

Florida Atlantic University

Peaceful Intent:

American Diplomacy during the India-Pakistan Conflict of 1971

A Research Paper Submitted To

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Diplomatic History Seminar

Boca Raton, FL

1 May 2006

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Most scholars believe that the United States “tilted” towards Pakistan during the 1971 Indo-Pakistani conflict that culminated in a war between the two South Asian nations. This is so because the Nixon administration failed to condemn the brutal, repressive actions of Pakistan’s military dictator Yahya Khan, who was situated in West Pakistan, when he tried to crush East Pakistan’s rebellion for independence in March 1971.¹ Another reason for this feeling was because the U.S. was trying to establish relations with China, which was also an ally of Pakistan, and so, historians believe the Nixon administration did not want to anger China by condemning the attacks. However, throughout the course of what was a nine-month conflict between India and Pakistan, Nixon never made any policy decisions that were intended to harm India. Only after a war broke out did Nixon take sides by cutting off economic and military aid to India because he felt that it was responsible for triggering the war.

Scholars also formed their opinions that Nixon was biased against India based upon the Anderson Papers, which were leaked to the press in the aftermath of the war. These papers revealed some anti-India comments that Nixon and Kissinger made in private meetings with cabinet officials during the war.² These papers were used by scholars in an attempt to solidify their argument that Nixon had a vendetta against India. While it is true that Nixon did privately favor Pakistan’s military leader Yahya Khan much more than India’s Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, whom he despised, Nixon’s

¹ Pakistan was created out of a partitioned India in 1947. At this time, Pakistan was a country divided into two halves with one-half on the eastern side of India (East Pakistan) and the other half on the western side of India (West Pakistan).

² Jack Anderson, *The Anderson Papers* (New York: Random House, 1973), 203-269.

personal feelings did not transfer into actual policy decisions until the advent of the Indo-Pakistani War at the beginning of December 1971. During the course of the nine-month conflict, Nixon attempted to resolve the problems between the two parties on an equal basis because he felt that peace in the region was in America's best interest. He may have had a biased policy in favor of Pakistan once the war broke out, but in the crisis that preceded hostilities he was remarkably even-handed. In addition to the China issue and the leaked documents, the impression that Nixon was against India further stemmed from the fact that he wanted friendlier relations with Pakistan than did prior U.S. Presidents.

Historians Robert Jackson and S. Nihal Singh feel that the developing relationship between the United States and China was the sole reason why the Nixon administration chose not to support the East Pakistani independence movement. These authors feel that the U.S. supported Pakistan during the Indo-Pakistani war because it stood to gain points with China and because it had nothing to lose by showing a bias.³ Historian Baldev Raj Nayar complains that continued military shipments to Pakistan after the West Pakistani crackdown in East Pakistan, in addition to a lack of concern for the plight of India and its having to contend with millions of refugees were signs that the Nixon administration tilted towards Pakistan before the war began.⁴ Nayar also believes that "the fact that both India and the United States are political democracies has been basically irrelevant to American decision-makers."⁵ Stephen Cohen lends credence to this view by arguing that the United States had never been able to develop a true friendship with the democratic

³ Robert Jackson, *South Asian Crisis: India, Pakistan and Bangla Desh: A Political and Historical Analysis of the 1971 War*, Praeger Special Studies in International Politics and Government (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), 157; Nihal S. Singh, "Can the U.S. and India Be Real Friends?," *Asian Survey* 23, no 9 (September 1983) : 1017.

⁴ Baldev Raj Nayar, "Treat India Seriously," *Foreign Policy* 18 (Spring 1975) : 1343

⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

India because of its “unwillingness to undercut or antagonize [a Cold War] ally, Pakistan.”⁶

Tensions erupted between West Pakistan and India after West Pakistan’s mostly Islamic troops persecuted the supporters and leaders of East Pakistan’s secessionist leading party, the Awami League, at the end of March 1971. India took further exception to the fact that these troops were persecuting the heavily Hindu population in East Pakistan. This persecution resulted in a mass exodus of Hindu refugees to India, which caused problems for India because it was already overpopulated. Since India’s population was already dense and because it was a heavily Hindu nation, it responded to this perceived ethnic cleansing by encouraging these refugees to become guerilla fighters and launch attacks against West Pakistan’s Islamic military. Since Pakistan saw these guerilla attacks as Indian-sponsored attacks on its sovereignty, it refused to send its troops back to the barracks as India called for.

While this paper will show that Nixon’s efforts to open relations with China played a large role in his decision not to condemn West Pakistan’s oppression in East Pakistan, as previous authors have said, it will also show that Nixon had a simultaneous interest in ensuring order and peace in South Asia. As such, Nixon did not support East Pakistan’s revolution. His commitment to opening relations with China and his desire for order were two key reasons behind his anger towards India for interfering in Pakistani politics. Nixon was also afraid that India’s interference could cause the downfall of Yahya Khan’s government, which served as the mediator in discussions between the U.S. and China. Furthermore, Nixon wanted India to stop encouraging attacks against

⁶ India claimed neutrality in the Cold War until it signed a treaty with the Soviet Union in August 1971. Even then, India tried to retain cordial relations with the U.S.; Stephen P. Cohen, “U.S. Weapons and South Asia: A Policy Analysis,” *Pacific Affairs* 49, no. 1 (Spring 1976) : 134.

Pakistan so that Pakistan could concentrate on establishing a constitution and a democracy, which Pakistan was working on before the secession crisis began. Consequently, Nixon threatened to cut off economic and military aid to India if its belligerency resulted in a war between the two South Asian nations. The Nixon administration made this threat to discourage a war, in which it believed it would have to side with a Cold War ally, Pakistan, for this inherent reason, and also, to show allegiance to China. However, while Nixon made this threat against India, he did not carry out any actions that were intended to harm it before the onset of the Indo-Pakistani war in December 1971. This war that ensued in December 1971 resulted in the independence of East Pakistan, or Bangladesh as it came to be known after the war.

This paper will take a thematic approach towards explaining the major events and problems that developed during the nine-month conflict between India and Pakistan and how America reacted and responded to these events. The first part of this paper will focus on West Pakistan's crackdown in East Pakistan and Nixon's lack of a response to it. The second part of this paper will focus on the role that the refugees played in the tensions between India and Pakistan. From there, this paper will look at how the U.S.'s developing relations with China affected its decision making in the Indo-Pakistani conflict. Finally, this paper will examine the impact of India's August 1971 treaty with the Soviet Union on American decision making and Nixon's decision to support Pakistan when a war broke out between India and Pakistan in December 1971. As a result of the recent declassification and publication of the most important documents pertaining to the crisis, a complete, thorough, and balanced account of America's involvement is now more possible than ever before.

