow an access to the subcontinent. This change in attitude was a result of Pakistan's attempt to placate the Soviet Union after conclusion of the Indo-Soviet treaty.
28 Newsweek, 23 August 1971.
This would have meant Soviet control of the Indian Ocean and threatened American national interests. As reported in NSSM 104, naval analysts believed Soviet control of the Indian Ocean would threaten vital communication links between Europe, the Middle East and the Far East. This led the United States to hasten development of the Diego Garcia base in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 867.

See General Manekshaw’s interview with Hasnein Heykel.


Cited from "Tilt Policy Revisited."

Nixon, "The Emerging Structure of Peace."


Indira Gandhi to Nixon, 9 August 1971, WHCF CO India 66.


Nixon, "The Emerging Structure of Peace."


Nixon to Yahya Khan, 14 August 1971, WHCF CO Pakistan 115.
Harold Saunders joined the CIA in 1959. In 1961 he was loaned by the Agency to the NSC, where over the next decade, he served under McGeorge Bundy, Walt Rostow and Henry Kissinger. In 1973 when Kissinger took over the State Department, one of the few officials from the NSC he shifted with him was Saunders, whom he appointed Director of the State Department's Intelligence and Research Division. Under President Carter he was elevated to the post of Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asia. In 1978 he received wide acclamation for his role in the Camp David negotiations.

George Griffin, the White House contact man on the spot returned to Washington in October 1971 and became Harold Saunders's deputy for South Asia.

Tazuddin was a left-wing social democrat. He favored industrial nationalization, including foreign-owned industries, in an independent Bangladesh. For Tazuddin's view, see Basic Documents, 3:49.

Within the confines of internal Awami League politics, Mushtaque was Tazuddin's theoretical opposite. He openly favored laissez faire capitalism and highly favorable terms for foreign investment, and he opposed nationalization. While Tazuddin had close relationship with the communist parties, Mushtaque was devoutly religious and strongly anti-communist.

Kazi Qaiyyum was an industrialist and a financial backer of the Awami League. He was closely associated with the Mushtaque group. Also see Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 869-71.
immediately put Tazuddin in prison. Toward the end of Mushtaque's rule, Tazuddin was killed while still in prison.


CHAPTER VI

TOWARD WAR: OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 1971

The American public had never had much interest in South Asia, but media exposure of the brutalities committed by the army in East Pakistan beginning March 25 and of the consequent suffering of the Bengali people changed that, at least for a time. The widespread criticism of the Nixon administration for its continued support of Yahya's government after the brutalities commenced kept Bangladesh and then the crisis of the refugees before the American public, and helped generate an outpouring of sympathy for the Bengalis and their cause; and in turn helped restrain the Nixon administration's tilt toward Pakistan.

Several factors encouraged this public interest. The large number of Indians and East Pakistanis in American academic institutions actively promoted the Bangladesh cause on the nation's campuses, and they were successful in rousing opposition to administration policies among students and faculty alike. The sizeable Indian communities in New Jersey, Boston, New York, and Chicago also helped publicize the plight of the Bengalis, and thereby encouraged criticism in and out of Congress of the administration's South Asia policy. The Indian embassy, under the skillful diplomat L. K. Jha, coordinated this successful effort to influence opinion. The embassy maintained excellent relations with Congress and the press throughout the crisis, and significantly influenced the views of these important molders of opinion.

Kissinger has acknowledged the success of these efforts. In his memoirs, he praised Jha's skill in "getting the Indian version of the issue to the press." "I was supposed to be skillful in dealing with the
press," Kissinger added. "On the India-Pakistan issue Jha clearly outclass me."¹ This confession was not an afterthought, but a view Kissinger had at the time of the crisis. On August 25, he had told Jha:

You must realize that no matter how much you succeed in influencing important Senators, you have to deal with this administration and that means the President. As for bringing about any change in the U.S. attitude, the President is angry with the Indian Embassy's efforts with the Congress. The President does not feel that apart from the East Coast intellectuals, among whom I used to be counted at one time, there are many people in this country who are genuinely interested in or excited about the affairs of the subcontinent. The Congressional leaders who support you do so because they want to use any excuse for attacking the President and not because they have any deep sympathies."²

As this suggests, the public outcry against Nixon's handling of the Bangladesh issue occurred in the context of the larger criticism of his handling of the Vietnam war and of his halting efforts to extricate the nation from that quagmire. The Bangladesh issue surfaced when the latter criticism was at its height. As Nixon's critics read accounts of the East Pakistan tragedy and saw its realities on their television screens, and juxtaposed these things in their minds with America's role in Vietnam, they tended to see Vietnam and Bangladesh as two manifestations of the same American problem. The administration's silence on Pakistan was to them another symptom of the moral insensitivity that kept America in Vietnam. "Most of these attacks were politically motivated," Kissinger later wrote of the critics, who, he said, turned Bangladesh into a "surrogate for Vietnam."³

Kissinger may be correct for some of the critics, but certainly not for all. A large numbers of Americans were genuinely grieved by the suffering of the people of East Pakistan. Those who witnessed the
military in action there or who visited the refugee camps were invariably touched by the brutality in the one case and the misery in the other. Invariably too they came away sympathizing with the Bengalis, and the stories they told touched and influenced public opinion. As a result, a Louis Harris Poll in June 1971 found that the American people disapproved of Nixon's handling of the South Asian crisis by a two-to-one margin.

As the crisis continued and evidence of the suffering mounted, intellectuals came to be the most outspoken and perhaps also the most effective critics of administration policy. They considered Nixon's support of the military regime and indifference to the fate of the Bengali people not only impolitic but morally outrageous. A number of them formed the Bengal Crisis Committee with chapters at university campuses across the nation, the most active of them at Harvard, Chicago, Berkeley, and New York. The committee organized mass rallies and smaller seminars and symposia, wrote articles for the press, and raised funds to help the refugees and mobilize American opinion in support of the victims of Yahya's army and of the rights of the Bengali people. They lobbied Congress to condemn the administration's policies and to cut-off military and economic aid to Pakistan.

Another important group was the Friends of East Bengal, with affiliates in Columbus, Ohio; Tempe, Arizona; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Palo Alto, California; New York City; and elsewhere. The goals of this group were aimed more specifically at relief efforts, but it too supported Bengali self-determination and sought to pressure the administration to change American policy. Under its auspices, a large number of prominent scholars from universities across the country petitioned the
the United States petitioned the White House in part as follows:

The civil war in Pakistan and the threat of war between India and Pakistan impose a heavy responsibility on the United States.... Despite an announced embargo, we continue to supply military aid. This policy has been justified by the argument that only in this way could we influence Pakistan and restore peace. But this policy has served only to alienate India and the people of Bangladesh and it has not succeeded in inducing the Pakistan government to cease its campaign of terror.... Both our political self-interest and our moral concern should lead us to deny support to the military-led government of Pakistan, demonstrate our appreciation for the Bengali claim, and assist India on a far larger scale than we have thus far to handle the refugee burden.

A group of economists from Harvard pressed the administration in similar terms. "While the West Pakistani army could suppress the Bengali nation for some months, the emergence of Bangladesh was inevitable in the long run," they told the administration, and urged that all economic and military aid to Pakistan be withheld until it withdrew its "occupational forces from Bangladesh." This statement was widely circulated, and had significant impact on congressional and public opinion.

Under auspices of the Rippon Society, an organization of liberal Republicans, another group of academicians studied the crisis and concluded that peace and stability in South Asia would return only when an independent Bangladesh came into being. Continued American aid to Pakistan, they suggested, only prolonged the struggle for a free Bangladesh and damaged the United States' image in an important region of the world. The Faculty of Asian Studies at the University of California at Berkeley endorsed a statement condemning the atrocities in East Pakistan and asking the administration to suspend aid to the army regime. "Our partnership had not only been unwise, indeed immoral,"
they said of American policy toward Pakistan, "but contrary to U.S.
national interest" and to future good relations with the people of
Bangladesh.

Professor Edward G. Dimock, Jr., of the University of Chicago and
the leading scholar of Bengali literature in America, told a symposium
organized by the American Council of Churches of Christ that "the best
we could do as a nation was not to hinder the emergence of a nation by
trying to preserve a hopeless status quo." Dimock was a member of the
Friends of East Bengal at Chicago, on behalf of which Marta Nicholas and
Philip Oldenburg published a handbook, Bangladesh: The Birth of a
Nation, to provide a convenient summary of the crisis and of America's
policy concerning East Pakistan. Other renowned Americans criticized
administration's policy. William B. Greenough of Johns Hopkins
University, for example, sent his criticisms of American diplomatic and
economic support for the military regime directly to Secretary of State
Rogers. Chester Bowles published his opinion in the New York Times,
urging Nixon to change American policy toward the subcontinental
13 crisis. Untold numbers of other Americans, in and out of the
universities, wrote to Congress, the White House, and the press
criticizing administration policy and voicing support for the Bengali
cause.

Certain features of these protests and criticisms stand out. All of
them expressed deep dissatisfaction at the administration's moral
insensitivity, especially the failure to publicly criticize the army
action in East Pakistan, and all of them urged the administration to
stop economic and military aid to Pakistan and to increase relief
assistance to the refugees in India. While many of the protesters
believed the independence of Bangladesh was inevitable, only a few of them urged the administration to recognize the Bangladesh government-in-exile. This suggests that Nixon's critics were more concerned with the humanitarian and moral aspects of the crisis than with the political ones involving Bengali independence and the dismemberment of Pakistan.

Many members of Congress joined this protest, and because of their positions they were among the most influential of Nixon's critics. Their involvement was particularly discernible on the refugee issue and on arms aid to Pakistan. Senator Edward Kennedy was a persistent critic of administration policy, which he repeatedly condemned for its insensitivity to humanitarian aspects of the crisis. As chairman of the Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees, Kennedy held hearings on the refugee problems and gave those problems extended publicity. In the second week of August, he visited the refugee camps in India and asked to go to East Pakistan, but Yahya's government denied him entry into the country. At press conferences in New Delhi and Calcutta, the Senator criticized American policy, which embarrassed the White House, in part because of the extensive media coverage Kennedy received. After the visit Kennedy published a report, Crisis in South Asia, in which he strongly censured the administration's handling of events and urged that humanitarian considerations be made the central concern of future policy.

Kennedy did not limit his concerns to humanitarian aspects of the refugee problem. During hearings before his Subcommittee, he repeatedly raised the issue of American arms supplies to Pakistan and linked the use of those arms to the refugee problem. The publicity generated by
these hearings and the outcry that followed disclosure of the continuing arms shipments to Pakistan were important factors in the eventual termination of those shipments. Though repeatedly embarrassed by them, the administration viewed Kennedy's criticisms as entirely political and self-interested, and in fact nothing more than the opening salvos of Kennedy's anticipated campaign for the presidency against Nixon in 1972.

Congressman Cornelius Gallagher and Senator Charles Percy also visited the refugee camps, and received from their visits much the same impression as Kennedy. Afterward, they accused the administration of practicing "tokenism" in its aid to the refugees and of maintaining silence in face of "one of the worst examples of genocide in human history." Senators William Saxbe, Frank Church, and Howard H. Baker, Jr. and Congressman Peter H. B. Frelinghuysen also visited the camps, and Frelinghuysen wrote a report for the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Drifting Toward Crisis, in which he not only criticized American policy but warned of the imminent danger of war in the subcontinent.

Congressional interest in the crisis was thus widespread and persistent. In the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives, the Subcommittee on Asia and Pacific Affairs held hearings on South Asian affairs in May 1971, and the Subcommittee on Appropriations did likewise in July. In the Senate, Kennedy's Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees held hearings in June, July, and October. About forty-five Senators actively followed the crisis and seventeen others showed some interest, while in the House, about thirty-five members took fairly active interest and a few more than that
showed interest on various aspects of the crisis. From April until the end of the war in December, the Congress passed twelve resolutions and five legislative measures concerning South Asia. The congressional displeasure over Nixon's handling of the crisis was evident in all of these actions; it was also bipartisan and, like the protests emanating from university campuses, focused on moral and humanitarian concerns.

However, the role of Congress in shaping American policy was limited by the much greater control the White House has over foreign policy generally. The administration has both authority and responsibility in the conduct of foreign policy, and can influence events through initiative or inaction and by establishing priorities. The role of Congress, on the other hand, is largely reactive, and functions chiefly to set limits on the executive and as a barometer of public opinion. Thus, Congress helped force the cut-off of arms shipments to Pakistan and increase relief aid to the refugees, but it was unable to achieve a fundamental redirection of American policy. Even the Congress's ability to expose controversial policies or actions of the administration was limited. When Congress wanted to know about American policy in South Asia, its committees had to call to their hearings Secretary of State Rogers and his aides, who were often in the dark themselves, and not National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger and his staff, who were protected from such testimony by executive privilege. But because so many State Department officials disagreed with administration policy, they could and often did cooperate with congressional committees in such things as exposing the problems of the refugees.

The media's role was also limited but important in shaping public opinion and administration policy; and it was large indeed in generating
sympathy for the Bengali people and their cause. The \textit{New York Times}, \textit{Washington Post}, \textit{Christian Science Monitor}, \textit{Time}, \textit{Newsweek}, and the television networks are only the most prominent participants in what was virtually a media-wide movement. All of them to one degree or another lent support to the people of East Pakistan and criticized the administration's pro-Pakistan policy. All of the genuinely national newspapers, the television networks, the wire services, and many magazines sent correspondents to East Pakistan and to the refugee camps, and interested Americans came to have a great deal of reliable information about the causes, the nature, and the victims of the crisis. And because the media were generally critical of American policy, Americans came also to know a good deal about the relation of that policy to the plight of the Bengali people. Indeed, the Pakistani ambassador to Washington, Aga Hilaly, complained to the administration in May about the anti-Pakistani tenor of the media. "This Embassy has been having difficulties," Hilaly wrote, "in getting the American press to give publicity to [the Pakistani] Government's point of view about events in East Pakistan."\textsuperscript{23}

Such widespread opposition dismayed the administration too. This is clear from a memorandum written by John Scali to Henry Kissinger concerning American policy during the war itself. Scali pointed out:

\textbf{Already the policy is being denounced by the \textit{New York Times}, \textit{Washington Post}, \textit{Baltimore Sun}, various network newsmen, Senator Church, Senator Kennedy, Senator Saxbe and others... What disturbs me particularly is that a newspaper such as the \textit{Baltimore Sun}, not known for its flaming liberal viewpoint, describes American policy as at best 'ambiguous' and wonders why we have embarked on the course that we have.}\textsuperscript{24}

The impact of the media on policy formulation cannot be measured...
precisely and was probably less than one might expect, since Nixon and Kissinger discounted media opinion as reflecting the views of their Democratic critics or "East coast intellectuals." But the media's role in mobilizing public sentiment on behalf of the Bengali people was basic.

The media influence in the latter respect was reinforced by the significant number of prominent entertainers who sympathized with the Bengalis people and spoke out on their behalf. In August, two of the former Beatles, George Harrison and Ringo Starr, staged a concert at Madison Square Garden in New York city to raise funds for the "displaced persons of Bangladesh." Bob Dylan, an important voice in American folk and popular music, joined them, as did other celebrities. Regarding the concert, a correspondent for New Yorker magazine wrote as follows:

For the first time ever, a major rock event was put on by the musicians without the thought of profit, but, instead for the benefit of desperately needy people in another part of the world.... Few members of the audience ... even knew very much, about the sufferings of the people of East Pakistan.... But all the members of the audience knew and trusted George Harrison, whose music had helped give shape to their lives, and they sensed the seriousness of his purpose.25

The renowned folk singer Joan Baez made a similar, but distinctive, contribution. She composed and sang the hauntingly beautiful song "Bangladesh," which told the story of the fate of the Bengali people at the hands of the Pakistani army and which became a national hit. Significantly, all of these entertainers tied their concerns for the Bengali people with their ongoing protest against American involvement in Vietnam, and the latter protest preconditioned the American public to understand the plight of the Bengali people in East Pakistan.26
Religious groups, for example the Quakers, also protested against Nixon's policy and on behalf of the Bengali cause. In July, Quaker activists blocked the loading of shipments of military equipment bound for Pakistan at the ports of Baltimore and Philadelphia. Press coverage of their actions not only publicized the issue of arms shipments again, but the activists used their arrests and trials to the same end. Richard Taylor, one of the organizers of these protests, later wrote as follows:

"Our discouragement at not being able to prevent the docking of the Padma was more than counter-balanced by the ... excellent nationwide coverage of the blockade on television, radio, and in the press. When the House Foreign Affairs Committee reported out a bill cutting off aid to Greece and Pakistan, a Congressional source and a well known New York Times reporter told us that our Baltimore action was a major factor influencing the committee to take their unprecedented action."

Quakers also formed a Direct Action Committee to encourage dockworkers to boycott the loading of military goods on Pakistani ships. They organized marches and picketed the offices of the American agents of the Pakistani ships. In October, members of this group built eight replicas of the sewer pipes used to house some of the East Pakistani refugees in India and placed them in Lafayette Park across from the White House. A team from the Direct Action Committee lived in the pipes for more than a week to dramatize the plight of the refugees. They also organized demonstrations in front of the Pakistani embassy in Washington, D.C., and lobbied on Capitol Hill. Because of generous media coverage, these actions of the participants kept the crisis and its victims—as well as American policy—before the American public.

How is the historian to assess the protest movement against American
policy in South Asia and in behalf of the Bengali people and their desire for independent statehood? And how is he or she to weigh its impact on American policy and, more importantly, on events in South Asia? The moral and humanitarian concerns of the protest, as distinct from its political and strategic concerns, are manifest. The intricacies of South Asian power politics seem to have penetrated public thinking in America no more than did the pros and cons of dismembering Pakistan and creating an independent Bangladesh. Yet this emphasis on moral factors had a distinct usefulness for the Bengali cause: it deflected attention onto the human suffering involved and away from issues of the Cold War and realpolitik, specifically the splitting of Pakistan into two nations and the consequent humbling of an American ally and the strengthening of a Soviet ally.

The protest might have had other effects, too. Given President Nixon's pro-Pakistani attitude, the protesters might have encouraged his propensity for private diplomacy and thus his public silence on the activities of the army in the East and on the Yahya regime generally. In his memoirs Kissinger repeatedly pointed out that public opinion precluded actions or policies best suited to American interests in the crisis. He also admitted that public opinion helped State Department bureaucrats oppose administration policy, especially Nixon's tilt toward Pakistan. Because of widespread condemnation, the administration belatedly and reluctantly embargoed arms shipments to Pakistan, finally including even the spare parts necessary to service American weapons delivered earlier.