This story begins in mid-November 1970 when a destructive cyclone in East Pakistan took the lives of over 200,000 people. Dissatisfied with the response to the crisis, the Awami League, led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib), charged Yahya's Martial Law Administration with providing inept leadership during this troubling time.⁷ The Awami League's voice was heard at the polls on December 7, 1970 when the East Bengalis in East Pakistan overwhelmingly gave them 160 out of 162 seats up for grabs in the first popular election in Pakistani history. This gave the Awami League a total of 288 out of 300 seats in the Provincial Assembly, which granted them the right to govern all of Pakistan.⁸ Pakistan, which was a country divided into two halves, with East Pakistan on the eastern side of India and West Pakistan on the western side of India now belonged to the Awami League. Awami victory was ensured not only by its charge against the Yahya government but also because of a Six-Point program that it campaigned on. This platform, which some members of the Nixon administration described as a call for "virtual autonomy," was not well received by West Pakistan's top vote getter Zulfikar Ali Bhutto or Yahya's military government for that matter.⁹ Yahya and Bhutto believed that the East Bengalis wanted to secede from Pakistan and this was something that Yahya, as a soldier, could not allow to happen.¹⁰

Unhappy with the course of events, Yahya delayed the formation of a new government. This act in turn prompted Rahman to take the drastic step of disobeying the military government. On the ides of March, Rahman began to take over the

⁷ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1979), 850.

⁸ Minutes of Senior Review Group Meeting, U. Alexis Johnson, Washington, 6 March 1971, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, vol. XI: *South Asia Crisis, 1971* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2005), 8-16; ⁸ Memorandum, Sisco to Rogers, Washington, 15 March 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 20.

⁹ Memorandum, Harold Saunders and Samuel Hoskinson to Henry Kissinger, Washington, 2 December 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 2.

¹⁰ Memorandum, Sisco to Rogers, Washington, 15 March 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 17.

administration of East Pakistan, claiming that his actions were justified since his party, the Awami League, had won the December elections.¹¹ During this time, the Nixon administration was trying to determine what position to take in what seemed to be a situation that was headed towards a civil war. President Richard Nixon's assistant for national security affairs, Henry Kissinger, believed that the U.S. should not rush to action. He claimed, "It is a more defensible position to operate as if the country remains united than to take any move that would appear to encourage separation."¹² Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Christopher Van Hollen supported this view, claiming that West Pakistan was already suspicious that the U.S. would support Rahman's quest for independence.¹³ Within ten days of Rahman's takeover of the East Pakistani administration, Yahya stood poised to invade the eastern wing of the country with the intent to restore order.

On the 25th of March, the West Pakistani army struck with such precision and speed that it was able to bring the East Bengalis to their knees overnight.¹⁴ This was an amazing feat as the East Pakistanis, despite not having a military force, numerically outnumbered the invading West Pakistani forces with a population of 75 million compared to the 30,000 invading West Pakistani troops. Dacca University was their primary target because it was the rallying base for the Awami League movement. At the university, the military systematically destroyed the student records of Awami League supporters and killed Awami leaders, student leaders, and faculty supporters of the

¹¹ Ibid., 20.

¹² Memorandum, Kissinger to Nixon, Washington, 13 March 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 20.

¹³ Minutes of Senior Review Group Meeting, Van Hollen, Washington, 6 March 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 13.

¹⁴ East Pakistanis are interchangeably called East Bengalis because of the region where they reside in.

Awami movement. Archer Blood, the U.S. Consul General in Dacca, speculates that students flocked to the university on this night to see what the commotion was about and thus, they became easy prey for the blood-hungry military. The military's attack was gruesome, too, as two mass graves were ordered to be dug, with each reportedly containing about 140 bodies. There were also reports of rape and torture by the military. The carnage did not stop at the university, however, as it sought out Awami leaders at their homes and shot them dead. On this same night, the armed forces captured Awami League leader Mujibur Rahman and took him over to West Pakistan, where he would remain captive until January 1972.¹⁵

Blood surmised that “the whole objective of the West Pak army apparently was and is to hit hard and terrorize [the East Pakistani] population into submission. All evidence suggests that they have been fairly successful.”¹⁶ Kissinger explained that Pakistan's military leaders “could not conceive of the dismemberment of their country...[and] they had no understanding of the psychological and political isolation into which they had maneuvered their country by their brutal suppression.”¹⁷

Awami League supporters were not the only targets of the military. The military had a religious vendetta to carry out, as well. Hindus, by the millions, were driven into

¹⁵ U.S. Consulate Cable, Archer Blood to U.S. Department of State, “Killings at University,” Dacca, 30 March 1971, in *The Tilt: The U.S. and the South Asian Crisis of 1971*, ed. Sajit Gandhi, National Security Archive, (16 December 2002) < <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB4.pdf>> (9 March 2006); U.S. Consulate Cable, Archer Blood to U.S. Department of State, “Selective Genocide,” Dacca, 28 March 1971, in *ibid.*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB1.pdf>> (9 March 2006); U.S. Consulate Cable, Archer Blood to U.S. Department of State, “Army Terror Campaign Continues in Dacca; Evidence Military Faces Some Difficulties Elsewhere,” Dacca, 31 March 1971, in *ibid.*, < <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB6.pdf>> (9 March 2006); Memorandum, Rogers to Nixon, 3 April 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 43. U.S. Consulate Cable, Archer Blood to U.S. Department of State, “Killings at University,” Dacca, 30 March 1971, in *ibid.*, < <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB4.pdf>>.

¹⁶ U.S. Consulate Cable, Archer Blood to U.S. Department of State, “Killings at University,” Dacca, 30 March 1971, in *ibid.*, < <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB4.pdf>>.

¹⁷ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 861.

India in order to escape the wrath of the (Islamic) Pakistani army. While Hindus were not the only people to seek refuge in India, they were the majority of those who did seek shelter from the attacks. This marked the beginning of new tensions between India and Pakistan, who already fought two wars against each other in 1947-48 and again in 1965.¹⁸

After this suppression occurred, there was a controversy in the United States over the Nixon administration's muted reaction. The Awami League, after all, had been popularly elected by the people and here, the military was quashing their rebellion to attain the power that it felt the people of Pakistan had given them. Nixon and Kissinger both wanted to stay out of the matter, however, feeling that it was an internal matter for the Pakistanis to contend with. Kissinger claimed that this was the position of Great Britain, too, which had a longer history than the United States in South Asian matters. Kissinger further stated that "[Nixon] recognizes that the only long-term prospect of restoring normal life in East Pakistan may be under conditions of greater East Pakistani autonomy, but he would prefer to see [the] West Pakistanis reach that conclusion, if it is valid, for themselves."¹⁹

Blood, the U.S. Consul General in Pakistan, was outraged that the U.S. did not show its dissatisfaction with the brutal repression in East Pakistan. If not publicly, he believed that it should be done privately. He complained that even the Soviet Union had condemned the brutality of the Pakistani military and that it had called for the violence to end. This, of course, was an ironic episode where the leader of the Free World, Nixon, did not publicly condemn Yahya's actions, while the Communist leader, Brezhnev did.

¹⁸ The two prior wars took place in 1947-48 and in 1965.; Christopher Van Hollen, "The Tilt Policy Revisited: Nixon-Kissinger Geopolitics and South Asia," *Asian Survey* 20, no 4 (April 1980) : 342.

¹⁹ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 852; Memorandum, Kissinger to Irwin, Washington, 7 May 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 104.

By this point, the brutal tactics that the Soviet Union had used to suppress democratic movements, most recently putting an end to Czechoslovakia's democratic socialism movement in 1968, made such an assertion by the Communist nation, very hypocritical. The reason for the Soviet's stance was that it was looking to gain influence with India, which was also outraged by the Pakistani suppression of rights. U.S. Ambassador to India, Kenneth Keating was shocked, as well, that the U.S. would associate itself with a "reign of military terror."²⁰ Criticism of Nixon's lack of a public condemnation of Yahya caused criticism of the administration from the American public, the press, and the U.S. Congress.

For the time being, however, Kissinger explained during a secret Washington Special Action Group meeting (WSAG) that any public criticism of Yahya and his Martial Law Administration would boost the morale of the East Pakistani population into believing that the U.S. supported their move for independence. The U.S. was not against a civil war taking place in the country; it just did not want West Pakistan to blame it for encouraging their independence.²¹ Kissinger commented that the West Pakistanis were already suspicious that the U.S. supported the separation of Pakistan.²² While the Nixon administration opposed the separation of East Pakistan from West Pakistan, Kissinger explained that "we did not oppose Bengali autonomy, and we were confident we could encourage a favorable evolution [of this possibility] if we dealt with Yahya as a friend

²⁰ U.S. Consulate Cable, Archer Blood to U.S. Department of State, "Selective Genocide," Dacca, 28 March 1971, in *The Tilt*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB1.pdf>>; U.S. Embassy Cable, Kenneth Keating to U.S. Department of State, "Selective Genocide," New Delhi, 29 March 1971, in *ibid*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB3.pdf>>.

²¹ Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting, Henry Kissinger, 26 March 1971, 26-27.

²² Kissinger, *White House Years*, 853.

instead of as a tormentor.”²³ By dealing with Yahya as a friend, the Nixon administration believed it could privately encourage Yahya to transfer power to a civilian government, which it believed would improve the tensions between East and West Pakistan. Nixon also believed that the transfer of power to a civilian administration would convince the East Pakistanis to restore normal business operations and services in their side of the country. The East Pakistanis ceased normal operations, including mail delivery and the running of schools, since their half of the country was invaded by West Pakistan, which consequently resulted in the U.S. evacuating its citizens who were residing in East Pakistan. Nixon also chose not to condemn West Pakistan’s crackdown because he did not want to side against a friend of China’s. At this time, West Pakistan’s military dictator, Yahya Khan, served as the middle-man between the U.S. and China’s negotiations to reestablish relations between the two countries.

These intentions, however, were not explained to Members of Congress and others who called for the U.S. to cut off military aid to Pakistan in response to the crackdown. Harold Saunders, a member of the National Security Council staff in the Nixon administration privately reacted to their desire to cut off military aid to Pakistan by arguing that the U.S. military aid, which had already been pledged to Pakistan, was not significant enough to merit its elimination. He believed that taking this step would adversely affect America’s ability to privately influence Yahya Khan.²⁴ It also seems clear to this historian that cutting off military aid to Pakistan would have further encouraged West Pakistani suspicions that the U.S. supported an independent East Pakistan since U.S. weapons helped West Pakistan to crush the rebellion in East Pakistan.

²³ Ibid., 860.

²⁴ Memorandum, Saunders to Kissinger, 19 July 1971, in *The Tilt*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB17.pdf>>.

More importantly though, this act would have negatively impacted the developing relations between the U.S. and China, in which West Pakistan's Yahya Khan was a crucial mediating element in. Therefore, the Nixon administration's lack of a condemnation against Yahya and its decision not to cut off military aid to Pakistan should not be seen as a sign of support of Pakistan for Pakistan's sake, but more so, as a measure of real politik, aimed at influencing events towards America's best interest.

While the Nixon administration did not favor the disintegration of Pakistan, it did want West Pakistan to end its fighting in East Pakistan. However, Nixon confided to Kissinger that neither revolution nor independence has ever been a virtue. He claims that "the real question is whether anybody can run the god-damn place."²⁵ Kissinger agreed with Nixon, commenting that historically, the Bengalis were a hard group of people to govern.²⁶ Nixon's pragmatic character believed that stability was the most important issue at hand. To him, stability was more important than self-determination. This was one of the main reasons why Nixon and Kissinger did not support their revolution. The Nixon administration's developing relations with China, therefore, was not the only consideration in their decision making, as historians Jackson and Singh felt it was.²⁷

Nixon and Kissinger's prognosis, however, was that with 75 million Bengalis demanding autonomy, if not independence, it was only a matter of time before West Pakistan's 35,000 troops would have to acquiesce to their demands.²⁸ Therefore, while people like Christopher Van Hollen, the deputy assistant secretary of state for near eastern and South Asian affairs, felt it "insensitive" to not tell the American public

²⁵ Telephone Conversation, Nixon and Kissinger, 29 March 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 36.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Robert Jackson, *South Asian*, 157; Nihal S. Singh, "Can the U.S. and India Be Real Friends?," 1017.