Nixon and Kissinger were fully prepared, even eager, to defend their policies, but their insistence that their critics were motivated by
politics rather than the substance of American policy precluded the usual kinds of political debate, and hardened attitudes on both sides of the issues. As sympathy for India and the refugees grew among the public, administration attitudes against India and the Bengalis hardened, and the possibilities of accommodation between the administration and its critics disappeared. In mid-summer, the House Foreign Affairs Committee recommended suspension of "all assistance to Pakistan" until the Islamabad government cooperated fully "in allowing the situation in East Pakistan to return to reasonable stability" and permitting the refugees "to return to their homes and to reclaim their lands and properties." 30

This action forced Nixon to defend his policy. Accordingly, in a news conference on August 4, the President reviewed and defended his course of action in South Asia. He described the relief effort as the centerpiece of his policy, and pointed out that Washington was the largest contributor of relief funds for all South Asia. The object of these efforts, he stated, was to eliminate the danger of famine and relieve the burden the refugees had forced onto India. But he opposed suspension of all assistance to Pakistan because that would "aggravate the refugee problem" and reduce the chances of a "viable political settlement." 31 Nixon's press conference made one thing clear: the bulk of refugee relief monies would go to East Pakistan rather than India, a decision congruent with an administration announcement in August that the outflow of refugee was the result of a threatened famine in East Pakistan rather than the actions of the Pakistani army there. 32 The refugee aid given to India would, the administration hoped, ease the burden on New Delhi enough to remove the issue as an excuse for war.
The President, however, overstated the extent and the impact of American assistance. According to a report issued by the Government Accounting Office on June 29, 1972, the United States had granted $94.5 million in refugee aid to India in 1971 and $75.5 million to Pakistan, and part of the latter had gone to victims of a pre-March cyclone and for regular bilateral food aid. These figures were dwarfed by the World Bank's estimate that the cost of refugee relief to India through March 1972 had been $700 million, and by India's claim in December 1971 to be spending $3 million a day on the refugees. If these figures are correct, the United States contributed about 15% of the cost of the refugees and the rest of the world about the same, leaving India with upwards of 70% of the total. These figures also indicate that the American contribution did not increase as the cost of the effort increased. For as of October 1971, the American government had contributed 42 percent of the total cost of refugee relief in India and 71 percent of the total in East Pakistan.

While the Nixon administration worked to blunt public criticism of its policies, India moved toward war. Revelation of the secret contact between Kissinger and a faction of the Bangladesh government-in-exile and the possibility that a minority within the Awami League might establish a rival provisional government had, as already noted, added to apprehensions the Indian government already had over the continued violence in East Pakistan and to the pressing burden of the refugee problem. All of these things encouraged Mrs. Gandhi and her advisors to take decisive action to relieve the situation. But before going to war, Mrs. Gandhi needed assurances of Kremlin support for what she was about to do. She therefore paid a visit to Moscow, where she received such
visit to the Soviet Union, where she received such assurances.

This change in Soviet policy seems to have resulted from Mrs. Gandhi's success in convincing her hosts that the Bengali refugees were not merely an economic burden but a severe threat to India's political and social stability. But there was more to the change than that. Yahya Khan's continuing inflexibility also seems to have weighed heavily on Kremlin thinking at this point. The Soviet leaders had hoped that Yahya Khan would be able to restore normalcy in East Pakistan through the series of concessions he announced in June-July 1971. Had that occurred, they believed at the time, it might enable them to preserve the influence they had so carefully developed in Pakistan after the Tashkent treaty of 1965. But after September, Soviet leaders came to realize that Yahya's efforts had failed, at least in part because Yahya was insincere in making them. Perhaps, they seem to have concluded during the talks with Mrs. Gandhi, a strong gesture of Soviet support for India would encourage Yahya to do something to relieve the situation.

Other things no doubt influenced Kremlin thinking at this point. If the Soviet Union did not come to India's aid at this stage, Moscow would lose credibility with its only non-communist ally. That would only compound the Soviet's diplomatic isolation in the aftermath of the Sino-American rapprochement. In addition, the Soviets knew that Indira Gandhi had tremendous popular support for a war against Pakistan, and given Washington's inability to help Pakistan, they knew also that she very likely would win such a war. And if she did so with Soviet assistance, Moscow's influence in New Delhi would soar. Moreover, India's position was viewed favorably by the international community,
and Soviet support would increase its image in Third World countries. On the other hand, the Soviets had nothing to lose with the United States either, provided only that the support for India not be allowed to jeopardize detente. Concerning the latter, there was to be sure a certain risk involved, but the Kremlin leaders seem to have understood that Nixon and Kissinger desired detente as much as they themselves did, and India would do nothing that threatened vital American interests in the subcontinent. In any event, the joint communique with which Mrs. Gandhi's trip ended praised India's restraint and desire for peace, blamed Pakistan for the tense situation, and pledged the two countries to maintain "mutual contacts and continue exchange of views" on the South Asian crisis.

Mrs. Gandhi's visit was clearly successful. In early October Soviet President Podgorny stopped in New Delhi on his way to Hanoi, and while there publicly reiterated Moscow's support for India's handling of the crisis, a declaration that may be taken as the point at which the Soviet position became clearly pro-Indian and anti-Pakistani, and thus no longer neutral. Following Podgorny's New Delhi statement a host of articles, commentaries, and editorials appeared in the Soviet press condemning Pakistan's "brutal military oppression" of the "peace-loving Bengali people," and the Soviets began making explicit demands for a swift political settlement of the Bangladesh crisis. In mid-October President Podgorny repeated these demands in a meeting with Yahya Khan, insisting that Yahya restore democracy in East Pakistan and make immediate arrangements for return of the refugees from India.

The Kremlin's campaign was well-organized and its meaning clear. On October 3, Pravda carried an unsigned editorial, a device Moscow
regularly used to state official policy, calling for a halt to the "mass repression," and expressing outrage at the persecution of East Pakistan's "progressive" leaders. The editorial may be taken as a signal of Soviet policy to the various players in the South Asia chess match. This was followed by other signals. A long commentary in the New Times, titled "Dark Skies Over the Indian Subcontinent," lamented the "sad plight of the refugees"; and another commentary in Pravda blamed the crisis on a "reactionary block of monopoly capital and feudal owners." The latter commentary also castigated West Pakistan for its economic exploitation of the Bengalis, praised Mujib's Six Points, emphasized the legality of the December 1970 election returns, and accused the military regime of sabotaging the National Assembly. The Soviet press also featured stories of mass rallies at Tashkent, Minsk, Kuibyshev and Alma-Ata protesting the repressions in East Pakistan.

By the middle of October this Soviet press campaign began to stress the imminent danger of war in the Indian subcontinent and put the blame for the tense situation on the military regime in Pakistan. "Having created the Bangladesh problem themselves," the New Times declared, "the Pakistani authorities are taking no effective steps to settle it by political means and are banking instead on a military solution." Shortly thereafter, on October 25, Pravda reported Pakistani shelling of Indian villages along the border in the East; and both Pravda and Izvestia began reporting consultations between Nikolai Firyubin, Soviet minister of foreign affairs, T. N. Kaul, India's foreign secretary, G. K. Banarjee, secretary of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, and Jagjivan Ram, India's defense Minister. According to the reports,

The consultations took place in accordance with Article IX of
the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation. Consultations were held in connection with the tense situation that has taken place on the Hindustan peninsula and which is threatening the cause of peace in that area [emphasis added]. Both sides agreed completely in their assessment of the present situation.41

Later in the same week, both newspapers carried reports of meetings of the chief air marshall of the Soviet Union, Pavle S. Rutakhov, with his Indian counterpart, P. C. Lal, and with Jagjivan Ram, the Indian defense minister.42 What happened in these meetings is unknown, but it is surely significant that they took place and just as significant that the Soviet press took prominent notice of them. The Soviet support for India was thus public and unambiguous.

One of those for whom these Soviet signals were intended was no doubt China. Through June and July, as the Chinese government and press continued their silence on the crisis, the Indian and foreign press carried reports of substantial amounts of Chinese arms aid to Pakistan; and in early June Indian Defense Minister Jag Jivan Ram told the Rajya Sabha that "100,000 Chinese troops in Tibet are now believed to be deployed along the Indo-Tibetan border."43 These troops, the Indian government believed, were intended to bolster the morale of Pakistan and heighten Indian concern; but the uncertainty of Chinese intentions was a major worry in New Delhi.

Once the Sino-American detente was announced, the Chinese media began justifying tactical alliances with secondary opponents against primary enemies by resurrecting such early prescriptions as Mao's "On Policy" (1940).44 This justification stressed the need for flexibility in external policy as a means of advancing the revolution by exploiting international tensions and rivalries. These rationalizations covered
more pragmatic purposes, to offset Beijing's fear of Moscow by a 
rapprochement with Washington and thereby neutralize Kremlin's hope of 
encircling China with nations allied to the Soviets. This hope had been 
raised by the Indo-Soviet treaty; and a principal concern of Chinese 
foreign policy in the Fall of 1971 was to neutralize the effects of that 
treaty. This meant among other things a reiteration of support for 
Pakistan. In early November Beijing was host to a Pakistani mission led 
by Z. A. Bhutto, leader of the People's Party, but consisting largely of 
military officials. The purpose of the visit was to get assurances of 
continued military supplies from China now that Washington had shut down 
arms deliveries to Pakistan, and to get specific pledges of Chinese 
support in the event of war with India.

The delegation held talks with Premier Zhou Enlai and acting Foreign 
Minister Ji Pengfei, as well as Vice-Chairman of the Military Commission 
Ye Jianying and Deputy Chief of the People's Liberation Army Peng 
Shaohui. In a banquet on November 7 honoring the visiting delegation, 
Ji Pengfei condemned the Indian government for interfering "crudely" in 
Pakistan's affairs and carrying out "subversive activities and military 
threats" against Islamabad. The East Pakistan question, he insisted, 
was an "internal affair of Pakistan," and "a reasonable settlement" of 
the problem should be left to "the Pakistani people themselves." Ji 
assured the visitors that "should Pakistan be subjected to foreign 
aggression, the Chinese government and the people will ... support the 
Pakistan government and people in their just struggle to defend their 
state sovereignty and national independence [emphasis added]." Ji's 
speech was the only public statement of Chinese views on the Bangladesh 
crisis during the stay of the Pakistani delegation. Notably, the speech
did not pledge Chinese intervention in an Indo-Pakistan war, even in the event of Indian aggression. The Pakistani delegation left Beijing on November 8 without achieving its purpose.

On November 9, British radio reported that a group of Chinese youths had demonstrated against Bhutto and his delegation while they were in Beijing. The youths, said the report, "wanted to know why the Pakistani authorities were averse to giving political rights to the people of East Pakistan." Neither Pakistani nor Chinese sources ever confirmed or denied this report, but back in Islamabad Bhutto claimed that the mission had achieved tangible results. Asked why no joint communique was issued at the conclusion of the discussions, Bhutto stated that such a communique would have been superfluous because of the "complete understanding reached" between the two governments. Asked if China would take diversionary action against India in event of an Indo-Pakistan war, he answered, "It is support that matters and we are not interested in diversionary action." In November, Yahya Khan himself acknowledged the limits of Chinese support. "We will get all the weapons and ammunition we need [from China]," he said, "short of physical assistance."

It is clear, then, that Pakistan had no commitment from China to intervene in an Indo-Pakistan war, and the reasons for that seem apparent. The Chinese leaders believed Pakistan would be fighting a losing, unpopular war over the present crisis, and they had no desire to provoke Soviet wrath by entering a war in which nothing vital to China's national interest was at stake. Moreover, Beijing seemed to have wanted the Pakistani government to reach the "reasonable settlement" of the Bangladesh issue that Ji Pengfei referred to, and to do so through
negotiation and not repression. Certainly Ji's statement can be interpreted that way. Perhaps the Chinese also refused to give Bhutto the assurances he sought because they were relatively indifferent to the question of the territorial dismemberment of Pakistan. This seems to explain why they spoke of the "sovereignty" and "independence" of Pakistan rather than its "unity" and "territorial integrity." China was mainly interested in West Pakistan, and to the Chinese, Pakistan's sovereignty and independence would be threatened only if the existence of West Pakistan was threatened. The Chinese refusal to adopt the phraseology of the Pakistani government thus had more than semantic importance, for it obviously incorporated an ambiguity concerning the future of East Bengal.

By early November, the realignment among the superpowers set off by the dual forces of the Pakistani civil war and Nixon's opening to China was completed, and all of the nations concerned about the crisis in South Asia had assumed the basic positions and relationships to each other they would retain until the war commenced. The realignment and the respective guarantees Pakistan and India had received from their new allies had clearly culminated to India's advantage. The chaotic conditions in East Pakistan and the mounting refugee problem both now also worked in India's favor, for everyone now recognized that something decisive would have to be done and soon, about both, and India was the only nation prepared to act decisively. It seems correct to say that by late October or early November Mrs. Gandhi was prepared to intervene militarily in East Pakistan if her demands for the release of Mujib and the withdrawal of the army from East Pakistan were not met soon. She gave no indication of any designs on West Pakistan, however, and Indian
troop deployments on the West Pakistani border were defensive in nature. The Nixon administration, which wanted desperately to prevent the outbreak of war, now had little time as well as little room in which to maneuver.

By October, the administration had concluded that autonomy for the Bengalis was the minimum price Yahya would have to pay for peace. And since both Nixon and Kissinger had concluded by then that autonomy was inevitable, they urged both Pakistan and India to avoid precipitate action and wait for negotiations to effect that change. To that end, they pressed Yahya Khan to negotiate an autonomy agreement with the representatives from East Pakistan elected to the National Assembly back in December.

They were less sure of how to solve the problem of the refugees, now estimated to number seven to eight million. One of the major obstacles, in Nixon and Kissinger's view, was India's unwillingness to encourage the refugees to return to their homes and its refusal also to permit UN personnel into the refugee camps in India or to inform the refugees of Yahya Khan's amnesty announcement. Equally troublesome in their view was India's refusal to acknowledge its control of the guerrillas or guarantee the safety of relief supplies. To the White House, these things were more clear evidence of Indian unwillingness to work for a peaceful solution to the crisis, a conviction Kissinger felt was confirmed definitively when, he says, the Indian foreign ministry informed the State Department of New Delhi's intention to take action by year's end if New Delhi's terms were not met. So short a deadline, the White House concluded, confirmed India's desire for war with Pakistan.

White House thinking on these matters took cognizance of only part
of what was going on. Kissinger failed to appreciate the fears the refugees had of the Pakistani army, at whose hands they had already suffered, or to understand that this was the real reason they refused to return to their homes after the amnesty was declared. Statistics on the refugees indicate that people were still escaping from East Pakistan in October and November, and the stories the new arrivals told of continuing atrocities reinforced the refugees' determination to remain in India as long as the army remained in East Pakistan. It is true the Indian government utilized the refugee problem to embarrass Pakistan and to its own advantage, but there is no evidence it discouraged any refugees from returning home.

It is also true that India trained and equipped the guerrillas, but this too was at least partly from necessity. By the Fall of 1971, nationalist euphoria among the Bengali resistance forces was so intense that any attempt to restrain them would likely have created a situation detrimental to Indian interest. In fact, at this stage, some of the guerrilla groups, frustrated by what they believed was insufficient support from India, dissociated themselves from the Awami League and joined leftist organizations over which the Indians had no control.

Another of Kissinger's statements, that New Delhi gave the Americans what amounted to an ultimatum to resolve the crisis by year's end or face war, is less easy to evaluate. Indian officials have denied Kissinger's statement, and said instead that they simply told Washington in no uncertain terms that if Pakistan did not release Mujib and negotiate with him soon, there could be no political solution to the problem. The economic and social structure inside East Pakistan had already collapsed, they also told Washington, and the political and
military structure was shaky and sustained only by brute force. The situation was thus becoming intolerable to New Delhi; but neither Washington nor Islamabad would give assurances that anything would be done about it in the near future.

'New Delhi, Nixon and Kissinger believed, was encouraged in its intrinsigence by Moscow. Toward the end of August, Kissinger received evidence that Moscow had promised to use its veto in the United Nations should India be accused of aggression before the Security Council. He also had evidence that in case Pakistan or China attacked India, the Soviet Union had pledged to airlift military supplies to India. These things form part of the basis for Kissinger's claim that Moscow "came close to giving Mrs. Gandhi a blank check.""

After Mrs. Gandhi's visit to Moscow in October, the White House became more concerned about Soviet support for India. In early October Nixon met Soviet foreign minister Andre Gromyko in Washington and pressed on him the idea that discouraging Indian provocations would serve the mutual interest of the United States and the Soviet Union. He also pointed out that Pakistan, being the weaker country and cut off from adequate supplies of arms, would never take aggressive action against India. Nixon further urged the Soviet foreign minister to allow Yahya Khan sufficient time to settle the crisis peacefully. On October 9, Kissinger also appealed to the Soviets, this time asking for help in discouraging the infiltration of guerrillas into East Pakistan from India; and he proposed a joint U.S.-Soviet effort to defuse the situation in South Asia. According to Kissinger, Moscow demurred on these proposals pleading its own inability to restrain the Indians.

Kissinger's explanation for this Soviet stance inevitably stressed
geo-political factors. Moscow, he wrote, wanted to humiliate China by encouraging India to defeat China's intimate ally, Pakistan. The United States, which could have balanced the scales between India and Pakistan by generous amounts of arms shipments to the latter, "was barred from helping Pakistan by a self-imposed arms embargo, a Vietnam-induced fear of any foreign involvement, and an unanimous Congressional and media sentiment that India was justified in any action she might take." And since China just then faced a political upheaval of its own, Moscow, Kissinger concluded, would be able to get what it wanted—to teach Beijing a lesson for its rapprochement with the United States and thereby show third world countries the unreliability of China and the United States as allies. Furthermore, if India succeeded in settling its problems by force, Egypt, another Soviet ally with problems, might be emboldened to attempt the same thing.

However relevant these considerations may have been at some level of strategic abstraction, Kissinger's treatment of them would have been much more interesting had he related them to the more challenging moral and humanitarian issues involved in the subcontinental crisis. It might be equally interesting to see how he related them to another basic factor an American statesman might be expected to keep in mind—the right of revolution, the right that is of a people to overthrow a government that violates their most fundamental rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

On October 7, the NSAG met to develop a strategy for preventing an Indo-Pakistan war. The group decided to ask both India and Pakistan to pull back their military forces from the borders, and to ask Moscow to endorse the request. It also decided to urge Pakistan to release Shikh
Mujib and open dialogue with the Awami League. On October 11, Yahya Khan accepted the proposal for troop withdrawal from the borders, and announced a timetable for a political resolution of the crisis. He would, he pledged, convene the National Assembly elected back in December before the end of the year and turn over power to the civilian government that Assembly established. He also promised to commute Mujib's death sentence, and leave the Shikh's fate to the promised new civilian government. The White House welcomed these moves as major steps toward resolving the crisis.

The Indian response to the NSAG proposals was less positive. On October 12, Foreign Minister Swaran Singh rejected Yahya's offer for mutual troop withdrawals, and said instead that India would consider withdrawing its troops from the West Pakistani border only after Pakistan withdrew its forces. He also demanded immediate release of Mujib and transfer of power to the National Assembly elected the previous December as preliminaries to negotiations on other issues. Despite American urgings to the contrary, the Soviets endorsed the Indian position on these matters.

As the American diplomatic effort unfolded, the situation on the Indo-Pakistani border deteriorated further. On October 18, India placed its armed forces on the highest state of alert, and on November 1, the Indian army destroyed a Pakistani artillery battery in East Pakistan which, the Indians claimed, had fired on Indian territory. The situation on the border in East Pakistan thus threatened to get out of hand, and the American government in the person of Ambassador Farland tried to get Yahya Khan to withdraw his troops along both the Eastern and Western borders unilaterally and increase his political concessions.
to the Bengalis. On November 2, Farland delivered a letter from Nixon to Yahya which tried to reassure the embattled Pakistani president while getting him to act at once. Nixon wrote:

I know the importance you attach to enlisting the maximum degree of participation by the elected representatives of the people of East Pakistan. I also believe you agree that this process is essential to restoring those conditions in the eastern wing of your country which will end the flow of refugees into India and achieve a viable political accommodation among all the people of Pakistan.63

The letter had some effect on Yahya, who agreed to a unilateral withdrawal of his troops from the western border on condition that India withdraw its troops "shortly afterwards." Yahya further agreed to a total cut-off of American arms shipments to his country, which Kissinger described as "a galling concession that [Yahya] made with good grace"; and he consented to meet with expatriated Awami League leaders, including anyone designated by Mujib. These concessions, were less "galling," or at least less substantive, than Kissinger made them out to be. Mutual troop withdrawals from the border areas would have given Pakistan a definite advantage, especially in West Pakistan, because redeployment there would have been easier for Pakistan than India.65 Furthermore, the arms ban Yahya agreed to had already been forced on the Nixon administration by its critics, and Yahya's willingness to talk with Awami Leaguers fell far short of India's demand for the unconditional release of Mujib and negotiation with Mujib and his supporters.

In late October, Mrs. Gandhi renewed her diplomatic offensive in visits to the capitals of major Western nations, during which she explained the inevitability of Bengali independence and the
intolerability of the problems facing India as a result of the crisis. Mrs. Gandhi's main target was Washington, for only Washington, she believed, could bend Pakistan to the extent necessary to prevent war. She was equally concerned to find out what the United States would do if a war erupted in the subcontinent. Nixon and Mrs. Gandhi met on November 4 and 5. Available accounts of the meeting suggest that both leaders were uncompromising. Nixon pressed on Mrs. Gandhi Islamabad's willingness to open negotiations with the Awami League, and stressed the need to allow Yahya time to resolve his problems peacefully. He also stressed the progress already accomplished through negotiations: the avoidance of famine in East Pakistan, the appointment of a civilian government there, the proclamation of amnesty for almost all the refugees, the promise not to execute Mujib, and the willingness of Islamabad to withdraw its forces unilaterally from the border of West Pakistan and India. Such progress, Nixon told Mrs. Gandhi, made war unnecessary, and his administration would view any aggressive act as deserving the most severe censure and redress.

Nixon also related the situation in South Asia to that in the Middle East, and to his geo-political concerns in both areas. "Just as American and Soviet interests were involved [in the Middle East]," he told Mrs. Gandhi, "so Chinese, Soviet, and American interests were at stake in South Asia.... It would be impossible to calculate precisely the steps which other great powers might take if India were to initiate hostilities." Clearly Nixon was warning Mrs. Gandhi of the possibility of Chinese intervention if she went to war against Pakistan.

Mrs. Gandhi assured Nixon that India's concern over East Pakistan was in no way motivated by a desire to harm West Pakistan. "India has
never wished the destruction of Pakistan or its permanent crippling," she told Nixon. "Above all, India seeks the restoration of stability. We want to eliminate chaos at all costs." 68 The Indian Prime Minister also wondered how the actions of her government, which was victimized by the influx of refugees from Pakistan, could be equated with those of the government of Yahya Khan, whose activities had caused the influx of refugees in her own country and the repression of the Bengali people in the East. She insisted again that the only hope for peace was the release of Mujib and the withdrawal of Pakistani forces from East Bengal. She left Washington disappointed. "[Nixon] was unwilling to accept my assessment of any situation," she said afterwards. "I always put forward my point of view, and he kept on repeating his." 69

At this time, the basic differences between India and the United States began to focus on the matter of timing. The United States wanted a longer timetable for Yahya Khan to restore civilian rule to East Pakistan than Mrs. Gandhi felt she could tolerate. Mrs. Gandhi had also apparently concluded by this time that Yahya would never take the actions she was demanding of him, however much time he had; and Yahya's record of forestalling every effort to wring substantive concessions from him suggests that she was correct. In spite of Yahya's statement that Mujib would be released if the people desired it, Islamabad made no move in that direction. But given the determination of the guerrilla forces by October and November, even Mujib's release would have meant little unless it were followed by East Pakistani independence. By October large areas of East Pakistan had been liberated by the guerrillas and with morale very low among Yahya's soldiers there, a guerrilla victory there was now a strong possibility. 70
reliance on U.S. support," *Newsweek* was still reporting as late as December 6, "Yahya resolutely clings to the view that Pakistan could be saved without the release of Mujib and without buckling under to the Mukti Bahini."

Mrs. Gandhi was well aware of the Mukti Bahini's determination to press for independence and of its increasing success inside East Pakistan. She knew too that these as well as other things were narrowing her own options and increasing the cost to her and her government of further delay in resolving the crisis. She therefore increased her support for the guerrillas lest her influence among them be diminished. By mid-November, both the press and intelligence sources in the United States were reporting that elements of the Indian army were actively supporting the Bengali rebels well inside East Pakistan. In the White House, this raised fears that Pakistan might retaliate by launching a counter-attack against India in the West, which would mean a general Indo-Pakistani war. The White House again stepped up its by now almost frantic search for a policy that would prevent this; but because no solution to the problem was possible without major reversals of policy which Kissinger and Nixon were unwilling to press on Yahya, nothing came of the effort. The White House thus became hostage to events it could not control, not even in a fundamental sense influence.

On November 22, the Indian army on the Eastern border responded to the shelling of Indian territory by Yahya's forces by making a large-scale incursion into East Pakistan and remaining there. The threat of general war was thus imminent. In fact, Kissinger considered this the actual outbreak of war, and blamed India for it. In the WSAG meeting that day, however, State Department representatives disputed
Kissinger's assessment of the incident on the grounds that there was not enough evidence to establish blame for the incident or draw conclusions about its significance. Kissinger then rejected the recommendation of the State Department for more pressure on Yahya's government, and instead urged State to take the border incident to the United Nations. He also informed the group of Nixon's decision to cut off economic aid to India because of the incident and to send cables to New Delhi, Moscow and Islamabad cautioning against war. 73

The next day, Nixon received a message from Yahya Khan describing repeated Indian military incursions into East Pakistan, and urging Nixon to undertake a "personal initiative at the present juncture" to defuse the situation while it "could still prove decisive in averting a catastrophe." 74 Nixon also received a message from Mrs. Gandhi's advising him not to take the Indo-Pakistan dispute to the Security Council. 75 This advice, Nixon and Kissinger felt, was an effort to cover up Indian actions by avoiding the necessity of having to defend them in public.

At the WSAG meeting of November 23, opinion was diverse, reflecting not only the split between State and the White House over South Asia but also the inability of anyone to come up with anything that promised to defuse the border tensions. The State Department agreed to send cables to Moscow and Islamabad urging restraint, but on the border incident itself advised delaying any action until the administration had "independent" confirmation of Indian aggression. The Department also advised against the cut-off of military aid to India on grounds that it would have no positive effect. 76 The next day, Mrs. Gandhi acknowledged publicly that Indian troops had crossed the East Pakistan border, but
she insisted the crossing was in self-defense, and she told Parliament that future decisions to cross the border would be left to military commanders on the scene. 77 Despite this disclosure, the State Department continued to recommend that the administration take no action against India and instead put further pressure on Pakistan for political concessions. "If there was a 'tilt' in the U.S. government at this stage," Kissinger wrote later of this stance, "objectively it was on the side of India. Bureaucratic paralysis had the practical effect of cooperating with the delaying action that India was conducting on the diplomatic front." The crisis, Kissinger felt, could have been controlled if the administration had acted with sufficient forcefulness against India as soon as news of the incursion of its army into East Pakistan had arrived in Washington. The loss of that opportunity, he believed, encouraged Mrs. Gandhi's defiant position. 78

On the same day, Nixon urged Secretary of State William Rogers to drop his opposition to bringing the border episode before the Security Council; but Rogers insisted the evidence on what happened was insufficient to get the Security Council to act against India. Though Nixon "afterwards fret[ted] to Kissinger about how to deal with the Secretary of State," he did not overrule Rogers. 79 The next day, November 25, the administration learned that Mrs. Gandhi had told her government she would escalate military activity in East Pakistan, and a day later the Soviet Union blocked a Japanese proposal for a Security Council meeting on the Indo-Pakistan crisis. At the same time Moscow informed American Ambassador Jacob Beam that it would support efforts to terminate Indian military operations in East Pakistan only if a political solution satisfactory to India was reached. These
developments prompted Nixon to send urgent pleas to Moscow, New Delhi, and Islamabad to do everything possible to end the fighting and avoid a general war.

The plea to Moscow, addressed to Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin, asked once again for Soviet cooperation in promoting a peaceful solution to the crisis and once more urged the Soviet Union to press New Delhi to withdraw its troops from East Pakistan. A simultaneous plea to Yahya sought to discourage him from attacking India from the West hoping thereby to relieve pressure on his army in the East. Kissinger and Nixon were especially fearful on the latter point, for they were certain that any military action by Yahya in the West would give India the pretext they thought India now sought to inflict a humiliating defeat on Yahya, and thereby dismember Pakistan. By this time Yahya was desperate and thus cooperative, and he responded to Nixon's plea by expressing eagerness to have United Nations observers on the Pakistani side of the Western border to substantiate the defensive nature of his forces deployed there. He also suggested that Ambassador Farland meet with Mujib's lawyers, and again affirmed his willingness to negotiate with the provisional government of Bangladesh.

Nixon's plea to Mrs. Gandhi informed her of Yahya's response on these points, and reminded her of Pakistan's standing offer of unilateral troop withdrawals. Pointing to her statement that Indian forces were engaged on Pakistani territory, Nixon cautioned that "the American people would not understand if Indian actions led to broad scale hostilities." Mrs. Gandhi ignored this warning, and instead accused the superpowers (meaning the United States) of overstepping their legitimate rights by complaining "because we have taken action to
defend our own border." Yahya's problems, she pointed out, were self-created and "we are not in a position to make it easier for him."

The response to Nixon's pleas by the three leaders was thus disappointing, and that fact dominated the NSAG meeting on November 29, at which discussion centered around the question of whether Mrs. Gandhi had made the decision to attack in the East before or after her recent talks with Nixon. Kissinger was certain that she had decided on war prior to the talks and had made the trip to Washington as a cover for her preparations. He justified this conclusion by pointing out that it was impossible for India to deploy the troops who made the incursion in so short a time as elapsed between the incursion and Mrs. Gandhi's return from Washington. Accepting Kissinger's reasoning on this issue, the NSAG at last and to his expressed satisfaction endorsed the cut off of aid to India. "But the State Department," Kissinger reported, "fought a dogged rearguard action to keep the reduction to a minimum and the directive sufficiently vague to permit the maximum administrative discretion." 

On December 1 and 2, the State Department announced cancellation of "all outstanding export licenses for shipment of ammunition and other military equipment [to India], amounting to a total of about $13.5 million." In making the announcement, State Department spokesman Charles W. Bray said the action was taken "in view of the deteriorating situation in South Asia and the continued military engagement between Indian and Pakistani armed forces." Another Department official noted the relatively small amount of American arms purchased by India, and thus affirmed that "the point of this move is political, not military. It's an attempt to underscore the Administration's belief that India can
and should take the steps to defuse the situation with Pakistan.85

The actual amount of arms affected by the ban was in fact small, but the political impact of the ban was considerable. The ban seemed not so much an attempt to influence India, for under the circumstances the United States obviously had very little leverage on that country, but an expression of administration's disapproval of India's action. New Delhi was therefore bitter over the ban, feeling that a policy which acted publicly against India but refrained from even criticizing Yahya's regime was not only unneutral but counter-productive. Mrs. Gandhi replied to the ban with a declaration that only the elected representatives of the people of Bangladesh could decide the future of that country, and in her view they would settle for nothing less than "liberation."86

The bases for the policy that led to the ban were largely those put forward by Kissinger, and there are valid grounds for questioning many of them. In the period following Mrs. Gandhi's visit to Washington, Kissinger still believed that Yahya Khan sincerely desired a peaceful resolution of the crisis and would succeed in his efforts to achieve that end if Mrs. Gandhi would give him enough time. He also believed that the administration could have pressured Mrs. Gandhi into foregoing war but was prevented from doing so by the delaying tactics of the State Department; that India had committed aggression in its incursions into East Pakistan; and that Mrs. Gandhi resorted to war with Soviet approval and encouragement, without which she would not have done so. Kissinger's insistence that Yahya was moving toward reform at a reasonable pace and should therefore be subjected to no additional American pressure cannot be squared with Yahya's actions. Though Yahya
had promised to implement his plan for civilian rule by the end of December, he made a speech on December 17 (which was not broadcast in Pakistan), in which he described his promised new constitution as one that would confirm himself as president and commander-in-chief of the army for an additional five years, and leave in his hands the power to proclaim martial law and to override his ministers. It is thus clear that Yahya was not prepared to transfer power to civilian authority; and when New Delhi "shrugged off" Kissinger's proposal at this time for full autonomy for East Pakistan by March 1972, the action was justified. Nor is there any evidence that Yahya even at this late date intended to give meaningful, to say nothing of equitable, representation to the Awami League in his promised civilian government. It is much more likely that he intended no more than token or even puppet representation of the League. Certainly there are few instances in history in which a military usurper has voluntarily surrendered power.

Kissinger's insistence that Washington had the means if it had only had the will to dissuade Mrs. Gandhi from moving into East Pakistan is equally questionable. Given Mrs. Gandhi's personality, the popular support for her military actions within India, and the backing of the Soviets at the United Nations, it is difficult to imagine what threatening gesture from the United States could have stayed her from the course she had adopted. In fact, the suspension of military aid increased her popular support in India and emboldened officials in her government to declare openly that they would not accept any solution short of complete independence for Bangladesh.

And it is surely evident by now that Mrs. Gandhi was no puppet of the Soviet Union. It is true that by supplying military equipment to
India the Soviets encouraged and made possible India's resort to war. But to credit the Kremlin with control over her action is to transform what was on her part a desire not to offend the Soviets into a willingness to follow their dictates. In addition, her supplies of arms from the Soviets must be viewed in conjunction with those from China to Pakistan and the use to which Pakistan sought to make of Chinese support. It must also be juxtaposed to the continued American support for Yahya and the effects that had on his continuing refusal to do the things necessary to solve the problems of East Pakistan and the Bengali people. When Yahya "gratefully acknowledged the support of the People's Republic of China and the United States," he was not speaking idly.

Even Kissinger's remark that Yahya had authorized the United States to contact Mujib through his defense attorney needs clarification. In a cable to Secretary of State William Rogers, Ambassador Kenneth Keating described Kissinger's words on this point as "overstatement." According to the reports received by Keating, Yahya had told Ambassador Joseph Farland on November 29 that he was agreeable to a meeting between Farland and Sheikh Mujib's defense attorney, A. K. Brohi (but not with Sheikh Mujib himself), because such a meeting would enable Farland "to obtain from Brohi at least his general impression as to the staff of the trial and its conduct." The purpose, in other words, was to convince the Americans that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had had competent counsel at his trial and that the trial had therefore—presumably—been fair. In any case, Keating was unaware of any specific authorization from Yahya "to contact Mujib" through Brohi, and furthermore, according to Keating, the whole matter came to an end on December 2, when Yahya Khan told Farland that "Brohi allegedly was not interested in seeing him."
Thus the diplomacy of the final episode preceding the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971 played itself out. The initial incursion of Indian army units into East Pakistan was in response to the shelling of Indian territory by Pakistan forces inside the East. But once those units advanced into East Pakistan they remained there until the actual war began. This is what Nixon and Kissinger had sought to prevent; but no sooner had they failed to get Mrs. Gandhi to remove her troops from the East than they found themselves facing what was to them the ultimate calamity. On December 3, only eleven days after Indian forces had moved into East Pakistan, Yahya made what can only be called a suicidal move. He ordered his army to invade India from West Pakistan while his airforce struck Indian airbases near the border. This sealed the fate of Yahya, and gave Mrs. Gandhi the grounds she needed to accomplish her purposes in Bangladesh.
CHAPTER VI—NOTES

2. Quoted in Hersh, The Price of Power, p. 454.
7. Signers included Nobel Prize winners Paul Samuelson and Salvador Luria (M.I.T.) and Simon Kuznetz (Harvard); such distinguished academics as Gabriel Almond (Stanford), James Tobin (Yale), Talcot Parsons, Wassily Leontief, and Daniel Bell (Harvard); such eminent Asian specialists as Henry Rosovsky and John Montgomery (Harvard), Richard L. Park (Michigan), Leo Rose and Gerald Berman (Berkeley); and many others. See ibid., 13: 548-49.
8. "Conflict in Pakistan: Background and Prospect."
9. "Pakistan: Background to a Crisis."
14. Relief Problems in East Pakistan and India.
15. In a letter (August 2, 1971) to Secretary of State William Rogers, Ambassador Keating wrote, "I am not sanguine about the possibility of totally avoiding ... criticism of the Administration when [Kennedy] arrives in India. The pressures are simply too great. Nevertheless, Kennedy obviously knows the ground rules, and I will do my best to assist him toward his stated goal of developing something "sympathetic and non-polemic" which might lead toward a solution of the imbroglio." WHCF 20 India 66.
16. U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Judiciary, Hearings Before Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees, Crisis in South Asia, A Report by

17 Relief Problems in East Pakistan and India, pt. III, October 1971, pp. 374,465-75.

18 In his report from the White House on December 9, 1971, Marvin Kalb wrote, "Several Democratic Presidential hopefuls, led by Senator Edward Kennedy and Muskie, were beginning to use the White House's attitude toward India to make potential hay." WHCF CO India 66.