²⁸ *Ibid.*; Memorandum, Kissinger to Nixon, 28, April 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 95.

exactly why the Nixon administration was not condemning Yahya for his oppression, it is a matter of reality that backstage politics cannot be discussed in the open without affecting presidential decision-making or thinking. Van Hollen was correct, however, in claiming that this silence negatively impacted Nixon's public opinion.²⁹ In part, this also stemmed from the fact that the reports that the American public heard about the situation all came through Indian channels. This was because all foreign correspondents had been thrown out of East Pakistan with censorship imposed throughout the entire nation of Pakistan. Additionally, Kissinger claimed that the American public was more predisposed to supporting India and any claims it made because of the "progressive" slogans and [the] pacifist-sounding morality of the world's largest democracy."³⁰

In the meantime, while Nixon and his administration waited for Yahya to come to his senses, East Pakistani refugees continued to pour into India. India's Foreign Minister, Kaul, told U.S. Ambassador to India Kenneth Keating that India was "deeply concerned that the magnitude of the problem would considerably exceed their ability to cope with it."³¹ Kaul anticipated that India would help in providing medicines, blankets, food, and shelter for these refugees. By the end of April 1971, over 500,000 refugees were estimated to have fled East Pakistan since the invasion by West Pakistani forces, with several million more predicted to follow suit.³²

The U.S. was willing to help ease the burden for India's refugee nightmare by offering them some much need economic aid. However, the U.S. preferred to provide

²⁹ Van Hollen, "The Tilt Policy Revisited," 343.

³⁰ U.S. Department of State Cable, "Dissent from U.S. Policy Toward East Pakistan," April 6, 1971, in *The Tilt*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BE79/BEBB7.pdf>>; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 849.

³¹ Telegram, Embassy in India to Department of State, 27 March 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 30-31.

³² Memorandum, Haig to Nixon, 29 April 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 100.

this aid through international organizations, such as the United Nations, the Red Cross, and other volunteer organizations. Joseph Sisco, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, explains that the U.S. was part of an international relief effort sponsored by UN Secretary-General U. Thant.³³ Nixon preferred to give U.S. aid through UN auspices because he did not want to be accused by Pakistan of taking sides in the rising tensions between India and Pakistan. India had a pressing need for help.

Hobart Luppi, the U.S. consul general in Karachi, Pakistan, told Yahya that “the continuing influx of refugees from East Pakistan into India currently appeared to be the single most likely cause [for the] escalation of Indo-Pak tensions.” Tensions continued to rise as fast as the refugees poured into Indian territory. By the end of May, India claimed that it had over two and a half million East Pakistani refugees on their land with one-hundred thousand new refugees coming in each day.³⁴ The Nixon administration was especially concerned that of those refugees crossing into India, 90% of them were Hindus.³⁵ This seemed like the West Pakistani military was ethnically cleansing the Hindus out of East Pakistan. Joseph Farland, the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, did not believe that this was due to official orders. However, he recognized that Hindus were in fact being singled out by the Pakistani army. Farland explains, “Faced with [the] choice of [an] uncertain and possibly physically unsafe future in East Pakistan, flight to India surely must have seen as [the] lesser evil by many Hindus.”³⁶

³³ U.S. Department of State Cable, “Dissent from U.S. Policy Toward East Pakistan,” April 6, 1971, in *The Tilt*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB7.pdf>>.

³⁴ Telegram, Luppi to Department of State, 22 May 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 137.

³⁵ Memorandum of Conversation Between Keating, Kissinger, and Saunders, Washington, 3 June 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 165.

³⁶ Telegram, Farland to Department of State, Islamabad, 14 May 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 120.

Despite the fact that Hindus were being targeted by the West Pakistani military, Yahya told Nixon that he had urged the refugees to return home, claiming that they would be welcomed and protected. Yahya insisted to Nixon that “infiltrators and saboteurs” from India were responsible for much of the unrest that existed in East Pakistan. He claimed that it was interrupting Pakistan’s economic and industrial life, including vital communications systems.³⁷ Rather than recognize the problem that existed with the Hindus being targeted, whether it was official policy or not, he claimed that these saboteurs were responsible for the refugees fleeing to India. This may have been part of the reason, but it definitely was not the main reason. Kissinger believed that the only way to improve this whole situation was by fostering greater autonomy for East Pakistan so that the economic and political situation would be stabilized.³⁸

In discussions about whether India was trying to undermine Yahya and promote the separation of Pakistan by helping the Bengalis that fled East Pakistan, Kissinger expressed his belief that it would not be in India’s best interest to support separation. This was because of their fear that the East Bengalis in East Pakistan would join with the West Bengalis in India, which India feared could create trouble for them. Van Hollen, on the other hand, believed that India supported a united Pakistan that would have been led by the Indian-friendly Bengalis, as the December elections dictated. However, since that was not going to happen after the invasion by West Pakistani forces, he feels that it resulted in India’s decision to support an independent East Pakistan, or Bangladesh, as it

³⁷ Letter, Yahya to Nixon, Rawalpindi, 24 May 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 142.

³⁸ Memorandum, Kissinger to Nixon, 18 August 1971, in *The Tilt*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB7.pdf>>.

would come to be known.³⁹ At the end of March 1971, Yahya claimed that the Indians had their army close to the East Pakistani border. He considered this to be a direct threat to Pakistan.⁴⁰ India's Foreign Minister Kaul defended these claims and insisted that these troops had been stationed there during recent elections in India. He asserted, however, that they would not be removed until the situation in East Pakistan was stabilized. India, after all, considered it a threat to its sovereignty that millions of refugees were flocking onto its land.⁴¹

India helped the Bengali pursuit of independence for East Pakistan by sheltering a provisional government in Calcutta. Hilaly, the Pakistani ambassador to the U.S., refused to recognize the government. He claimed that it was an antagonistic move by India to justify its involvement in Pakistani matters.⁴² Kissinger told Nixon that this path that the Indians were on would lead to a "prolonged guerilla war." Kissinger insisted, that "there is absolutely no justification for it—they don't have a right to invade Pakistan no matter what Pakistan does on its territory." He passed this message along to Ambassador Keating that the U.S. would give India money for its refugee problem, but that the U.S. would not condone military action against another nation as retribution. Nixon declared, "If [the Indians] go in there with military action, by God we will cut off economic aid."⁴³

Under Secretary of State Irwin told Jha, the Indian Ambassador to the United States, that

³⁹ Minutes of Senior Review Group Meeting, San Clemente, 31 March 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 41; Memo of Conversation, Keating, Kissinger, and Saunders, Washington, 3 June 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 165; Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting, Washington, 26 May 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 151.

⁴⁰ Yahya gave Hilaly this message in order for him to transmit it to Nixon; Hilaly to Rogers, Washington, 31 March 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 39.