22 Carnegie papers. Some notable Senators who opposed the Nixon administration's policy were Edmund S. Muskie (Democrat, Maine), Walter Mondale (Democrat, Minnesota), Robert P. Griffin (Republican, Michigan), William Proxmire (Democrat, Wisconsin); and Congressmen James R. Grover, Jr. (Republican, New Jersey), Mike McCormack (Democrat, Washington), Seymour Hershman (Republican, New York), and James A. Burke (Democrat, Massachusetts).


24 Memorandum from John Scali to Kissinger, 7 December 1971, ibid.


27 Ibid., 13:505-507.

28 Ibid., 13:513.

29 Ibid., 13:515.

30 Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon, 2 August 1971, WHCF CO Pakistan 115.


32 Before August the official view, that all was "normal" in East

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Pakistan as the Government of Pakistan contended, led the administration to resist Congressional efforts—especially those of Senator Kennedy—to officially acknowledge the danger of famine.

42 Ibid.
43 Hindustan Standard, 10 June 1971.
47 Ibid.
48 BBC broadcast reported in Hindustan Standard, 10 November 1971.
49 Financial Times, 9 November 1971.
50 Yahya Khan's interview with Maynard Parker, Newsweek, 8 November 1971.
53 See Indira Gandhi's interview with Australian Radio, 27 October
1971, Basic documents, 12:110; and Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 873-74.

55 Ibid.
56 Raul, Kissinger Years, p. 90.
57 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 874.
58 Nixon, Memoirs, pp. 526-27; and Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 875-76.
59 Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 876.
60 Nixon, "The Emerging Structure of Peace."
61 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 877.
63 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 878.
64 Ibid.
65 With regard to the proposal for troop withdrawal, Mrs. Gandhi remarked, "Pakistan's line of withdrawal to their bases is very close to the borders whereas [India's] bases are very far." See New York Times, 19 October 1971.
66 Nixon, Memoirs, pp. 525-26; also see Raul, Kissinger Years, pp. 77-80.
67 Nixon, Memoirs, p. 525. At a White House dinner, instead of toasting relations with the United States, Mrs. Gandhi directly criticized American policy, and to Nixon, her remarks were a calculated insult. Nixon had included among the dinner guests some of his Democratic opponents in Congress as a gesture of goodwill to Mrs. Gandhi, who used the occasion to appeal to them over Nixon's head. This deliberate courting of his political opponents hardened Nixon's attitude.
68 Nixon, Memoirs, p. 525.
73 Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 887-88.
74 Yahya Khan to Nixon, 21 November 1971, WHCF CO Pakistan 115.
75 Indira Gandhi to Nixon, 18 November 1971, WHCF CO India 66.
76 Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 888-89.
77 Facts on File 31 (November 1971): 924.
78 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 890.
79 Ibid.
81 Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 891-92.
82 Ibid., p. 892.
83 Ibid., p. 893.
84 According to Martin Kalb and Bernard Kalb, Joseph Sisco "battled" with Kissinger in the NSAG meetings against the administration's anti-Indian policy. See Kalb and Kalb, Kissinger, pp. 258-59.
85 Facts on File 31 (December 1971): 924.
87 Basic Documents, 7: 300-06.
89 Pakistan Horizon 25 (1971): 143.
90 Anderson Papers, p. 238.

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On December 2, the day before Indian troops entered East Pakistan, Yahya Khan requested American military assistance under the 1959 Pakistan-American bilateral agreement. That agreement stated that in the event of aggression against Pakistan, the American government would take "appropriate action, including the use of armed forces" to "assist Pakistan at its request."¹ The State Department and the White House had differing assessments of what these obligations entailed in the present crisis. The State Department believed that the 1959 agreement required the United States to provide Pakistan assistance only in the event of communist aggression, i.e., by the Soviet Union or China, and had no bearing on the present war. The Department also felt by the beginning of December that East Pakistan's independence was inevitable as well as desirable, that India had limited aims in East Pakistan, that the possibility of Soviet intervention there was remote and of Chinese intervention unlikely, and that for all these reasons a positive response to Yahya's request for military assistance was unnecessary and unwise. Because India was the dominant power in the region, the State Department sought its friendship, and regarded White House support for Pakistan as unnecessarily antagonizing a potentially important ally.

Nixon and Kissinger, on the other hand, believed that even though the 1959 agreement was specifically aimed at communist threats, verbal and written assurances to Pakistan by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson had included pledges of support against Indian aggression.² The events of early December had reinforced their conviction that India was trying to
dismember an American ally with Soviet assistance, and if Washington failed to help Pakistan against what they regarded as a clear act of aggression, they were certain that China and the United States' allies would be made distrustful of American guarantees and Moscow would be encouraged to create similar disturbances elsewhere. In addition, they felt that the United States should do whatever it could to help Pakistan because India was acting militarily when a political solution to the problem was still possible and even likely. 3

These arguments are of course questionable. That the 1959 agreement with Pakistan was not aimed against India is evident from President Eisenhower's assurance to India at the time that the so-called Eisenhower Doctrine restricted the use of American armed forces "to cases of armed aggression from any country controlled by international communism." 4 On later occasions, other presidents did assure Pakistan of military support, but as Kissinger himself points out, these assurances were made to evade Pakistan's requests for additional military aid. The argument that a failure to assist Pakistan against India in the present crisis would diminish American credibility among its other allies has also proved to be faulty. Although Washington failed to prevent Pakistan's dismemberment as a result of the December war, that fact did not undermine the Western alliance or the new relationship with China.

Events in the subcontinent now overshadowed the administration's indecision. On December 3, Pakistan's airforce made strikes on eight Indian airfields and its ground forces made limited incursions across the West Pakistani border into India. According to Kissinger, this occurred because Mrs. Gandhi had maneuvered Yahya Khan into a bind: if
Yahya failed to respond forcefully to India's invasion of East Pakistan, his country would disintegrate; if he did respond forcefully, an Indian invasion of West Pakistan was inevitable. So, in Kissinger's words, Yahya chose "what he considered to be a path of honor. In a simple-minded soldierly fashion he decided that if Pakistan would be destroyed or dismembered, it should go down fighting."\(^5\)

This explanation ignores more plausible, if less exalted, motivations for Yahya's action. According to some analysts, by year's end Yahya's regime needed to divert popular attention from the unrest that had developed in West Pakistan because of heavy casualties in the East, and the regime hoped to accomplish this by means of victory in a surprise attack on India in the West. Moreover, so this view runs, the regime realized that Pakistan could not win a sustained war of attrition against India. Its only hope, therefore, lay in a decisive initial strike that destroyed the Indian airforce and guaranteed Pakistan the air superiority necessary to sustain its army against India. This, the regime hoped, would create a situation in which diplomatic efforts and international pressures would force a ceasefire before India could recover.\(^6\)

According to another view of Yahya's motives, by December military strategists in Pakistan knew East Pakistan was a lost cause, and the only way to avoid humiliation from the loss of the East was to occupy some Indian territory in the West, where the Pakistani army was much stronger. A pre-emptive air strike, according to this view, would cripple the Indian airforce, paralyze the Indian army, and give Pakistan the opportunity to occupy all or part of Kashmir.\(^7\)

The purposes of Yahya and the Pakistani army, in fact, encompassed
all these considerations. Army leaders knew defeat in East Pakistan was now certain, so they decided to give up most of the East but hold on to Dhaka, which was surrounded by a network of rivers that made it militarily defensible. This is evident from the following statement of General Paul Marc Henry, head of the United Nations mission in Dhaka:

We expected a tragedy of the same dimension as Stalingrad. [The Pakistani army] had prepared for a war of attrition [in Dhaka]. After a month or two, according to the strategy, the diplomatic situation would change. Pressure would increase for India to leave East Pakistan alone. The Americans and the Chinese would send increasing amounts of supplies to the Pakistanis. The Russians would be forced to back down or enter into a major triangular conflict with the Americans and Chinese.8

In the West, Pakistani air attacks focused on forward Indian air bases capable of providing air cover for ground forces fighting on the border, while the main thrust of ground operations was an invasion into Kashmir. This indicates that Pakistan hoped to compensate for its losses in the East by acquisition of Kashmir in the West. Thus, the twin objectives become clear: the capture of all or part of Kashmir would redeem the prestige of the army regime, and control of Dhaka would deny the Indians a full victory in East Pakistan. Achievement of these objectives, however, depended on the ability of the United States and China to pressure India to accept a ceasefire before its forces in the West could recover from the initial attacks. This was of course the flaw in the whole calculation. Sino-American pressure on India was ineffective, and in the end the pre-emptive strike succeeded in demonstrating only how irrational the military government could be.

The Nixon administration took the outbreak of war with utmost seriousness. The State Department wanted to take the issue at once to
the United Nations, and until that body could act wanted to adopt an even-handed policy that would enable Washington to arbitrate between the warring countries. Kissinger saw these recommendations as a pretext to avoid supporting an ally and condemning an aggressor. But he agreed to take the issue to the Security Council since there the White House would be relatively free from State Department constraints. Nixon believed the war jeopardized his China initiative, and because of the domestic pressures on his administration he feared that an even-handed policy would work to India's advantage. Therefore, he too endorsed the proposal to take the matter to the Security Council, and directed that the United States take a strong stand there against India.

The NSAG assembled on December 3 to formulate American policy on the war. There, Kissinger advocated a vigorous response against India, doing so, he said, at the President's instructions. He complained, "I am getting hell every half hour from the President that we are not being tough enough on India. He wants to tilt in favor of Pakistan. He feels everything we do comes out otherwise." This, however, did little to affect State Department thinking. When Kissinger indicated the President's desire to cut off economic aid to India, State Department officials responded by suggesting a similar cut off against Pakistan. Kissinger insisted, however, that "the President had directed that [the] cut-off was to be directed against India only." The following day, December 4, the NSAG finally agreed to request an immediate meeting of the Security Council, to adopt a pro-Pakistani approach there, and to continue economic aid to Pakistan—but not to India.

The rapid recovery of Indian forces in the West and the simultaneous advances of those in the East alarmed the White House, so also on
December 4, Joseph Sisco made the administration's views of the situation known when he briefed the press on "U.S. criticism of Indian policy." Sisco acknowledged that the army actions against the Bengali population had been "regrettable" and "had given rise to a number of difficulties" in the initial stages of the hostilities in the East, but he claimed that India was responsible for the hostilities spreading to the West. He insisted that administration policy was even-handed, pointing out that Washington had counseled restraint on both governments, had provided humanitarian assistance to both, and had presented proposals for military disengagement and political accommodation which Pakistan accepted and India rejected. At the UN, Sisco announced, the United States would press for a resolution urging an immediate ceasefire.13

Though Sisco's statements accurately reflected administration thinking, they hardly represented an even-handed view of events in the subcontinent. He termed the army action in East Pakistan "regrettable," but failed to point out that the atrocities perpetrated there were the main incentive, the real reason, for the rebellion of the Bengali people. By charging India with sole responsibility for hostilities in the West, Sisco ignored the role of the Bengali guerilla forces, who were unwilling to accept anything short of independence, and whose military successes were behind the desperation that prompted Yahya and his army to attack in the West. It was they who had kept hostilities alive after the initial repression, and though they needed and got military assistance from India, they more than India supplied the dynamic that forced the crisis to resolution. Sisco also ignored the economic and political difficulties the Indian government faced because
of the civil war in the East and the refugees on its own soil.

Furthermore, in trying to exonerate the military regime, Sisco implied that Yahya Khan sincerely desired a dialogue with the Bengali exiles, a position that Senator William Saxbe among others had challenged. "I suggested to Yahya that he proceed with granting at least a degree of autonomy to East Pakistan," Saxbe wrote after returning from a trip to the subcontinent. "He told me he was willing to do this and he seemed very sincere. But ten hours later, Pakistani planes bombed six military airfields inside India and this in turn triggered a land invasion of East Pakistan by Indian troops. Yahya Khan lied to me." 14

Sisco's press briefing reflected White House, not State Department thinking. Of it, Marvin Kalb later wrote, "It was clear the word had come from the White House, from the President himself by way of National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger." 15 What is equally clear is that Sisco's briefing upset his superiors at the State Department. This is confirmed by Kissinger's later remark that Sisco's press statement so displeased Secretary of State Rogers that Rogers prevented Sisco from repeating it on television. 16 Under such circumstances, Kissinger felt justified in excluding the State Department from policy formulation for the duration of the crisis.

On December 4, Ambassador George Bush introduced a resolution in the Security Council denouncing India's resort to arms and calling for an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of all forces invading into either country, including East Pakistan. The Soviet Union vetoed the resolution, as a result of which Kissinger promptly informed the Soviet embassy in Washington that Moscow's support of India's aggression could hamper improvement in Soviet-American relations. 17 Two days later, on
December 6, India extended diplomatic recognition to Bangladesh, an act which Nixon and Kissinger regarded as precluding any possibility of a political accommodation between India and Pakistan.

On the same day, in a television interview, Ambassador Bush expressed White House annoyance at the course of events by accusing India of "clear cut aggression." The White House also announced that the suspension of economic aid to India was a response to that aggression. It argued that the purpose of the aid was to support economic development, an objective that could not be pursued while India was at war. Economic aid to Pakistan would continue, however, because it was earmarked for relief in East Pakistan in the form of fertilizer for the next rice crop. The logic of this differentiation would seem to be undermined by the fact, which the White House announcement ignored, that agricultural operations in most of East Pakistan had ceased and that funds earmarked for fertilizer could be used for military purposes. The suspension of aid did not, however, influence Indian military action in East or West Pakistan.

On December 6, Richard Helms, Director of the CIA, told the WSAG, still exploring policy options, that "for all practical purposes [Bangladesh was] now an independent country recognized by India." At the same time, Joseph Sisco argued for the State Department's position that the Indians would pull their troops out of East Pakistan once the Pakistani forces there were disarmed, and that that part of the war would cease. As for the war in the West, General William Westmoreland, the army chief-of-staff, thought it would take a month for the Indians to transfer their forces from the East, and only then would India be able to control the situation in the West. Everyone believed that the
defeat of the Pakistani army in the East was now a certainty, but
Kissinger at least was still searching for ways to take some of the
sting out of that defeat for Yahya. The embargo earlier forced on the
administration prohibited Washington from shipping arms to Pakistan, so
Kissinger raised the possibility of sending arms via Jordan and Saudi
Arabia, both of whom were anxious to assist Pakistan. The State
Department, however, objected to the proposal because such a move would
be illegal. Kissinger therefore instructed the NSC to explore the
possibility of providing arms directly to Pakistan, because "the
President was not inclined to let the Paks be defeated." 20

The contradictions between the administration's stated policy of
even-handedness and its obviously anti-Indian activities and
inclinations aroused strong criticism. 21 On December 5, Consul General
Herbert Spivak cabled the State Department from Dhaka that the "U.S.
position emerging as [a] result [of] recent actions [was] beginning to
take on [a] definite pro-Pakistan slant, and accordingly, [was] bound to
be increasingly resented by [the] BD [Bangladesh leadership], [the] MB
[Mukti Bahini], and [the] overwhelming majority of [the] East Bengali
People." Ambassador Keating in India also sent a series of dispatches
complaining that the White House was pushing Mrs. Gandhi into the arms
of the Russians. 22

Domestic criticism of the administration's anti-Indian stance did
have some effect. A presidential election was scheduled for the
following year and Nixon, who was running for a second term, did not
want to give his rivals an issue on which his was the unpopular side.
Accordingly, he met with Democratic and Republican congressional leaders
and pledged that the United States would maintain neutrality and not
become "physically involved in any way" in the war. Meanwhile, on December 7 Kissinger himself held a press conference, because Secretary Rogers had prohibited State Department personnel from giving press briefings, and the administration wanted to present its case to the American people in the most favorable light possible.

At his press conference, Kissinger insisted that neither he nor Nixon was prejudiced against India but that they both now felt it necessary to criticize India because they did not favor military solutions to political problems. He admitted that the White House had not condemned Pakistan's use of force in East Pakistan, but argued that that policy was dictated by the need to preserve American influence in Islamabad. He also argued that that policy had succeeded. As a result of American prodding, he said, Yahya Khan had announced a timetable for the return of civilian rule in the East and had offered amnesty to all refugees who returned to their homes from India. He claimed too that Washington had initiated its relief program in East Pakistan at the request of the Indian government, and that because of assurances from Mrs. Gandhi herself that her government discouraged war, the administration had not had "the slightest inkling" that war had been imminent in South Asia. In fact, he said, on November 19, Secretary of State Rogers had informed the Indian ambassador that Yahya had promised to withdraw his forces from the border and open negotiations with Mujib, and India's response, two days later, had been the incursion of its army into East Pakistan.

In a cable from New Delhi to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Keating later challenged Kissinger's version of these events. Keating denied that the relief program in East Pakistan had been initiated at
the request of the Indian government, and pointed out instead that the latter did not welcome the program at all because it might "bail out Yahya." As concerned Yahya's offer of amnesty, Keating observed that it applied only to those not charged with treason and thus excluded most of the Bengali leadership. He also refuted another of Kissinger's statements—that both he, Keating, and Rogers had informed Ambassador Jha that Washington favored autonomy for East Pakistan. And with so much information flowing from New Delhi and Islamabad about the certainty of an Indo-Pakistan war, Keating found it incredible that Washington could have been surprised by the outbreak of war.

On December 7, Yahya Khan informed the White House that the position of his army in East Pakistan was disintegrating, and without immediate assistance complete defeat there was certain and imminent. In face of the mounting domestic criticism of their policies, Nixon and Kissinger decided that the best way to respond to Yahya's urgent plea, the best way that is to prevent India from destroying Pakistan, was to increase pressure on Moscow to restrain India. In a strongly worded letter to Leonid Brezhnev, Nixon warned that improvement in Soviet-American relations would be impossible unless Moscow acted at once to "restrain India" and "restore territorial integrity in the subcontinent." The Soviets responded by calling on Pakistan to recognize the independence of Bangladesh.