⁴¹ Telegram, Embassy in India to Department of State, 27 March 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 32.

⁴² Telegram, Department of State to Embassy in Pakistan, Washington, 17 April 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 75.

⁴³ Memorandum, Kissinger to Nixon, Washington, 28 April 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 95; Transcript of Telephone Conversation, Nixon and Kissinger, 23 May 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 140.

while India had the desire to help its friends in East Pakistan to seek greater autonomy or independence, its involvement in supporting the guerilla fighters would only make it harder for the refugees to return. Irwin claimed that like India, the U.S. was working to alleviate the refugee problem, but rather than use force, the U.S. was working to persuade Yahya to accept autonomy for East Pakistan. The Nixon administration believed that this would end West Pakistan's military occupation in East Pakistan, which in turn, would end India's refugee problem.⁴⁴

Handling matters through peaceful diplomacy was becoming more challenging, though. On the 23rd of July, Pakistani Ambassador Hilaly said that his country had agreed to UN supervision over the resettlement of the refugees to ensure their safety. The Indians, however, refused to comply. Jha of India told Irwin that if Pakistan "would stop selectively driving out Hindus and if [the] refugee flow were reduced to a trickle it would be easier to ask India to agree to such moves, as a UN presence to help with the return of [the] refugees."⁴⁵ Jha correctly observed that the largely Hindu refugees would not be able to be return to East Pakistan if they continued to be the targets of military reprisals. Could the UN have truly protected the refugees? How many of the refugees would trust the UN enough to believe that it would ensure their safety? These are important questions, but nevertheless, they are questions that will never be answered since India would not allow the UN to oversee the refugees' return. India believed that it "might succeed [in convincing] a few Muslims [to return to their homes in East Pakistan] whereas Hindus without any prospect of getting back their homes and property would not

⁴⁴ Department of State Cable, Jha and Irwin Meeting, "Indo-Pakistan Situation," 15 July 1971, in *The Tilt*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB16.pdf>>.

⁴⁵ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 863; Department of State Cable, Jha and Irwin Meeting, "Indo-Pakistan Situation," 15 July 1971, in *The Tilt*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB16.pdf>>.

return.”⁴⁶ As a result of India not allowing an oversight agency in to examine the reality of the situation, the U.S. could never be completely sure about the true number of refugees that India claimed to have.

In terms of resolving the conflict between India and Pakistan, the U.S. faced a real catch-22 situation. On the one hand, India told the U.S. that it should concentrate on ending the refugee flow, rather than worrying about the guerilla activity. India also wanted the Pakistani army to withdraw back to its barracks, feeling that this would stop the refugee flow. Above all, it wanted the Pakistani military to stop attacking Hindus.⁴⁷ On the other side, the West Pakistani military refused to return to the barracks as long as it felt that India was threatening Pakistani sovereignty by encouraging the separation of East Pakistan through guerilla attacks. Since the Indian threat towards Pakistan persisted, it did not retreat. Consequently, the West Pakistani military was able to continue its attacks against Hindus, which led to their departure to India. In turn, the refugees which fled to India, became guerilla fighters and attacked the West Pakistani military. Facing such a threat to their lives, Kissinger believed that “few if any refugees will return under present conditions and more will probably leave East Pakistan.” He explained to Nixon that “a major international effort can be made to avert famine, but the cycle of guerilla attack and army reprisal will affect not only food distribution but also the restoration of normal conditions in which refugees or potential refugees can feel safe.”⁴⁸

This statement by Kissinger reflects a sense of hopelessness in his effort to create peace once again on the Indian subcontinent. Despite the millions of dollars that the U.S.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Memorandum, Kissinger to Nixon, 18 August 1971, in Ibid., <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEbb24.pdf>>.

had given to help the refugees through the UN, India continued to feel that the U.S. supported Pakistan over India in the Indo-Pakistani conflict.⁴⁹ Basically, it seems that the Indians felt that by not being anti-Pakistani, the U.S. was favoring Pakistan. Kissinger felt that there was no pleasing the Indians. In assessing the entire matter, he explains that “there seems to be a growing sense of the inevitability of war or at least widespread Hindu-Muslim violence, not necessarily because anyone wants it but because in the end they fear they will not know how to avoid it.”⁵⁰

Neither Nixon nor Kissinger took this feeling that war was inevitable very lightly. Above all, Nixon was especially concerned that this war could pose a threat to his ongoing efforts to open relations with China. China was an ally of Pakistan and, so, Nixon was using them to communicate messages to China. After this diplomacy was revealed to the world in mid-July 1971, it seemed to many people that the U.S. was favoring Pakistan in its conflict with India. This was not completely unfounded, as it was one of the major reasons why the U.S. did not cut off military assistance to Pakistan after West Pakistan invaded East Pakistan.⁵¹ Nevertheless, Nixon truly felt that India should not get involved in the matter and that the suppression was actually a civil war. Perhaps one could say that Yahya was ethnically cleansing the Hindus out of East Pakistan. While that may be true, Nixon and his administration were working behind the scenes with Yahya to convince him to give East Pakistan greater autonomy. Nixon believed that

⁴⁹ Memorandum, “Dr. Kissinger's Reports of Conversations in New Delhi,” 7 July 1971, in *Ibid.*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB14.pdf>>.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Memorandum, Nixon-Farland Meeting, 28 July 1971, in *Ibid.*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB18.pdf>>; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 853; Memorandum, Saunders to Kissinger, 19 July 1971, in *The Tilt*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB17.pdf>>.

this would have ended the East Pakistani oppression, which consequently would have ended India's refugee problem.

Van Hollen was still not convinced that condemning Yahya's repression in East Pakistan would have adversely affected America's position with Pakistan or China if it had been explained that these were the views of the American public and Congress.⁵² However, Van Hollen's feelings were irrelevant. In the end it came down to how Nixon and his closest associate, Kissinger, felt about such an act. In August, when Kissinger met with Hua Huang, China's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Kissinger revealed to Huang that he would have liked to have given military aid to help Pakistan deal with its problems with India, but that the U.S. Congress would never allow it. Regardless of whether Kissinger actually felt that the United States should give more arms to Pakistan or whether this was just an empty claim to China since it was also an ally of Pakistan, it would only have been a desire. The Nixon administration did not knowingly give any arms or weapons to Pakistan that had not already been paid for before the West Pakistani invasion. Therefore, Kissinger informed Huang that the U.S. was separating humanitarian help for the refugees and the people in East Pakistan from the political future of East Pakistan.⁵³ This shows that the U.S. did not have bad intentions towards India, as historian Baldev Raj Nayar felt it did. Nixon's administration was concerned for the plight of the refugees; however, it felt an obligation

⁵² Van Hollen, "The Tilt Policy Revisited," 360.

⁵³ Memorandum, Kissinger to Nixon, "My August 16 Meeting with the Chinese Ambassador in Paris," 16 August 1971, in *The Tilt*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB24.pdf>>.

to complete the transfer of weapons to Pakistan since the weapons were already licensed and since they were already in the production process.⁵⁴

Kissinger further explained to Huang in their August 1971 meeting that he was against humiliating Pakistan, as he claimed India was trying to do. He said, “While we recognize that India had a problem with refugees, we would not be a party to its attempts to exploit this situation to settle Indian scores with Pakistan.”⁵⁵ This is an internal matter for Pakistan to deal with, he explained. Kissinger told Huang that if India started a war with Pakistan over this matter then it would cut off economic aid to India. He asked Huang to use China’s influence with Pakistan to make sure it did not precipitate any action against India. Kissinger also sought China’s help in encouraging Pakistan to be “more imaginative politically and psychologically so as to allow the return of the refugees.”⁵⁶ He tried to pressure the Chinese into helping the U.S. to convince West Pakistan that it needed to resolve its domestic political situation much faster than it was.

The U.S. belief that neither it nor India should publicly interfere in Pakistan’s internal affairs was not an attempt by the U.S. to help East Pakistan’s independence movement. Rather, this stance was maintained because the U.S. was against East Pakistan’s independence movement. Kissinger believed that this position of non-interference in Pakistan’s internal affairs was the best way to achieve this result, while also downplaying West Pakistani suspicions that it supported an independent East Pakistan. Nixon angrily asserted to Kissinger that “the people who bitch about Vietnam bitch about it because we intervened in what they say is a civil war...Now some of those

⁵⁴ Baldev Raj Nayar, “Treat India Seriously,” 133-34.

⁵⁵ Memorandum, Kissinger to Nixon, “My August 16 Meeting with the Chinese Ambassador in Paris,” 16 August 1971, in *The Tilt*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB24.pdf>>.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

same bastards...want us to intervene here—both civil wars.”⁵⁷ These peaceful intentions, above all, were to ensure that the U.S. did not antagonize West Pakistan, which acted as the mediator to the U.S.’s developing relations with China.

Van Hollen, however, felt that aside from the China issue, that Nixon had a long-standing hatred towards India, which impacted his decision-making in the Indo-Pakistani conflict. While Nixon was not very fond of India, the real question is whether Nixon’s policies were geared towards harming India? Nixon was against a war erupting between India and Pakistan. He threatened to cut off economic aid to India if it started a war because it was interfering in Pakistan’s politics. Nixon did not want to see a war break out because he feared that it would affect his developing relations with China. However, he did not do anything to harm India before the start of the war in December, which he felt that India was responsible for starting. Nixon is looked down on by scholars and by the Indians because he did not condemn Yahya’s brutality in East Pakistan. But more so, he is looked down on because he was not anti-Pakistani. Like the Indians, Nixon’s warm sentiment towards Pakistan, for some reason, made Van Hollen believe that Nixon was acting to spite India. This was not the case, though. Kissinger explained that Nixon had friendly relations with Yahya because he had “an understanding for leaders who operated on an unsentimental assessment of the national interest.”⁵⁸

Nixon wanted to help Yahya to end the problems in East Pakistan by gradually pushing him in private discussions to resolve the political problem that began the turmoil. He wanted to allow Yahya, though, to figure out how to solve the matter so that the U.S. was not accused later on of helping to break-up the country. Nixon and his

⁵⁷ Editorial Note, Nixon to Kissinger, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 65-66.

⁵⁸ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 848-49.

administration realized that eventual autonomy or independence for East Pakistan was likely, which is what India was trying to help them to attain, but Nixon wanted to allow West Pakistan to reach that conclusion by itself.⁵⁹ Nixon told Yahya's economic advisor, Ahmad, that "there were a number of critics who felt that the U.S. should become heavily involved in telling Pakistan how to work out its political difficulties. He said that the U.S. is not going to become involved in that way." Nixon explained to Ahmad that "it is wrong...to assume that the U.S. should go around telling other countries how to arrange their political affairs."⁶⁰

Nixon continued to urge Yahya to find a solution for the refugee problem, but it was difficult, while India was encouraging guerilla attacks on Pakistani territory in East Pakistan. Ahmad, Yahya's economic advisor, said that Yahya still desired to see the transfer of power to a civilian government. The West Pakistanis realized that this would improve conditions in East Pakistan. However, they were adamant that it had to be in the form of a single country. Ahmad claimed that Yahya was willing to go along with Rahman and give the East Pakistanis virtual autonomy before the conflict began, but he felt that Rahman was really seeking independence. That is something that Yahya could not allow to happen. Ahmad and Hilaly also made it clear that if India helped to topple the Yahya government, then it would be impossible to pull the army out of East Pakistan "without the expectation of [a] large number of killings by Bengalis directed at the non-Bengali population." Ahmad said that the Awami League could form a government, without Rahman since he was accused of conspiring for secession, once normal

⁵⁹ Memorandum, Kissinger to Irwin, Washington, 7 May 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 104.

⁶⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, Nixon, Washington, 10 May 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI:

conditions were restored and the Indian attacks ended.⁶¹ These normal conditions could not be restored, however, since India continued its aggression against Pakistan by encouraging guerilla attacks against the West Pakistani military.

Despite the hardships created on Pakistan by India, Farland believed that by mid-September 1971, Yahya had made several key steps towards improving the situation in East Pakistan. These steps included offering amnesty to the refugees and also, removing General Tikka Khan from his position as governor of East Pakistan and installing Dr. Malik, Yahya's special assistant for displaced persons and relief and rehabilitation operations in East Pakistan, in his place as the new governor of East Pakistan. The U.S. believed that these measures were responsible for fewer intellectuals being harassed and that it was only a matter of time before official orders translated into actual implementation by the lower levels of the military.⁶² This step, most likely the result of the Nixon administration's influence, would not help the souring relations between India and the United States, however.