At about the same time, the CIA received a report, allegedly from inside Mrs. Gandhi's cabinet, indicating that India would continue the war until Kashmir, a part of which was still occupied by the Pakistani army, was liberated and the Pakistani army and airforce destroyed. The report also claimed that Mrs. Gandhi had told her colleagues that if the
Chinese "rattled the sword," the Soviets would initiate a diversionary action against China in Sinkiang. 29 This intelligence led Nixon and Kissinger to conclude that unless they could prevent it West Pakistan would sustain a complete military defeat and that a Sino-Soviet war was not unlikely. 30

Kissinger and Nixon took this intelligence report at face value, and one may speculate that they did so because it gave them grounds for justifying policies they already wanted to pursue. The report was therefore never appraised by the canons of intelligence evaluation, and its reliability was never authoritatively assessed. There is reason to question its reliability. According to Jha and other Indian officials, by late 1971 Mrs. Gandhi never discussed the most sensitive military matters in the full cabinet, reserving them instead for a small subcabinet of trusted advisors, among whom CIA infiltration was entirely unlikely. In his analysis of the intelligence report, Christopher Van Hollen of the State Department has noted that "Nixon and Kissinger were virtually alone in the U.S. government in interpreting the report as they did." 31

Now convinced of the correctness of their policies, Nixon and Kissinger were more than ever impatient of the bureaucratic resistance they continued to encounter and of their inability to act decisively in a crisis they considered of supreme strategic importance. Their impatience was reinforced by the failure of the United Nations to condemn India and achieve a ceasefire in the subcontinent. Under these circumstances, the NSC met on December 8 for another review of policy options. Earlier in the week, the group had been skeptical of reports that India intended to "extinguish" West Pakistan once the war in the
East was over. On December 4, no one had challenged Richard Helms's assessment that there was little chance of a great power confrontation as a result of the war, something that would surely have occurred had India tried to destroy or dismember West Pakistan. On the 6th, General William Westmoreland had described the Indian strike toward Sind as a diversion to force Pakistan to pull its reserves from Kashmir and to capture some Pakistani territory to appease Indian public opinion upset over the losses in Kashmir. These remarks indicate that even up to December 6, Washington did not believe that India intended to dismember Pakistan. By the 8th this assessment had changed. On that day, Richard Helms reported that the CIA now believed that Mrs. Gandhi would not end the war until she had eliminated Pakistan's army and airforce. At the same time General John Ryan of the Joint Chiefs of Staff reported that while it would take considerable time for India to shift its ground forces from East to West Pakistan, airborne troops could be moved within six days. The war, in other words, might be shorter and more disastrous than anyone heretofore believed, which meant Washington had even less time to forestall Pakistan's utter collapse.

Kissinger summarized these assessments by concluding that "if the Indians smash the Pak airforce and the armored forces we would have a deliberate Indian attempt to force the disintegration of Pakistan." Joseph Sisco immediately challenged this conclusion by referring to Indian statements denying any intention of appropriating Pakistani territory. Kissinger's response was to ask for an assessment of Pakistani capabilities and prospects in Kashmir. The meeting concluded with no agreed-upon answer to the question Henry Kissinger posed at the outset concerning "what the next turn of the screw might be?"
By this time, the administration had applied, without effect, all the means available to it of pressuring India. Its efforts to find heretofore unrecognized obligations to come to Pakistan's defense under the SEATO and CENTO treaties had come to naught, as had an effort to justify American involvement in the war on grounds that the Indian blockade of Pakistani ports was illegal. It was out of this desperate search for viable policy options that the administration decided to send an air carrier task force into the eastern Indian Ocean. The purpose in doing so was to aggravate Indian fears that Washington would supply weapons to Pakistan and even step in militarily to avoid the total defeat of its ally.

At the direction of Kissinger, the State Department sent secret cables to American embassies instructing them to do nothing to allay these fears. One of the cables, addressed to the embassies in Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) and New Delhi, stated, "In view of intelligence reports spelling out Indian military objectives in West Pakistan, we do not want in any way to ease Indian government concern re help Pakistan might receive from outside sources. Consequently, the embassy should give India no assurances re third country transfers." Indian fears on the latter point were well grounded. King Hussein of Jordan, for example, was under heavy pressure from the Pakistani military for arms aid, and Hussein, in turn, was pressing Washington for help in providing the arms. "[The Ambassador] should tell King Hussein we fully appreciate heavy pressure he feels himself under by virtue of request from Pakistan," Washington cabled Amman on December 9. "We are nevertheless not yet in a position to give him definite response, while subject remains under intensive review at very high level of U.S. government."
As the United States stepped up its pressure on India in the early days of the war, the outbreak of war had a very different impact in Moscow. After the initial Indian incursion in East Pakistan on November 22, Soviet press coverage of the conflict continued to reflect Moscow's increasingly firm commitment to India. That commitment was affirmed again on November 23, when Ambassador Aleksei A. Ridonov informed Yahya Khan of Soviet insistence that he make an immediate political settlement with the Bengali rebels. At the same time, the Soviet press restated Soviet support for India and "Bengal" and praised the Indo-Soviet treaty.

There were several reasons for this hardening Soviet commitment. Moscow could not remain indifferent to developments so near the Soviet border. In view of their treaty obligations to India, the Soviets could not sit idly by after Kissinger warned Jha that even if China intervened on behalf of Pakistan in a war with India, the latter should not count on American support. Soviet leaders were also sensitive about Yahya's public boasts about the firmness of Chinese pledges to support him in a war with India. The interests of the Soviet Union demanded that world opinion see it as honoring its treaty commitments to India and that the conflict remain localized. Both goals required the Soviets to act to avoid intervention by China or the United States, and that became the chief object of Soviet diplomacy from late November until the war ended.

As long as the war remained localized, the conflict in fact worked to Soviet advantage. Because the Indians were winning decisively, the war gave the Soviets a public relations victory in the superpower game of one-up-man-ship. They were backing the winning side in a cause viewed highly favorably by world opinion. At the same time, they were
able to revel in the discomfiture of their rivals, whose own actions were discrediting the revolutionary posture of China in the Third World as the champion of people's liberation movements while also exposing the leader of the "free world" as the champion of a repressive dictatorship. The Soviet press made a concerted effort to exploit these advantages. On December 5, it demanded that the world powers keep "hands off" the "Hindustan Peninsula" and refrain from "any measure that might entail their eventual involvement in the conflict and an aggravation of the situation." 38

In China, the advent of war had a quite different effect. Toward the end of November, as India increased its military support to the Mukti Bahini, the Chinese government reiterated its own "resolute" support for Pakistan, and when, on December 2, Pakistan closed its border with China to all foreigners, the move was taken to indicate the arrival of increased military aid from the People's Republic. 39 The increase, which was real, reflected Beijing's dual fears that the Soviet Union would use the war to advance its influence in the subcontinent and India would use it to humble China's most dependable non-Communist ally. 40 On December 3, the Peking Review carried a report entitled "Most Absurd Logic; Flagrant Aggression" accusing India of plotting to create a "Manchukuo" in East Pakistan, and alleging that the Indian aggression was approved of and abetted by the Soviet government. 41

Throughout the war, however, the Sino-Soviet dueling remained verbal, not military, and took place mainly in the press and the United Nations. In the latter, China and the United States invariably aligned themselves against India and the Soviet Union during the war, in the Security Council as well as the General Assembly. Thus, on December 4,
when the United States requested the emergency session of the Security Council and asked for a condemnation of Indian aggression, an immediate ceasefire, and a withdrawal of hostile armed forces from both countries, China supported the request and the Soviet Union vetoed it.

On December 5, three other draft resolutions were submitted to the Security Council. The Soviets called on the Council to support its resolution which called for a solution to the crisis satisfactory to India and the Bangladesh provisional government, the Chinese urged an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of forces from both countries, and an eight-nation resolution called for a ceasefire and mutual withdrawal of forces, and asked India and Pakistan to cooperate fully with the United Nations in aiding the refugees. China vetoed the Soviet resolution, the Soviets vetoed that of the eight nations, and the Chinese, anticipating a Soviet veto, withdrew theirs. Thus all efforts to frame an acceptable resolution in the Security Council were unsuccessful; the Soviet Union refused to accept any proposal which condemned India and called for a ceasefire, while the United States and China refused to accept one which did not.

The United States and China then decided, on December 6, to take the issue to the powerless but veto-free General Assembly. Two days later, the Assembly passed a resolution calling for a ceasefire and mutual withdrawal of forces, urging India and Pakistan to cooperate with the Secretary General to repatriate the refugees, and asking the Security Council to do whatever it could to further these goals. Pakistan promptly accepted this resolution, but India deferred a decision as its armies moved toward victory in both fronts. Four days later, on December 12, New Delhi rejected the resolution, complaining
that because "in calling for a ceasefire, the UN made no distinction between the aggressor and its victims." 44

This rejection reinforced the White House conviction that India had designs on West as well as East Pakistan. Alarmed by news that Indian troops had reached the outskirts of Dhaka and that Indian commanders were demanding the surrender of the large Pakistani army entrapped there, the White House took the issue once again to the Security Council. While the Council debated the issue anew, the White House fretted that the prolonged debates served no purpose but to provide India the time needed to destroy Pakistan. Kissinger and Nixon now found additional evidence that this was indeed India's objective in a conversation between Ambassador Jha and Under-Secretary of State John Irwin. When Irwin sought assurances from Jha that India would seize no territory in West Pakistan, Jha assured him India had no designs on Pakistan itself, but with respect to Azad Kashmir, that small part of Kashmir annexed by Pakistan as a result of the Indo-Pakistan war of 1948, he could make no promises. 45

This convinced the White House that India intended to keep Azad Kashmir, an act Nixon and Kissinger professed to believe would effectively destroy Pakistan, for without East Pakistan and Azad Kashmir, they insisted Pakistan would no longer be a viable nation. These conclusions were questionable, to say the least. As the State Department was then explaining, all of Kashmir, including Azad Kashmir, was disputed territory, which is why it was the object of the main thrust of the West Pakistan army, and on both of those accounts India as well as Pakistan would want to occupy as much of it as possible before agreeing to a ceasefire. 46 And for the same reasons, India could not be
expected to divulge its intentions there as long as the war continued. Again, the White House confused India's evident intention to destroy the Pakistani army and airforce with its own fears that an Indian victory would mean the destruction of Pakistan itself.

At this point, Nixon and Kissinger concluded that only intervention in the form of pressure by the superpowers could prevent Pakistan's destruction, and they turned again to Moscow for help. In a strongly worded letter, Nixon urged Brezhnev to stop the aggression by India, a nation over which, "by virtue of its treaty, the Soviet Union had great influence and for whose action Moscow must share responsibility." At the same time, Nixon told Vladimir Matskevich, the Soviet Minister for Agriculture, who was then visiting Washington, that the war in the subcontinent had created obstacles to the improvement of American-Soviet relations, and warned him that Washington would not tolerate a total defeat of Pakistan.

As these efforts continued, the White House turned again to the United Nations. On December 10, Ambassador George Bush raised in the Security Council a Pakistani proposal that abandoned the demand for withdrawal of the Indian army and called instead for an in-place ceasefire monitored by UN observers. The White House submitted this proposal too to the Soviet embassy, accompanied by a verbal threat that the United States would come to Pakistan's assistance if the integrity of West Pakistan was threatened. The air carrier task force then moving into the Indian Ocean was meant in part to buttress this threat.

The decision to send this task force within striking distance of the war was actually made with several things in mind. On December 6, during a discussion of the problem of evacuating American citizens from
Dhaka, the WSG explored the idea of a naval evacuation after it was reported that aerial fighting over the city might make air evacuation too dangerous. At that time it had not been clear how rapidly the Indians would complete their victory in the East; it was becoming increasingly clear, however, that it might be necessary, and soon, to evacuate the Pakistani army from the East to prevent its annihilation or unconditional surrender. This was an especially vexatious problem because of Indian air and naval superiority everywhere in the East. As General Westmoreland told the WSG on December 6, there was "no means of evacuating West Pakistani forces from the East, particularly in view of Indian naval superiority" and of the fact that Pakistan simply did not have the aircraft to effect an air evacuation. An American carrier force on the scene would of course change this, and that consideration was another reason for the decision to order the task force into the area. Still another reason was intelligence reports that a Soviet naval task force was off Sri Lanka headed toward the Bay of Bengal. 49

Larger strategic considerations were thus also involved in the dispatch of the task force. The American navy, which had only a small presence in the Indian Ocean, had been concerned over Soviet eagerness to fill the power vacuum left in that ocean by the withdrawal of the British fleet earlier that year. American strategists feared that if the American navy did not establish a presence there, the Indian Ocean would become a Russian lake. In fact, beginning in 1970, the National Security Council had prepared a series of assessments of possible Soviet naval threats to American interests in the Indian Ocean, but none of the assessments had been implemented because there was no consensus over the degree of the Soviet threat or what should be done about it. 50
With the outbreak of war in South Asia, the Navy repeated its call for a strong presence in the Indian Ocean. Naval planners presented Kissinger a "Plan for Show of Force Operations in the Pakistan-India Area" during the current crisis, which recommended sending a naval task force to the Bay of Bengal to divert the attention of the Indian navy and airforce from East Pakistani targets, and to break the Indian blockade of East Pakistani ports. It also recommended that the 82nd Airborne Division be placed on alert and prepared for immediate deployment to that task force from its home base in North Carolina. To ensure that the Russians and the Indians learned of this mobilization, the plan recommended that several African nations be asked for permission to a fly over their air space. The pretext for the request was to be the humanitarian purpose of evacuating refugees created by the war in Pakistan. The plan offered Kissinger and Nixon, who were looking for ways to "do something" for Pakistan, an opportunity to signal the Soviet Union and India that the United States was putting together a military and naval force that could be ready on short notice to prevent the destruction of Pakistan.

On December 10, the task force, code named TG-74, consisting of the aircraft carrier Enterprise, an amphibious assault ship, four guided missile destroyers, a guided missile frigate, and one landing craft, was detached from the Seventh Fleet in the Gulf of Tonkin and ordered into the eastern Indian Ocean. This further complicated the naval situation in that ocean. A British naval fleet was just then traversing the Indian Ocean, and two days after Indian forces had marched into East Pakistan, a Soviet destroyer and a mine sweeper came into the Indian Ocean to relieve a similar force that had been observing the British
fleet movement. But because of the war, the original Soviet force stayed on, thus doubling the Soviet presence. Furthermore, on December 7, the Russians detached from their Pacific fleet a cruiser armed with Cruise missiles, and its support vessels, and sent them toward the Indian Ocean. Though these ships did not reach the Strait of Malacca until the third week of December, the United States was aware of their movement and destination. Meanwhile, TG-74 halted east of the Strait of Malacca for about twenty-four hours in order, says Kissinger, to consult the Chinese before the administration made its next move. A more likely reason was to ensure that the task force was sighted by the Soviets, who, in turn, would inform the Indians.

At this point, the White House received information that defeat was at hand in the East: the commander of the Pakistani forces there had responded to Indian demands that he surrender by offering to cease fire at once. At the same time, Consul General Herbert Spivak cabled Washington from Dhaka suggesting that the United States initiate contacts with Bangladesh officials looking toward eventual diplomatic recognition. He and his staff, Spivak added, were willing to stay on in Dhaka and "operate in whatever restricted fashion [if permitted] by Bangladesh government which now appears likely to assume de facto control over East Pakistan in near future." The State Department welcomed prospects of a ceasefire and establishment of contacts with the Bangladesh government. Kissinger, however, wanted neither. A ceasefire in the East, he feared, would free the Indian army for an all-out attack in the West, and to prevent that he urged Pakistan to withdraw from the Security Council its recent proposal for a ceasefire without Indian withdrawal as a precondition. Kissinger later claimed credit when
Pakistan did in fact withdraw that proposal, but the real reason for the withdrawal was that Islamabad learned of the appearance of the American task force in the Indian Ocean. Assuming that the task force must be there to intervene in the East Pakistan war, Pakistani leaders decided that their proposal was no longer in their best interest.

Ironically, Kissinger's fear that a ceasefire in the East would greatly increase Indian fighting forces in the West appears to be unfounded. In the NSC meetings, he had been told that it would take considerable time to transfer Indian forces from the East to the West and a ceasefire in the East would have little or no impact on the war in the West. The real meaning of this, which Kissinger seems not to have grasped, was that India had already enough troops in the West to accomplish its objectives, and the two fronts were essentially separate wars. A major piece of evidence in support of this view is that the capitulation of the Pakistan army in the East did not end the Indian problems in that beleaguered state. Even after the war was over, India had to keep its army in Bangladesh for two months to protect West Pakistani prisoners of war from the wrath of the Muktibahini and otherwise maintain law and order while the new government organized itself.

In the second week of December, Kissinger also met Huang Hua, China's ambassador to the United Nations, and pressed on him the idea that India was bent on destroying the integrity of West Pakistan and the urgent necessity of preventing that. Huang in response conveyed Chinese fears of the same thing and warned that India's success in dismembering Pakistan would encourage similar ventures by Soviet clients in other parts of the world. Kissinger assured him that the United States would
not tolerate other similar moves by the Soviets or their clients, and especially not against China. Throughout this exchange of views, Huang was outspoken in his anti-Indian rhetoric and in his pledge of Chinese support for Pakistan, and Kissinger left the exchange believing Chinese intervention in the war was likely.

Kissinger's meeting with Huang was part of his effort to get China to play a more active role in the overall endeavor to save the military regime in Pakistan. Like Nixon, Kissinger knew his hands were tied by domestic critics, and that the administration would never be able to justify its own military intervention in the subcontinent. But both men wanted to help the military regime, and the Chinese government was under no such domestic constraints. The Chinese did fear the Soviet Union, however, and would never intervene in the war as long as they feared that the Soviet response to their intervention would cost them too much. By trying to neutralize the latter fears, Kissinger hoped to encourage the Chinese to enter the war on Pakistan's behalf.

To increase pressure on the Soviet Union, Kissinger informed Yuli Vorontsov, the deputy of Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin, that Washington would dispatch the task force to the Bay of Bengal unless Moscow gave a satisfactory reply to the White House plea that India be restrained in the war against West Pakistan. On December 12, Vorontsov informed Kissinger that to do just that the Soviet government had sent Deputy Foreign Minister Vasily Kutznetsov to New Delhi. It was at this point that Indian Ambassador L. K. Jha replied to Under Secretary John Irwin's query regarding Indian intentions concerning territorial aims in West Pakistan and Kashmir. Jha's lack of assurances concerning Azad Kashmir reconfirmed Nixon and Kissinger's belief in the correctness of
their decision to send the naval task force into the Indian Ocean.

Thus fixed in his convictions, Nixon called a meeting of the NSC on December 12 to draw up a new response to the impending defeat of Pakistan. "It was symptomatic of the internal relationships of the Nixon administration," Kissinger later wrote, "that neither the Secretary of State nor of Defense nor any other representative of their departments attended this crucial meeting, where, as it turned out, the first decision to risk war in the triangular Soviet-Chinese-American relationship was taken." The NSC meeting decided on a two-fold strategy: to renew efforts at the Security Council to achieve an immediate, stand-still ceasefire; and to open a direct hotline with Moscow to convince Soviet leaders of the seriousness of the situation.