Kissinger explained that the Indian government wanted better relations with the U.S., but that it harbored animosity against the U.S. for continuing to give arms to Pakistan, despite the fact that these were already licensed to be sent before the West Pakistani invasion. The U.S. had stopped sending new arms to Pakistan after the invasion began.⁶³ The Indians were not just upset at this last bit of military aid but also wanted the U.S. to cut off all economic aid to Pakistan, as well. The U.S. had not cut off economic aid to India up to this point, so why should the U.S. take sides in the battle by

⁶¹ Letter, Yahya to Nixon, Rawalpindi, 17 April 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 72; Memorandum of Conversation, Ahmad, 10 May 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 111

⁶² U.S. Embassy Cable, Farland to Department of State, Islamabad, 17 September 1971, in *The Tilt*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB25.pdf>>.

⁶³ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 861.

cutting off aid to Pakistan? Kissinger explained the Indian troubles by saying, “Indian leaders evidently did not think it strange that a country which had distanced itself from most of our foreign policy objectives in the name of non alignment [in the Cold War] was asking us to break all ties with an ally over what was in international law a domestic conflict.”⁶⁴

While Pakistan’s Cold War alliance with the U.S. may have been one of the reasons why Nixon did not cut off aid to Pakistan, the decision of whether the U.S. should have cut off aid or not was not its decision to make. Despite India’s non alignment status, it also seems clear to this historian that Nixon and Kissinger’s judgment of India as the aggressor was based on the fact that it encouraged guerilla attacks into East Pakistan. The Nixon administration believed that when India’s attacks ended, Yahya in West Pakistan could establish the democratic process that he had been working to establish before the secession crisis began. Furthermore, Nixon also had reason to question India’s moral leadership because of India’s claim in the summer of 1970 that the U.S. was interfering in its internal politics because some U.S. Embassy personnel talked with members of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s opposition.⁶⁵

Explaining her side of the story as it related to her tensions with Pakistan, Gandhi told Nixon that Pakistan’s internal problems in East Pakistan were India’s concern since millions of refugees had crossed the border in India. She believed that “the rulers of Pakistan would wish the refugee problem in India to result in an aggravation of social tension and religious strife.” She was further upset that the refugees coming into India were affecting its economy. She stood firm that things could not return to normal as long

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 848-49.

as these refugees kept coming in because they were affecting the sovereignty and well-being of India. Gandhi claimed that since the refugees were coming into already crowded areas, it could result in hostility towards them very easily. Gandhi claimed that the will of the majority of the people of East Bengal “cannot be enforced at gun-point” and she urged the U.S. to work to improve the problems.⁶⁶

In response to Gandhi’s problems, Nixon told her that the U.S. was working through the UN to provide relief for the refugees. He mentioned all of the money that the U.S. had donated to refugee relief and other assistance, including providing four C-130 aircrafts to help India move some of the refugees from one city to another.⁶⁷ While the U.S. could have offered further assistance to India, perhaps more directly, it did not want to be accused by China or West Pakistan of conspiring with India. The U.S.’s assistance with food, medicine, and other supplies to India, however, did not translate into ending the refugee problem. Refugees continued to flock to India after the military reacted to the continued shots by the guerilla fighters out of India.⁶⁸ Author Nihal Singh believed that Kissinger’s trip to India in July 1971, where he reiterated some of Nixon’s comments, was an attempt to improve relations with India and “wean it away from the Soviet Union.”⁶⁹ Singh is most likely correct in this view. Kissinger’s trip to India was an attempt by the U.S. at improving relations with India so that it would not align with the Soviet Union. Kissinger’s efforts were not overly successful, though, because he did not want to anger West Pakistan by getting too close to India.

⁶⁶ Letter, Gandhi to Nixon, New Delhi, 13 May 1972, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 117-18.

⁶⁷ Letter, Nixon to Gandhi, Washington, 28 May 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969-1976, XI: 160-61.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Nihal S. Singh, “Can the U.S. and India Be Real Friends?,” *Asian Survey* 23, no 9 (September 1983): 1017.

Nevertheless, Nixon and Kissinger played to India's ego by claiming that it was the pre-eminent power in the region and that it had a job, as such, to act like the grown-up and to promote peace with its smaller neighbors. During his summer trip to India, Kissinger made it clear to Singh, India's minister of external affairs, that "[Nixon] felt that an Indo-Pakistani war would be a disaster for both countries and would create the risk that the subcontinent would become an area for conflict among outside powers. The President has felt that he had certain influence in Pakistan which could be used to encourage the Pakistani Government to encourage [a] political solution." Kissinger further expressed to Singh that "we recognized that the Indians would prefer [the] U.S. to cut off assistance for the shock effect of that step, but the President had felt that we should do enough to maintain our influence."⁷⁰

There was no surprise as to how the U.S. felt about India's support of guerilla warfare into East Pakistan. Kissinger communicated, as well to Singh, the U.S.'s reasons for not wanting to cut off economic assistance to Pakistan and that he did not want the region's problems to be internationalized. Basically, he told Singh that he did not want this crisis turned into an international Cold War battle, where it would have to take a stance in a war between India and Pakistan. The U.S. wanted to avoid this possibility at all cost because it did not want to take a position against India or to make China believe that the U.S. was conspiring with India in its problems with Pakistan. This latter concern was of greater importance to the Nixon administration. Consequently, the U.S. could not truly improve its relations with the Indians. This inability of the U.S. to assist in the

⁷⁰ Memorandum, "Dr. Kissinger's Reports of Conversations in New Delhi," 7 July 1971, in *The Tilt*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BEBB14.pdf>>.

dismemberment of Pakistan resulted in India's decision to break its non alignment status and to align with the Soviets.⁷¹

Nixon explained in his memoirs that Gandhi had a close relationship with the Soviets during her years in power that gradually became closer by 1971. As a result, he claimed that Pakistan had to resort to improving its relations with China over the past decade in order to establish a balance of power.⁷² The intensifying Sino-Soviet rift was evident in each superpower's opposing side in this regional conflict between India and Pakistan. Historian Robert Jackson explains that this Communist rivalry was the reason why China sought a rapprochement with the United States.⁷³ Van Hollen believed that India felt slighted by the U.S. and constituted the U.S.-Pakistan-China alignment as superpower involvement in South Asia, and more specifically, in Indian matters.⁷⁴ He made a good point and one could argue that the U.S. sided with Pakistan against India by not choosing to have friendlier relations with India, whereas it wanted friendlier relations with Pakistan. Nevertheless, the U.S. did not take any steps to directly harm India before the war commenced in December 1971. As for why Van Hollen took exception with China's alignment with Pakistan, since as a regional superpower in the area, it already had an interest in resolving the conflict, if one understands that Van Hollen was biased towards the Indians. The fact that China aligned itself with the U.S. and that this caused the U.S. not to want to harm Pakistan, does not mean that the U.S. did anything to harm India. However, this alignment did justify India's decision to align itself with the Soviet

⁷¹ Memorandum, Kissinger to Nixon, 18 August 1971, in *Ibid.*, <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/BE24.pdf>>.