Over the hotline the White House flashed Moscow that there must be an immediate ceasefire in the West, otherwise Washington would conclude that "there is in progress an act of aggression directed at the whole of Pakistan, a friendly country," toward which the United States had "obligations." At the same time, Ronald Ziegler, the White House Press Secretary, announced that in view of India's defiance of the General Assembly call for a ceasefire, the United States would return the issue to the Security Council and urge a more vigorous response. "With East Pakistan virtually occupied by Indian troops," Ziegler said, "a continuation of the war [in the West] would take on increasingly the character of armed attack on the very existence of a member state of the United Nations." After the hotline message went to Moscow, the White House received word that Huang Hua had an urgent message for Kissinger. Nixon and Kissinger assumed that only a matter of greatest urgency would induce
the Chinese to depart from protocol, and because this development came so soon after Kissinger's assurances to Huang of American support in the event of a Sino-Soviet clash over Chinese actions in behalf of Pakistan, the White House assumed that Huang's message would announce that Beijing was preparing to intervene in the war. This assumption was also based on several recent reports from the CIA and other sources regarding Chinese intentions. The CIA had discovered what it interpreted as the first hint of a Chinese decision to intervene in the war in the People's Daily, which, on December 8, had published a comment that if India's example in East Pakistan was followed, a country neighboring India could send troops into India to create an independent West Bengal or Sikhistan. Another CIA report, based on a conversation between Yahya Khan and his Prime Minister, stated that the Chinese ambassador in Islamabad had assured Yahya that the Chinese would move troops toward India's Himachal Pradesh border within seventy-two hours. A third CIA report indicated that the Chinese had been collecting weather data for locations in Tibet and along the Sino-Indian border, and noted that war preparations had been observed in Tibet for several months. In apparent confirmation of the CIA assessment of Chinese intentions, the 157th Infantry Regiment of China's 53rd Independent Infantry Division at Yatung, Tibet, now precipitously recalled all personnel on leaves of absence.

The CIA assessment was strengthened by cable messages from Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. Colonel Malvin Holst, the American defense attache there, reported that the Indian military attache in Kathmandu had recently asked him about Chinese military activities in Tibet, which the Indian high command believed were increasing. Colonel
Holst also reported that the Soviet military attache in Kathmandu had told him that he had advised the Chinese military attache, Zhao Kuangqi, that China should not think seriously of intervening in the Indo-Pakistani war because the Soviet Union would respond to such an act. According to Holst, both the Soviet and Indian embassies were worried that China might intervene in the war. Other intelligence reports, this time from the Soviet Union, also seemed to suggest that something big was about to happen. According to these reports, Soviet hard-liners were hoping for Chinese intervention in the South Asia war, because that would provide them an excuse to eliminate China's relatively small atomic and rocket production facilities, an act long advocated by some Russian military strategists. That the Soviets were indeed preparing for war seemed to be confirmed by spy satellite photographs of new concentrations of Soviet ground and air forces along the Sinkiang border.

Despite the seeming coherence of these various sources of information and their apparent validation of White House thinking, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research had reached altogether different conclusions about Chinese intentions. According to those conclusions, China seemed prepared to acquiesce in an Indian victory in the current war and to do so without escalating its support for Pakistan. "The Chinese appear unwilling to become too deeply involved in a situation where the risks, including a Soviet countermove, are real and the possible gains small," State Department analysts concluded. "They are unlikely to go beyond political support [for Pakistan] and the provision of military supplies." A more careful look at factors outside the realm of military intelligence might also
have discouraged belief in the likeliness of Chinese intervention. In 1971, China had not yet recovered from the Cultural Revolution, and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was still involved in management, reconstruction, and administrative tasks that pre-occupied elite units of its main force and deeply involved its officers in Communist Party politics. Under such conditions, it is doubtful that the PLA would consent to involve itself in a war the outcome of which was problematical at best and of no primary importance to China. The desire of Chinese leaders to avoid war became in fact a virtual necessity following the failure of a coup attempt in September 1971 by Lin Biao, who had been not only Vice-Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party and Defense Minister in the government, but Mao's designated heir as well. The coup attempt had paralyzed the entire Chinese military administration, and before the military had recovered from the shock, the Indo-Pakistan war had come and gone.

The harsh winter weather in the Himalayas also discouraged Chinese intervention. Kissinger himself has suggested that Mrs. Gandhi delayed the showdown with Pakistan until winter, when the main mountain passes from China to India were blocked with snow. Furthermore, after the border clash in 1967 at Nathula Pass in Sikkim, in which the Chinese army came out second best, Chinese leaders became less ready to take on the Indian army. Finally, Beijing was clearly worried over the nature and extent of Soviet retaliation should they enter the war, and that too discouraged intervention.

So also did the Chinese assessment of the assurances they had received of American support if they entered the war. Chinese leaders were well aware that the United States was bogged down in Vietnam and
that the Nixon administration could do little in the subcontinental crisis because of domestic criticism of its policies there and in Vietnam. Since that was the case, the consequences of intervention would be borne by the Chinese alone. Because of these difficulties, Beijing at this point saw the United States as a useful ally in the United Nations and not much more. Moreover, the fledgling Sino-American relationship was still untested, and in spite of all the American promises to come to China's assistance if it entered the South Asian war, Beijing needed time to overcome the legacy of distrust engendered by more than twenty years of hostility between the two nations. Yet the Chinese wanted to do what they could to discourage the Indians and the Soviets. They saw the dispatch of the American task force to the Indian Ocean as an attempt to boost the morale of the Pakistani leadership and bring psychological pressure on India. For the same reasons, China decided to move troops into Tibet and spread disinformation about its intentions to enter the war. Thus Chinese denunciations of India and the Soviet Union became unusually frequent and extremely harsh after Beijing learned of the dispatch of the American task force.

Whatever the effects of these deceptions in New Delhi or Moscow, the White House was thoroughly deceived, and the result was a scenario in which Nixon and Kissinger confidently anticipated Chinese intervention in the war to save Yahya's government and their own geo-political calculations. It seems altogether likely that Nixon and Kissinger developed this scenario not because the Chinese ever gave them any intimation that they intended or even wanted to intervene in the war but because Nixon and Kissinger hoped they would. Chinese intervention might of course lead to a Sino-Soviet war, and the latter war might in
turn necessitate American intervention on grounds that the Soviet Union was attempting to destroy the world balance of power and thereby jeopardize the security of the United States. It was partly in hopes of encouraging at least the first act in this sequence that Nixon ordered TG-74 to proceed toward the Bay of Bengal. The publicly stated purpose of that order was to assist the evacuation of American civilians from Dhaka, but that evacuation was completed two days before TG-74 even got to the Indian Ocean, and in view of Nixon and Kissinger's proclivity for seeing everything in geo-political terms, one feels impelled to look for those terms in trying to understand why the task force was dispatched.

The presence of the task force in the Indian Ocean occasioned a new round of public and congressional criticism of administration policy, which Nixon and Kissinger sought to deflect by keeping their real purposes secret. "If queried by [the] press" concerning the task force, the White House advised Pacific Fleet Commander Admiral John McCain, "reply along the following lines: 'We do not discuss specific ship movements. We do have contingency plans to evacuate American citizens if necessary in emergency situation.'" A top-secret message from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the task force commander was a better statement of what lay behind the presence of the task force: "Primary air threat to U.S. forces will be from Indian Air Force aircraft who will be covering seaward approaches to both parts of Pakistan ... and will be understandably nervous about ... moving forces into offshore positions." Obviously, Washington was not ruling out the possibility of an air or naval clash with India, even in the face of the larger risks that would involve of Soviet retaliation. The White House, however, wanted to avoid any such clash until Chinese forces were
deployed in the Himalayas with access to India, and as it waited for that to eventuate, the commander of the task force, Rear Admiral D. W. Cooper, put his command on wartime alert when both of the Soviet task forces began trailing his ships. 71

New Delhi reacted bitterly to the presence of the task force, rejecting outrightly the explanation that it was there to evacuate American citizens from Dhaka. All 114 American citizens who wanted to leave the city had left on December 12, Indian officials noted, and the forty-seven still there were there of their own free will. 72 Ambassador Jha conveyed to Washington his government's "deepest concern" about the presence of the naval force, but the administration continued to stick to its public explanation for its presence. At this point the Pakistanis tried to further complicate matters by announcing that Islamabad was invoking its "understandings" with all friendly nations to come to its assistance. This was apparently an effort to give the Nixon administration an excuse to use the bilateral defense agreement between the two countries as legal cover for helping Pakistan. And if this was not enough to disconcert New Delhi, the government there presently received reports of Chinese ships off the coast of East Pakistan waiting to evacuate fleeing elements of the now-defeated Pakistani army. 73

India's response to these multiplying threats was unequivocal but not panicky. In response to the reports concerning Chinese ships in the Bay of Bengal, New Delhi said its navy would attack any ships attempting to evacuate Pakistani troops from the East, and the warning was backed by strong statements of Soviet support for India. 74 The Soviets charged the United States with trying to use "gun boat diplomacy" and "gross blackmail" to rob India of the fruits of its victory in East Pakistan. 75

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When Indian officials voiced fears regarding the American task force and possible Chinese intervention in East Pakistan, Soviet Ambassador Nicholai M. Pegov told them the American task force was there to bully them and boost the morale of Pakistani forces, and assured them Moscow would respond in kind to any American or Chinese action against India. Pegov also pointed out that once Dhaka was liberated and the Bangladesh government installed there, neither the United States nor China would be able to reverse that situation, and would in fact have to come to terms with it. On December 14, the Indians were even more reassured by a State Department response to their inquiries concerning American obligations to Pakistan under the 1959 bilateral agreement. The United States, the Department said, had no obligations under that agreement to aid Pakistan in the present war.

With India and the Soviet Union warning against outside intervention in East Pakistan, the White House announced on December 15 that ships in the task force were available to evacuate Pakistani forces from the East in case a ceasefire was agreed upon. The Indians believed this was the real reason the task force had been dispatched in the first place, and they supported their belief by pointing out that Major General Farman Ali Khan, military advisor to the governor of East Pakistan, had proposed a ceasefire on December 10, only to withdraw it the following day when he learned of the presence of the American task force. The Indians also claimed that Yahya Khan had assured General Abdullah Niazi, his military commander in the East, that the United States and/or China would intervene to save the situation there. Furthermore, they pointed out that Niazi's ceasefire offer of December 15 was conditional on the repatriation of his troops by the task force. Without question, this
was one of the reasons Nixon dispatched TG-74, and given the
unlikelihood of Chinese intervention, this must be seen as a priority
mission for the task force.

Earlier, on December 14, when Kissinger officially informed
Vorontsov of the dispatch of the task force, he also indicated that
Washington was willing to accept a standstill ceasefire in both theaters
of war and to cooperate fully in a Security Council inquiry into the
entire South Asian crisis. Vorontsov replied that the Soviet Union was
working for the same objectives, and that that was the reason Moscow had
sent Vasily Kuznetsov, the Deputy Foreign Minister, to New Delhi to urge
restraint on Mrs. Gandhi's forces on the Western border. He hoped that
by the time the Security Council met, the Soviet effort to restrain New
Delhi would have achieved its purpose.

The urgent message from Huang Hua, mentioned earlier, which Nixon
and Kissinger believed would inform them of a Chinese decision to
intervene in the war, was on the contrary a shocking disappointment.
The message announced not a Chinese decision to enter the war but
Chinese support for a political solution to the South Asian crisis
through UN mediation. This apparent reversal of policy stunned
Kissinger, who found solace only in the fact that the Chinese had
accepted his proposal for United Nations' action on the war.
"Amazingly," he wrote later, "Pakistan, China and ... the Soviet Union
were now working in the same direction under our aegis. But Nixon did
not know this when he made his lonely and brave decisions [dispatching
the task force]. Bad things developed as we anticipated, we would have
had no choice but to assist China in some manner against the probable
opposition of much of the government, the media, and the Congress."
The entry of the task force into the Indian Ocean attracted a great deal of media attention. Many Americans saw ominous similarities between its presence in the Indo-Pakistani war zone and the presence a few years earlier of other American naval vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin. The risk of a naval incident in the Bay of Bengal similar to the one that led to American involvement in Vietnam caused grave apprehensions not only in the media but in Congress as well. Kissinger, however, has strongly justified American actions in the wake of the collapse of the Pakistani army in the East:

The U.S. had some seventy-two hours to bring the war to a conclusion.... It would take India that long to shift its forces [from East to West Pakistan] and mount an assault. We had to give the Soviet Union a warning that matters might get out of control on our side too. We had to be ready to back up the Chinese if at the last moment they came [into the war].... The Kremlin needed an excuse to accelerate the pressure it claimed it was exerting on India.... Moscow was prepared to harass the United States; it was in our judgement not prepared to run military risks. Moving the carrier task force into the Bay of Bengal committed us to no final act, but it created precisely the margin of uncertainty needed to force a decision by New Delhi and Moscow.82

Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, a bitter critic of the Nixon-Kissinger policies and at that time Chief of Naval Operations, agrees in general with Kissinger's assessment of these points. Zumwalt does not think the White House sent the task force to influence the course of the war, because TG-74 was not formed until the outcome in East Pakistan had become clear. Nixon and Kissinger, he believes, were frustrated by their inability to influence events and impulsively organized TG-74 and sent it to the Indian Ocean to show the world that America was not to be taken lightly.83 Columnist Jack Anderson has expressed similar views. He has argued that the task force was sent to force India to divert

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ships and planes from the East Pakistan war to shadow TG-74, and in this
and other ways to reduce India's aerial capacity to harass Pakistani
ground forces.

Both critics and apologists have agreed that the White House sent
TG-74 into the war zone chiefly as a show of force. Some have argued
that the main purpose was to divert Indian attention from West Pakistan,
while others have suggested that the intent was to dissuade the Soviet
Union from permitting India to dismember West Pakistan. In fact, all of
these considerations played a role in the decision to send the task
force, but their importance varied with the changing context of the
South Asian situation.

Initially, it was White House concern for China that motivated the
naval deployment. By this action Nixon and Kissinger wanted to
demonstrate to the Chinese that the United States would not sit idly by
while a Soviet client threatened an American ally. They also wanted to
encourage Chinese intervention in the war. But once it became clear
that China would not intervene, the justification for the presence of
the task force changed. In the final analysis, one cannot say that
there was a single purpose for sending the Task Force into the Indian
Ocean.

While the United States searched desperately for a formula to end
the war on terms short of total defeat for Pakistan, China and the
Soviet Union continued their verbal hostilities. On December 9, Pravda
charged China with setting Asians against Asians, a goal, it said, that
coincided with the purpose of the Nixon Doctrine. The Moscow press
also accused Beijing of providing arms to Pakistan and otherwise fanning
the Indo-Pakistani conflict to the detriment of progressive forces there
China, for its part, insisted that the Soviet Union sought to dominate India through military and economic aid, and accused India of bowing to Soviet designs in the interest of its own expansionist policies. In this propaganda war, which intensified as the collapse of Pakistan became more apparent, Sino-Soviet rivalry rather than the Indo-Pakistan war was the primary concern. The very intensity of the verbal sparring, however, precluded the possibility of compromise between the communist rivals.

On December 14, Yuli Vorontsov, deputy to Ambassador Dobrynin, conveyed to the White House New Delhi's assurance that India had no intention of annexing any territory in West Pakistan. Nixon and Kissinger considered this assurance a step in the right direction, but they were dissatisfied with Indian silence on the question of a ceasefire. On the same day, as Indian troops marched triumphantly in East and West Pakistan, Kissinger told a background press briefing that unless the Soviet Union restrained India in West Pakistan, Nixon might cancel his visit to Moscow for the 1972 summit. He also intimated that Nixon believed Moscow's policy in South Asia was aimed at humiliating China and that Nixon's views on this point had been conveyed to the Soviet Union.

Kissinger later admitted that his threat to cancel the summit had not been cleared with Nixon, but he argued that the threat reflected the President's thinking. In any case, he believed, the ploy had been successful, for in its aftermath "Vorontsov appeared several times with increasingly urgent, soothing commitments and requests for reassurances that the Moscow summit would be held according to schedule." According to Kissinger, by the following morning the White House had received
reliable reports that Kuznetsov was pressing New Delhi to insure that no
territorial changes would be made in the West. 90

Kissinger's threat to cancel the summit created confusion in the
administration, and provoked denials from both the State Department and
the White House. On December 15, White House Press Secretary Ronald
Ziegler stated directly that Washington had no intention of cancelling
the summit, and labelled Kissinger's assessment of Nixon's position
"highly speculative and taken out of context." He agreed, however, that
if Moscow continued to support Indian military action, that support
could adversely affect Washington's future relations with the Soviet
Union, but, he added, the United States had no reason to believe that
would occur. 91

In his memoirs, Nixon avoids any mention of this subject, and it is
unlikely that he ever thought seriously of canceling the summit. Nixon
wanted to help Pakistan, but once he realized the outcome of the war
would be in India's favor, it would have been inconsistent with his
strategic thinking to jeopardize his global objectives. The flap over
canceling the summit thus strongly suggests that Kissinger and Nixon had
a difference of opinion on the subject. Both believed that the crisis
in South Asia was a Soviet-engineered effort to destroy an American ally
through a client state, but Nixon was not prepared to threaten the
Moscow summit for that reason alone. Kissinger has described Nixon's
attitude clearly: "[Nixon] had his heart set on completing the journey
that Eisenhower had planned in 1960 but never accomplished. It meant a
great deal to him to be the first American President in Moscow." 92
There was another reason for White House disavowal of Kissinger's
remarks on the summit. With Indian victory now a certainty, Kissinger's
comments fueled new criticism of the administration's South Asia policy, and one way to defuse that criticism was disavowing Kissinger's remarks. Since he rather than Kissinger was the target of the criticism, Nixon felt it appropriate to let Kissinger take the heat.

Meanwhile on December 14, General Niazi, the military commander in East Pakistan, asked for the ceasefire that ended the war in the East. There were several reasons for his doing so. The Indian army had surrounded Dhaka, and its leaders had let it be known that Pakistani prisoners of war would be treated according to the terms of the Geneva Convention. The Mukti Bahini gave no such guarantee and was in fact bent on revenge. The Pakistani generals thus thought it preferable to surrender to the Indian army. Also, the prospects of Chinese or American intervention on their behalf were remote now that the Soviets had shown their determination to match the actions of any outside power thinking of intervening in the war. The Pakistani army was also thoroughly demoralized, defeated and cut off from West Pakistan, and saw its only hope of survival in surrendering to the Indians.

Success of the Pakistani war plan had always hinged on American or Chinese intervention. But the Chinese had done little more than sword-rattling and the White House had been paralyzed by Vietnam, bureaucratic in-fighting, and public criticism. Soviet support for India, both material and diplomatic, on the other hand, had been strong and steady. The rapid Indian advance into East Pakistan broke the will as well as the ability of the Pakistani army there to continue to resist. Pakistan's principal failure in the war was not the ultimate defeat of its army in the East. Given the balance of forces in the subcontinent and the geography of Pakistan, defeat was probably
inevitable without help from the outside. The real failure was the fact that the army in East Pakistan collapsed too rapidly to give Beijing or Washington sufficient time to develop workable means of pressuring India to forestall the disintegration in the East.

On December 15, the war was again on the agenda of the Security Council. But on the following day, before any substantial discussion occurred, Swaran Singh, the Indian foreign minister, informed the Council that the Pakistan army had surrendered in the East, that a ceasefire was in effect there, and that his government had ordered its forces to ceasefire unilaterally in the West. When Yahya Khan accepted the ceasefire in the West on December 17, the war ended. The Security Council therefore suspended discussion of the issue. Five days later, on December 22, the Council adopted a compromise resolution calling for strict observance of the ceasefire and mutual withdrawal of armed forces.

The war thus ended, but the recriminations did not. On December 16, China sent a note to New Delhi charging that an Indian military force had crossed into Chinese territory on December 10, and demanding its immediate withdrawal. This message was similar in tone to the one China had sent to India prior to the 1962 border war. On December 17, Zhou Enlai attacked India and the Soviet Union at an official banquet in honor of a Sudanese delegation visiting Beijing, and ten days later Beijing charged that Indian soldiers had once again entered Chinese territory on December 15.

There were reasons for this continued animosity. The Chinese leaders realized that the war in East Pakistan had actually been a people's war—they never directly attacked the Bengali freedom struggle
during the crisis—and that Indian victory was a certainty. But once the war in the East was over, Beijing wanted to prevent India from acting against West Pakistan, for that would have represented a threat to China's security. The Chinese also realized that they had failed to fulfill Pakistani expectations, and by continuing their verbal attacks on India they hoped to demonstrate their continued support for Pakistan. Moreover, by their public hostility toward India and Bangladesh, they hoped to prevent the United States from normalizing relations with these countries.

The military defeat discredited Aga Muhammad Yahya Khan, and sealed the fate of his regime. On December 19, the military forced him out of office and turned over power to the parliament elected by the people of West Pakistan a year earlier, in which the People's Party under Z. A. Bhutto had a substantial majority. One of the first acts of the new president, Z. A. Bhutto, was to release Mujib, who returned in triumph to independent Bangladesh.

As these events transpired, Nixon's critics and others sympathetic to Bangladesh urged the administration to give diplomatic recognition to the new nation. The White House, however, put off the matter because of Nixon's upcoming visit to China. Strategic rather than regional considerations, in other words, continued to guide South Asia policy. As Nixon himself told Congress:

*It was our view that the war in South Asia was bound to have serious implications for the evolution of the policy of the People's Republic of China. That country's attitude toward the global system was certain to be profoundly influenced by its assessment of the principles by which this system was governed—whether force and threat ruled or whether restraint was the international standard.*
The communiqué that marked the end of Nixon’s visit to China confirmed this linkage. Although the communiqué revealed significant differences in the degree of support expressed for Pakistan by the United States and China, it reflected the overall congruence of American and Chinese thinking regarding their interests in the subcontinent. The United States did not recognize Bangladesh until April 4, 1972, after Nixon completed his China visit, some two months later than most of the Western nations had done so and nearly a month after the last Indian troops had left the new nation.

Nixon and Kissinger have claimed credit for bringing the war in the West to an end, arguing that White House pressure had caused the Soviet Union to get India to end the war there and withdraw its army before it had a chance to destroy West Pakistan. They have also claimed credit for preserving the integrity and independence of West Pakistan while avoiding a major confrontation with the Soviet Union but at the same time making Moscow understand that it could not further its global aims through the use of client states fighting proxy wars. They have claimed, in addition, that their actions prevented India from wrecking the China summit.

These claims merit comment. Did India ever intend or even desire to destroy West Pakistan or annex any of its territory? The evidence already presented suggests convincingly that the answer is "no." After December 11, when victory in East Pakistan was in sight, the Indian government repeatedly assured Washington it had no intention of annexing any Pakistani territory. These assurances had not included Azad Kashmir, to be sure, but that area had always been disputed. It is surely significant, however, that India did not annex Azad Kashmir in
1971, and instead used the opportunity presented by Pakistan's debacle only to make minor modifications of the border between the two countries to India's strategic advantage. Kissinger's claim that Indian retention of Azad Kashmir would have led to the disintegration of West Pakistan is also unjustified. The Pakistanis were sensitive about the area, to be sure, but it was not an integral part of their national identity. Moreover, since East Pakistan's secession did not lead to centrifugal tendencies in the West, it is highly unlikely that the loss of Azad Kashmir would have had a different consequence.

Kissinger's assessment of Indian motives seems equally suspect. His claims that after a ceasefire in East Pakistan, Washington would have only seventy-two hours to end the war before the Indian army destroyed West Pakistan is contradicted by general Westmoreland's estimate, already noted, that such a transfer of forces would at the minimum take a month; and it is doubtful whether Mrs. Gandhi could have continued the war that long given India's economic condition. The claim that the administration successfully limited the amount of aid and other encouragement the Soviet Union would otherwise have extended to India is also questionable. India was the Soviet Union's principal ally in the non-Communist world, and apart from India's position in the subcontinent and its proximity to the Soviet Union, Moscow had every incentive to stand firm in its commitments to New Delhi. In addition, contrary to Nixon and Kissinger's assertions, the Soviet Union never took seriously Washington's threats to intervene directly in the war. This is evident from the assurances Moscow's ambassador to India, Nicholai Pegov gave to Indian officials even while the American task force was in the Indian Ocean. Moscow's actions in the region—which consisted of matching
American actions—were designed to bolster Indian morale, and in that they were successful.

It is true, however, that the Soviet leaders were not prepared to go to war with China or the United States because of the South Asian conflict. That is why they worked to keep the war localized. This is also why they urged India to complete its victory in East Pakistan as rapidly as possible and to show restraint in the West. Thus, it was not the Soviets but the Americans who raised the stakes in the war and risked transforming a regional conflict into a global war. "The Indo-Pakistan war involved stakes much higher than the future of Pakistan," Nixon later wrote. "It involved the principle of whether big nations supported by the Soviet Union would be permitted to dismember their smaller neighbors." Surely that was not the "principle" the war involved.

Despite the significance of the Soviet role before and during the war, there is no evidence that India acted as it did because of Soviet pressure. In fact, Nixon himself has admitted that "Vorontsov complained that the Indians were proving very resistant to Soviet pressure." Kissinger too has acknowledged the independent nature of Mrs. Gandhi's foreign policy. "The lady is cold-blooded and tough," he told the WSJ on one occasion, "and will not turn into a Soviet satellite merely because of pique." The war was the result of deep-rooted animosities and of structural problems intrinsic in the region at the time, and not the consequences of Soviet machinations. The Soviets did not direct Indian policy; rather, they worked with the Indians to achieve certain mutual goals.

Nor would a threat to cancel the Moscow summit have made much
difference to the Soviets. The Soviets wanted the summit to take place as scheduled, and within limits they were willing to act in such a way as to make sure that it did. But cancelled summit can be rescheduled, and the Sino-American rapprochement made the Kremlin determined to keep its commitments to India. This alone is sufficient to explain why Moscow steadfastly supported India in and out of the United Nations. Nixon and Kissinger's claim that they successfully threatened the Soviets thus lack credibility. The hotline messages that passed between Nixon and the Soviets were never published, and Nixon's characterization of them as "threats" to begin a nuclear war, a characterization he made to the Watergate Special Prosecution Force in 1975, was not repeated in his memoirs.

Nixon's and Kissinger's versions of events thus appear to be little more than retrospective attempts to justify their own actions. After months of futile efforts to save the military regime in Pakistan, they realized their policies had failed. Hounded by domestic critics, they wanted to take credit for achieving the ceasefire in the West, preserving a viable Pakistan, and containing the Soviet Union and India, and thereby improve their credibility at home and abroad. The diplomatic and naval maneuvers they initiated late in the crisis were undertaken in part for these purposes. As Nixon told David Frost in 1977, "What we did in saving West Pakistan built up a lot of credibility with the Chinese." Kissinger's claim that Nixon sacrificed his short-term political interests to preserve the world balance of power should be read with that statement in mind. To ensure the success of his 1972 summit in Beijing, Richard Nixon had unnecessarily threatened to turn a local war that grew entirely out of local causes into a
superpower confrontation that might have turned into a superpower war. Few people in the administration believed that Nixon and Kissinger had salvaged victory from the defeat and humiliation of one of their closest allies. Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, then Chief of Naval Operations, has for example, described the dispatch of the task force as a "gesture" that was both "untimely and futile." Christopher Van Hollen, Deputy Under-Secretary at the State Department, has been more candid:

There is no support for the claim that India had decided upon an all out assault on West Pakistan; there is certainly no support for the contention that the two countries [India and the Soviet Union] were working in tandem toward that goal. The White House's policies represented the domino theory raised to global heights—and to heights of incredulity.

It is thus clear that White House policy had little effect on the outcome of the war, although it did have a great impact upon some of the actions of India, Pakistan, China, and the Soviet Union. The dispatch of the task force was cavalier as well as dangerous in the extreme. Too little and too late to help Pakistan or to encourage Chinese intervention, or to overawe the Soviets, it was enough to arouse the resentment and bitterness of India and to threaten a larger war. It was also the final sorry act in a series of sorry acts that damaged the moral influence of the United States and gave the Kremlin a major diplomatic victory over its rivals in Washington and Beijing.

259
2. Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 894, 895, 1488.
4. Nehru, India's Foreign Policy, p. 473.
5. Kissinger, White House Years, p. 896.
12. Ibid., p. 259.
22 Anderson Papers, p. 239.

23 Marvin Kalb's report from the White House, 9 December 1971, WHCF to Pakistan 115.


25 In a memorandum to Kissinger, John Scali wrote, "It is urgent that far more be done to background newsmen quickly at a high level to explain why we have adopted a pro-Pakistan policy.... Unless we do more the President's overall foreign policy objectives will suffer, particularly his trip to Peking." John Scali to Kissinger, 7 December 1971, WHCF to India 66.

26 Congressional Record, 117:45734-38.


29 Nixon and Kissinger have not revealed the name of the source inside the Indian government. According to Seymour Hersh, the source was Morarji Desai. Desai, Hersh claims, was paid $20,000 a year by the CIA through the covert intelligence group 40 Committee, and most of the information he provided related to Indo-Soviet dealings. However, it is doubtful whether Desai could provide any information on Indo-Soviet dealings in 1971 because he was not in the government and was distrusted by Indira Gandhi. See Hersh, The Price of Power, p. 453.

30 Basic Documents, 13:267-68.

31 Van Hollen, "The Tilt Policy Revisited," p. 351. Another intelligence report from the CIA indicated exactly the opposite of this version of events, but it was never taken up seriously by Kissinger and Nixon. It stated: "There have been reports that Mrs. Gandhi would accept a ceasefire and international mediation as soon as East Bengal had been liberated, and there have also been official hints that the GOI [Government of India] would accept a ceasefire now in return for an early surrender of Pak forces in East Bengal." See Anderson Papers, p. 233.


33 Ibid.

34 Memorandum for Ronald Zieglar, 4 December 1971, WHCF to Pakistan 115.

35 Anderson Papers, pp. 228-29.

41 Hsinhua Report No. 120429 (5 December 1971).
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid. In a memorandum Les Janka, at the White House, wrote, "Bush will attempt to take the issue to the General Assembly via the Uniting for Peace Resolution ... an action that cannot be vetoed by one of the five permanent members. If we can get the issue to the General Assembly—we have a chance of getting a good resolution." See Les Janka to Ron Ziegler, 6 December 1971, WHCF CO Pakistan 115.
45 Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 903-4. At the partition of India and Pakistan (made on the basis of religious division) in 1947, Kashmir, a Muslim majority state with a Hindu maharaja, opted for the Indian union, but in 1948 India and Pakistan fought a brief war over Kashmir. In that war, Pakistan occupied and retained a small portion of Kashmiri territory which it renamed Azad (independent) Kashmir, while the rest remained in India. India never accepted Pakistani occupation of Azad Kashmir, and Pakistan never dropped its claim to all of Kashmir.
46 Basic Documents, 13:267.
47 Nixon, Memoirs, p. 528.
48 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 905.
49 The Soviet naval movement became a matter of consternation when Washington realized that the new vessels were in the Indian Ocean to augment, not replace the Soviet ships already there. Communication interception showed that these new ships were five hundred miles off Sri Lanka, and heading north in the Bay of Bengal. See, Anderson Papers, p. 260.
50 Analysts from the State Department and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency felt that the United States had no vital interests in the Indian Ocean that the Russians were likely to threaten. Military analysts believed that the Soviets had strategic objectives in the Indian Ocean—the encirclement of China from the South, radicalization of the Middle Eastern regimes to influence the outcome of the Arab-Israeli conflict and to secure political access to oil resources, and development of a military capability that could interfere with oil
deliveries to Japan and Europe. The first group advocated a policy of negotiated mutual reduction of naval forces in the area. The second group advocated regularized American naval presence. The two factions held their opposed views so tenaciously that Nixon found it impossible to decide between them.

51 Anderson Papers, pp. 263-64.
53 Ibid., p. 25072.
54 Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 905-06.
55 Anderson Papers, p. 240.
56 Dawn, 12 December 1971.
57 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 906.
58 Nixon, Memoirs, p. 529. Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin never dealt directly with the Americans on the Indo-Pakistan war and was on leave from his office during the entire war period. This is another indication that the Soviets never took American threats seriously.

59 Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 909-10.
60 Ibid., pp. 909-10. Also see, Nixon, Memoirs, pp. 528-29.
62 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 910.
64 Ibid., pp. 260-63.
65 Ibid., p. 248.
69 Ibid., p. 25071.
70 Anderson Papers, p. 264.
71 Ibid., pp. 241, 265-66.


Ibid.


The CIA got a complete report of the Soviet secret conversations with the Indians. See Anderson Papers, p. 266.


Ibid.

Kissinger, White House Years, p. 910.

Ibid., p. 911.

Marvin Kalb's report from the White House, 12 December 1971, WHCF CO Pakistan 115.

Kissinger, White House Years, p. 912.

Zumwalt, On Watch, p. 368.

Anderson Papers, pp. 263–64.


Nixon, Memoirs, p. 529.

Kissinger's threat about the summit was made at a background press briefing. But Benjamin C. Bradlee, editor of the Washington Post, decided to publish it by quoting the name of the national security advisor. Similarly, Kissinger's background briefing of December 7 became known when Senator Barry M. Goldwater (Republican, Arizona) inserted a transcript of the session in the Congressional Record. See Facts on File (December 1971):963.

Kissinger, White House Years, p. 913.


Kissinger, White House Years, p. 918.
96 Marvin Kalb's report from the White House, 12 January 1972, WHCF.
97 Nixon, "The Emerging Structure of Peace."
98 Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 529-31.
99 Ibid., p. 912.
100 Anderson Papers, p. 266.
101 Ibid., Memoirs, p. 530.
102 Ibid.
104 Nixon did not directly discuss in his memoirs the possibility of all-out war, but in 1975, during his secret grand jury testimony to the Watergate Special Prosecution Force, he insisted that the United States came close to a nuclear war during the Indo-Pakistan war.
106 Zumwalt, On Watch, p. 369.
AFTERMATH: SINCE 1971

American policy in South Asia during the Bangladesh liberation struggle and the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 had had great impact on specific events but little influence on the outcome. Nixon and Kissinger had wanted to prevent the dismemberment of Pakistan, maintain the regional power balance, restrict Soviet influence in the region, and show China and America's allies that the United States would defend them against aggressors. None of these objectives was achieved. Instead, by viewing a regional crisis through a global prism and acting accordingly, the two American statesmen not only prolonged the crisis but also caused the other two superpowers to become more involved in it than would otherwise have been the case.

All of this occurred in spite of the fact that South Asia was of only limited strategic importance to American interests, even in Cold War terms, and of virtually no importance otherwise. Nor was it an area in which the nation had any meaningful historical or cultural ties. Historically, few Indians, Pakistanis, or Bengalis had immigrated to America, and there was never a South Asian counterpart of the Irish-American or German-American groups who lobbied the government to influence American policy toward their ancestral homelands. Indeed, one of Nixon and Kissinger's major problems was the utter absence of constituencies within the country to rally political support for their policies. Nor was there any South Asian counterpart of the special relationship many Americans imagined they and their country had had with China because of such things as the long history of American Christian
missionaries in China or the famous Open Door policy through which Americans sometimes fancied that their government had "saved" the territorial integrity and political independence of China from European imperialist predators. In part, these twin sources had spawned the influential "China Lobby" of the Cold War era, which encouraged Americans to view the triumph of the Chinese revolution in 1949 as America's "loss" of China. Again, this group, which did so much to influence American policy and thinking about Nationalist China (Taiwan) and Communist China for two decades or so after World War II, had no South Asian counterpart.

American policy in 1971 thus grew not out of domestic political pressures, but out of Nixon and Kissinger's strategic thinking. That thinking was not without its attractions despite the difficulties it led to in South Asia in 1970-71. Nixon and Kissinger wanted to build a stable world order based on a balance-of-power that would preclude the kinds of necessities that led to the Vietnam war or the Soviet-American confrontation in the Cuban missile crisis. By the early 1970's, this required the creation of a multipolar world in which China and the United States balanced the Soviet Union while the United States and the Soviet Union balanced China, thus neutralizing the communist threat in the battle for world opinion in the United Nations and the Third World, and in such hot spots too as Southeast Asia after American withdrawal from Vietnam. However, the Nixon administration knew that China was no military match for the Soviet Union and was in fact seeking American assistance against their own Soviet threat. These considerations led Nixon and Kissinger to want all the more to act in the Bangladesh war, the first crisis to develop after the opening to China, in a way that
impressed the People's Republic. At the same time, the desire for stability demanded better relations with the Soviet Union, a fact that explains the simultaneous efforts to achieve detente with that nation. Each of these considerations dictated that regional conflicts be muted and otherwise subordinated to superpower relationships, and thus to strategic considerations. Accordingly, the Nixon administration would judge the other superpowers by their behavior not only in strategic matters but in regional matters as well, and their regional activities would be evaluated largely in terms of global strategic concerns.

Prior to the civil war that began in Pakistan in March 1971, the Nixon administration was already laying the groundwork for this triangular superpower relationship, and was willing to accept its implications for South Asia. It thus viewed Soviet attempts to influence India as a means of protecting the USSR's southern flank against the growing Chinese influence in Pakistan. The Chinese rapprochement with Pakistan was simply the other side of that coin, and was tolerable as a balance-of-power move against Moscow. What the Nixon administration opposed was not balance-of-power jockeying, but the hegemony of any one of the subcontinental nations if that hegemony depended on a close military alliance with one of the communist powers. That, it thought, would destabilize the region in undesirable ways that had larger strategic significance. This meant viewing the Bangladesh crisis only in global terms and the dismemberment of Pakistan as a threat to regional stability and thus to American interests.

Certain other corollary considerations help account for the administration's unwavering support of Pakistan. Nixon and Kissinger believed that democracy in Third World countries like Pakistan was not
feasible because of the absence of a democratic tradition and of those other socio-economic factors that lay behind democracy in the West. The viable alternatives in such countries were to them not democracy or dictatorship but dictatorship or chaos, and since at present only the military could prevent chaos, such regimes as that of Yahya Khan must be accepted and dealt with. Alas, one must admit that to this point, the Nixon-Kissinger analysis has some validity. Democracy is not something that can be willed—or imposed—on any people, though its achievement might be encouraged by the whole array of political, economic, and social policy.

None of that, however, justifies some of the conclusions and policies the Nixon administration drew from the inviability of democracy in Pakistan. Among these conclusions, one of the most important was that since military dictatorship is inevitable in such a nation, the United States could use that fact—the need to maintain a strong military—to make a government like that of Pakistan's dependent on American military aid and thus susceptible to American influence. A logical corollary to this conclusion was the idea that all anti-establishment movements were radical, probably communist inspired, efforts bent on destabilizing Third World countries to Soviet advantage. The Awami League and the Bengali movement for autonomy or independence fit precisely into this pattern of thinking in the Nixon administration. Thus, Nixon and Kissinger readily accepted the Pakistani argument that the Bengali movement for autonomy and then independence was not a genuine popular movement but an attempt by Soviet-influenced and Indian-backed dissidents to destabilize pro-Western Pakistan. An independent Bangladesh would thus only weaken Pakistan and strengthen
India, and thereby elevate Soviet influence to a controlling level in the region.

Strategic thinking based on Cold War considerations thus go a long way to explain American policy and actions in the 1971 crisis. It is therefore ironic that the thawing of Cold War relationships also influenced Nixon and Kissinger's policies. As noted earlier, the crisis occurred after the two leaders had already begun working toward detente with the Soviet Union and the opening to China, and among the things that constrained their actions in South Asia was the determination not to sacrifice either of those initiatives. In fact, some students of the subject believe that the only controlling factor in administration policy throughout the crisis and the war was the China initiative. Certainly Nixon and Kissinger themselves have made much of that factor in explaining and defending what they did. But that emphasis is at least partly a self-serving rationalization for their support of Pakistan. Even if the Pakistani channel to Beijing was preferable, there was another, through Rumania, that might have worked equally well given the obvious desire of Chinese leaders to open contact with the United States. Furthermore, even after the China opening was accomplished and Pakistan was no longer needed as an intermediary, Nixon administration's support for the military regime continued unabated. The China factor thus seems more a good retrospective rationalization for failed and unpopular policy than the real explanation for adherence to that policy.

In retrospect, what stands out about the Nixon policy in South Asia in 1971 was the degree to which it represented a departure from previous American approaches to the subcontinent. During the short time of
approximately 1970-1971, Washington switched from traditional policies of evenhandedness and limited involvement in South Asia to others of direct involvement on behalf of Pakistan and against India. The change was the direct result of presidential initiatives and was crisis-oriented as well, and since it never had the support of the State Department bureaucracy and its area experts, the new policies lapsed once the crisis ended and presidential interest in the area ceased. When that occurred, America's South Asian policy returned to what it had previously been, and once again centered on economic development aid rather than military assistance, and on encouraging good relations not only with India as well as Pakistan but with the new nation of Bangladesh as well.

The impact of the crisis on regional diplomacy and security arrangements was more enduring. By dismembering Pakistan, India established itself as the dominant power in the region, its military position unchallenged there, and the threat of further wars with Pakistan more or less eliminated. Despite the latter fact, the war proved to be a turning point in India's military policy. Indian leaders came to believe that their country had been a pawn in a superpower chess match during the war, and unless India strengthened its defense forces that might happen again. Among other things, this led New Delhi to build its own nuclear weapons and significantly enlarge and upgrade its navy. By 1974, Indian scientists had successfully completed an underground nuclear test, and by the early 1980's India's naval strength had been doubled. With the acquisition of its first nuclear-powered submarine in 1988 and the successful test-firing of its own intermediate-range ballistic missile in 1989, the Indian navy became a
strong force in the Indian Ocean and one to be reckoned with even by the superpowers. At the same time, India continued to oppose superpower presence in the Indian Ocean, and the establishment of the American naval base in Diego Garcia in 1971-72 became a source of friction between the United States and India.

This transformation of India's military position was accomplished with Soviet assistance. Before and during the war, the Soviets had shipped enormous supplies of arms to the Indians, and the continuation after the war of the security arrangements outlined in the Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971 guaranteed continued Soviet influence in New Delhi. During the long chill in Sino-Soviet relations that lasted through the 1970's and beyond, the Soviet Union made India the centerpiece of its Asian policy, a purpose which the enhancement of Indian military and naval power abetted. Even today, Moscow's influence in New Delhi remains stronger than Washington's.

Along with the Americans and Pakistanis, the Chinese were the big losers in the war. If Nixon's actions were aimed at impressing the Chinese, it is doubtful they succeeded, even if the Chinese accepted Nixon's arguments that dispatching the task force caused the Soviets to restrain India from dismembering West Pakistan. There is no reason to believe that they did accept that argument, for after the war was over, the Chinese government continued its hostile attitude toward India because it feared New Delhi would use its dominance in the region to harm Pakistan. For the same reason the Chinese, whose fears of encirclement by Soviet allies and clients were exacerbated by the results of the war, remained a close ally of Pakistan. The same fears also hastened the process of normalizing their relations with the United
States in the aftermath of the liberation war in Bangladesh.

The events of 1971 had significance too for Pakistan. The loss of a large slice of its territory and more than half of its population meant that the country could no longer challenge India's hegemony in the region. It also meant that the military elite who had ruled the country for two decades and who was responsible for the loss was discredited, and civilian rule was restored. This change of leadership had great impact on Pakistan's foreign policy generally and toward the United States specifically.

The new government, led by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and the People's Party, ruled Pakistan for seven years, during which time it effected a major reorienting of Pakistani foreign and security policy. The Pakistanis had tested the limits of American assistance during the war and found them woefully lacking. Nixon and Kissinger had stood by while their "most allied ally" was defeated and dismembered. This behavior, in Pakistani eyes, contrasted dramatically with the massive aid India received from the Soviets.

The new government resolved at once that the country would never be caught in the same position again. The war taught the Pakistanis that superpower guarantees are good only as long as they are in the interest of the guarantor. President Bhutto thus turned not away from Washington in seeking new guarantees but reached out for much better relations with the Soviet Union while maintaining the already warm relations with China. He concluded a number of agreements enlarging economic and political cooperation with China and with the Soviet Union. He also worked to enlarge Pakistan's stature outside South Asia; especially by increasing its involvement in non-aligned and Third World movements and
in the so-called North-South dialogue. One other thing that he did strained American-Pakistani relations: he attempted to match India's nuclear performance by developing an "Islamic bomb." In July 1977 Bhutto was overthrown by a military coup (though he continued to dominate Pakistan's politics for another twenty-one months) and two years after his removal from office, Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan. These twin developments interrupted the search for an independent foreign policy. Once again Pakistan became a military dictatorship and once again, too, a front line state in the American war against international communism. The military dictatorship has since been removed, but Pakistan remains a mainstay in the American alliance system.

The American role in the liberation war also affected the subsequent relations between Bangladesh and the United States. As if to atone for the effects of its policies on the Bengali people, Washington became the largest donor of relief aid to Bangladesh after its independence. Despite this, American-Bangladeshi relations were strained and distant. The government established by the Awami League and Sheikh Mujib necessarily bound itself to India, and in turn to the Soviet Union. Within three months of independence, Mujib in March 1972 concluded a treaty of friendship and mutual security with India modeled on the Indo-Soviet treaty of August 1971, and over the years made a series of cultural, economic, and other agreements with the Soviet Union, including one that permitted Soviet naval vessels to visit Bangladeshi ports.

However, chronic poverty and the devastation of war made Bangladesh heavily dependent on American economic assistance, including food aid,
and Sheikh Mujib had no choice but to pay court to the American
government. In the summer of 1974 when Kissinger visited Bangladesh,
Mujib in conciliatory gestures dismissed his pro-Indian finance minister
Tazuddin Ahmed to demonstrate that Bangladesh was outside the
Indo-Soviet orbit, and ordered an end to the export of gunny sacks to
Cuba, one of the country's few export items. In September of the same
year, Mujib visited the United States to try to normalize relations with
Washington, but neither the Ford administration nor the American public
took much notice of him—a dramatic reminder of how largely the protest
against Nixon's policy in the South Asian war had been a protest against
Nixon rather than in behalf of the Bengali people.

Later that year, when famine occurred in Bangladesh and increased
American food aid was not promptly forthcoming, thousands of people
died, and Mujib's government and the nation with it verged on collapse.
One of the reasons for the failure of the American government to respond
rapidly to the Bangladesh famine was the simultaneous purchase of huge
supplies of American food grain by the Soviet Union. This Soviet
purchase not only raised the world price of food grain at a time when
the oil embargo was having the same effect on most other prices, it also
made it impossible for Bangladesh to purchase adequate food supplies on
the world market and limited and delayed the American supply of food aid
to Bangladesh. Thus, in once again pursuing larger global interests,
the American government failed to respond to the human misery in
Bangladesh.

Sheikh Mujib reacted desperately to this desperate situation; he
established one-party autocratic rule. With the economy in shambles and
masses of people facing starvation, most of the Bangladeshi people
rejected this act, and in August 1975 disgruntled army officers under the leadership of Khondaker Mushtaque, then a cabinet minister in Mujib's government, assassinated Mujib and overthrew his government. Within a few months, Mujib's closest associates in the government, including Tazuddin Ahmed and Syed Nazrul Islam, the two most important leaders of the Awami League after Mujib himself, were killed while in government custody. The new government was welcomed in Washington, and the United States was one of the first countries to grant it diplomatic recognition. Shortly afterwards, Washington also significantly increased food aid to Bangladesh.

This change of sentiment on Washington's part might have been intended to encourage the new government to pursue policies more acceptable to Washington than some of those pursued by Mujib. When Mujib assumed leadership of the Bangladesh government, for example, he charged some of the Pakistani military officials who had surrendered to the Indian army and were imprisoned in India with war crimes, and asked India to turn them over to his government for trial. Washington of course objected to this, as did Pakistan, which maneuvered to prevent Dhaka from pursuing the plan by encouraging the Muslim countries to withhold diplomatic recognition of Bangladesh and getting China to veto Bangladesh's entry into the United Nations. In June 1972, however, Pakistan concluded a non-aggression pact with India, the so-called Simla Agreement, as a result of which both sides agreed to exchange prisoners of war. With India's power established in the subcontinent, New Delhi now wanted to create an image of "magnanimity" on the question of war prisoners, while Mujib publicly committed himself to the trail of 195 prisoners-of-war. This created a rift between Bangladesh and India, and
under Indian pressure, Mujib signed the Tripartite Agreement reached between the three countries in 1974, and dropped all charges against Pakistani military officials. Indo-Bangladesh relations became further strained because of trade imbalances, disputes over border demarcations, and sharing of river waters.

With public opinion turning against the perceived Indian domination of his government, Mujib tried to normalize the relations of Bangladesh, officially a secular nation, with other Muslim countries including Pakistan, most of which were officially religious states. Bhutto wanted to normalize relations with Bangladesh and settle Pakistan's outstanding issues with its former province, and thereby help legitimize his own position at home. The Muslim countries too wanted Bangladesh to come out from the Indian fold and drop its secular policy. Through the mediation of Kuwait, Lebanon, Algeria and Senegal, the two countries established diplomatic relations in February 1974, and Bangladesh became a member of the Organization of Islamic Countries. This was followed by the recognition of Bangladesh by most of the moderate Muslim countries, and by Bangladesh's admission to the United Nations in June 1974, when China withheld its veto of Dhaka's application for entry into the world body. But it was only after Sheikh Mujib's assassination and the subsequent change of government in Dhaka that China and the more orthodox Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia and Libya recognized Bangladesh. Thus, only in sacrificing the blood of the man who led it to independence did the nation prove to its bitterest critics that it was no Manchukuo. After Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination, on the other hand, Bangladesh's relations with India, its ally and savior during the war for independence, became severely strained.
The war also had a lingering impact on the Nixon administration. Perhaps the most immediate effect was the continuing criticism of the administration's actions on moral grounds but on grounds too that its policies poorly served American interests. The result of a survey published in the New York Times just after the war, on December 20, 1971, illustrated this. "The war that brought victory to India and dismemberment of Pakistan," the Times noted, "profoundly damaged the moral influence and big-power leverage of the United States in Asia." Moreover, "The Soviet Union emerge[d] with great strategic and diplomatic gains from the first major confrontation in which its two big-power rivals, China and the United States, both opposed her."

Immediately after the war, a series of leaks of confidential policy papers further embarrased the administration. While the administration had continued publicly to profess its neutrality in the crisis, the documents revealed just how heavily the tilt toward Pakistan had been and just how great a defeat the administration had sustained. In a vain attempt to deflect the resulting criticism from himself, Nixon tried to place much of the responsibility for the failure, if not the substance, of American policy on Kissinger; and as a result Kissinger for a time seriously considered resigning from his post. The continuing criticism was sustained in part by the parallel protests against Nixon's actions in Vietnam (the so-called Christmas carpet bombing of Haiphong Harbor and the environs of Hanoi occurred in December 1971, the month of the Bangladesh war). By this time, the beginning of 1972, the anti-war movement was focusing on issues of human rights and the abuse of presidential authority, on both of which the administration was especially vulnerable and which would become increasingly important.
through the rest of the 1970's. One source of the popular appeal of those issues had been the protest against Nixon's policies in South Asia before and during the Bangladesh war.

Bangladesh, however, was never intrinsically important to the protesters and Nixon's failures there were soon overshadowed by larger events elsewhere. The success of President Nixon's China trip in the spring of 1972 and a series of other foreign policy triumphs, including withdrawal from Vietnam and detente with the Soviet Union, showed Nixon and Kissinger at their most adroit and their critics overawed. In addition, all of the South Asian nations, including India, needed economic assistance from the United States, and that encouraged each of them to develop satisfactory, if not warm, relations with the United States. This alone was sufficient to guarantee that American influence in South Asia would not be seriously or permanently damaged in the long run, and this fact was facilitated by Washington's return to traditional policies of maintaining a low profile in the region and a balanced relationship with India and Pakistan. The thaw in the Cold War, signaled by normalized relations between the three superpowers, also encouraged that development.

The autopsy on Nixon and Kissinger's South Asian policy during the critical months of 1970-71 may be concluded on this note. Despite its folly as well as its potential dangerousness, that policy left surprisingly few scars or permanent animosities between the parties involved. This suggests the degree to which Cold War fears and animosities dissolved in the decade or so after 1971, and the extent to which more realistic assessments of national interest came to guide the diplomacy and security policy even of such visceral enemies as India and
Pakistan. Though the Cold War did not end, international relations changed so much within a few years after 1971 that anything like a repeat of the American policy in the South Asian crisis of that year became difficult to imagine.

President Ronald Reagan's "tilt" against the Sandinista government of Nicaragua in the 1980's is the nearest subsequent equivalent of that policy that comes to mind, but the parallel is diminished by the geographical proximity of Nicaragua to the United States and by the historical ties between Central America and the United States. It is also diminished by the concerted domestic opposition to Reagan's policy, which ultimately contained that policy. It is far too much to say that that opposition owed its existence to the criticism of and protest against Nixon's earlier policies during the Bangladeshi war of national liberation. But it is not unreasonable to say that that criticism and protest were among the things that caused American opinion to condemn and rein in the kind of adventurousness in American foreign policy that led to such things as Nixon's recklessness in the Indian Ocean and South Asia. If that is indeed the case, the Bengali war of national liberation may be said to have had a significance far beyond the fruits it bore for the long-suffering but never daunted people of Bangladesh.
APPENDIX A

FIGURE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF REFUGEES BY STATES IN INDIA

REFUGEE POPULATION AS ON DECEMBER 15, 1971*

*The abbreviations stand for West Bengal, Tripura, Meghalaya, Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh. Note that the highest concentrations of refugees were in West Bengal and Tripura. In 1971 both states were facing problems from Marxist insurgents and were politically the most turbulent states in India.

Source: Basic Documents, 8:690.
APPENDIX B

FIGURE 2

REFUGEE INFLUX BY MONTH*

*The influx of refugees slowed in July, when American pressure forced Yahya Khan to make a number of concessions to the Bengalis. But in August, when the army resumed repressive actions in areas believed to be sheltering the Mukti Bahini and the Awami League rejected Yahya's concessions, the refugee exodus again went up. From October refugee movement decreased sharply because of border skirmishes between Indian and Pakistani troops. Backlog accounts for refugees present in India before April 1971.

Source: Basic Documents, 8:690-91.
APPENDIX C

FIGURE 3

SUPERPOWER ARMS EXPORT TO SOUTH ASIA

(IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS, AT CONSTANT 1973 PRICES)*

*Before 1965, U.S. was the largest arms supplier to South Asia, the beneficiary being Pakistan. After the arms embargo of 1965, American arms export to South Asia dwindled. Whereas after 1965, the Soviet Union became the chief arms supplier in South Asia, India being the beneficiary. At the same time Chinese arms supplies also increased, Pakistan being the recipient.

Unlike fluctuations in arms shipments, American economic aid to South Asia had been steady indicating that the major concern of American policymakers had been economic development of South Asia to ensure stability in the region. Although militarily Pakistan was the major beneficiary of American arms, economically India received more aid than Pakistan. This policy was adopted to maintain equal relationships with both powers as well as to maintain regional balance.

APPENDIX E

FIGURE 5

MILITARY EXPENDITURE AS PERCENTAGE OF GNP*

*Note that military expenditure as percentage of annual GNP is higher in Pakistan than India. This was due to Pakistan's constant attempt to match Indian military power because the Pakistani leadership feared that India's main aim was to establish its supremacy in South Asia and dismember Pakistan. This fear not only influenced Pakistan's domestic policies (making the armed forces the most privileged institution in the country) but also shaped its external policies, which centered around the containment of India.


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