⁷² Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), 525.

⁷³ Robert Victor Jackson, *South Asian Crisis: India, Pakistan, and Bangla Desh: A Political and Historical Analysis of the 1971 War*, Praeger Special Studies in International Politics and Government (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), 153.

⁷⁴ Van Hollen, "The Tilt Policy Revisited," 360.

Union, as per the friendship treaty each nation signed on August 9, 1971. This treaty served to balance the power in South Asia.

Van Hollen explained in an article he wrote that Gandhi was not a war hawk, who was seeking to dismember Pakistan, as Nixon believed she was. However, he sympathized that there was a lot of pressure on her from within her country “to act more decisively.”⁷⁵ This push he believed was what prompted her to sign a friendship treaty on August 9th with the Soviet Union.⁷⁶ Nixon recounts in his memoirs that at this time, with the combination of Moscow’s ties to New Delhi and Peking’s ties to Islamabad, there was a great possibility that the Indian subcontinent would become “a dangerous area of confrontation between the two Communist giants.”⁷⁷ This was not to say that either the Soviet Union or China was seeking to start a war between India and Pakistan. However, whenever the two countries clashed over a matter, sparks could fly.

Jackson claims that during the months of September and October, the Soviets were in fact putting heavy pressure on India to settle its dispute with Pakistan. However, he explains that the Soviets backed off in mid-October after Yahya made a public announcement stating that he still refused to release Rahman and to give East Pakistan autonomy, with Rahman as its leader.⁷⁸ Despite this claim, the U.S. continued to try to seek a political deal, but the U.S. could not get Yahya to change his mind on this matter, either. Nixon continued discussions with Gandhi during her visit to Washington in early November, seeking assurance from her that she was not going to start a war. This much she pledged to Nixon, stating that “India has never wished the destruction of Pakistan or

⁷⁵ Ibid., 346.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Nixon, *RN*, 525.

⁷⁸ Jackson, *South Asian Crisis*, 159.

its permanent crippling.” Nixon asserts that he later came to find out that she was lying to him and that she already had contingency plans to attack the West Pakistani army in East Pakistan and, possibly, even invade West Pakistan, as well.⁷⁹

Gandhi further annoyed Nixon during his conversation with her in Washington in early November 1971 because she would not agree to pull her troops back from the border of East Pakistan. This upset him because Yahya told him that he would pull his troops away from the Indian border if Gandhi agreed to do the same. It seemed to Nixon that India would not mind another war with Pakistan, despite Gandhi’s claim to wanting peace.⁸⁰ Singh believed that India did not want the U.S. to tell them what to do in this situation or in any other.⁸¹ While this was within India’s rights, having this type of feeling towards a peace-maker (in this situation) was eventually caused a war to break out between India and Pakistan on the 3rd of December 1971.

As for who started the war, the answer remains inconclusive. However, what is important is that Nixon felt that India was responsible for starting the war. He felt that he worked hard to try to prevent a war and that India showed signs of aggression throughout the crisis by supporting guerilla attacks and by refusing to remove its troops from the East Pakistani-Indian border. This prompted Nixon to cancel \$11.3 million worth of aid for India for military and other equipment, followed by another \$3 million in licenses two days later. Additionally, the U.S. State Department cut off \$87.6 million in economic aid to India because Nixon felt that India had started the war.⁸² Nixon had for a long time

⁷⁹ Nixon, *RN*, 525-26

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Singh, “Can the U.S. and India Be Real Friends?,” 1020.

⁸² W. Norman Brown, *The United States and India, Pakistan, Bangladesh*, The American Foreign Policy Library, ed. Edwin O. Reischauer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 224-25.

threatened to cut off economic aid to India if it attacked Pakistan and he followed through with his pledge.

In order “to discourage both Indian aggression and Soviet adventurism...I agreed with Kissinger’s recommendation that we should demonstrate our displeasure with India and our support for Pakistan.” This came after the Soviets lined-up troops on the Chinese border in order to neutralize them from helping Pakistan in the fighting. With Nixon telling Brezhnev that the Indians had no right to impose political demands on the Pakistanis and Brezhnev countering that Pakistan should recognize the independence of East Pakistan, things seemed to be getting heated all around. Consequently, this became another Cold War face-off with the U.S. having to take Pakistan’s side because it was a Cold War member of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO).⁸³

Since India refused to accept a proposed cease-fire called for by the United Nations on December 9th and because it was considering invading West Pakistan, according to Nixon, a U.S. nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, *Enterprise*, was taken from its position in Saigon and was sent into the Indian Ocean in order to intimidate the Indians. Van Hollen claims that this was “the first threat by the United States to use military force against India.”⁸⁴ Lawrence Ziring, along with many others, considered this to be a “tilt” towards Pakistan, which it was; however, that tilt was not solely for Pakistan’s sake. It was a way for America to show its power and also, a way for Nixon to pay back Gandhi for her deception.⁸⁵ The official line was that the *Enterprise* was there to evacuate Americans from Pakistan, if necessary, but that was not its real purpose.

⁸³ Nixon, *RN*, 526-27; Brown, *The United States and India, Pakistan, Bangladesh*, 415..

⁸⁴ Van Hollen, “The Tilt Policy Revisited,” 360.

⁸⁵ Lawrence Ziring, “Pakistan and India: Politics, Personalities, and Foreign Policy,” *Asian Survey* 18, no. 7 (July 1978) : 708.

Historian Singh claims that the Indo-Soviet treaty that India felt compelled to sign in August 1971, in order to ensure a balance of power, served India's interests very well, as it helped to end the war in India's favor.⁸⁶ This was achieved when the U.S. pressured the Soviet Union to use its treaty with India to force it to accept a cease-fire from Pakistan. Pakistan, at this time on December 9th, was losing the war and consequently wanted a ceasefire; however, India refused to accept Pakistan's offer to end the war. This prompted Nixon to urge Soviet Premier Brezhnev "to restrain India, with which, by virtue of your treaty, you have great influence and for whose actions you must share responsibility."⁸⁷ Nixon believed that while the Indians were responsible for triggering the war, that the Soviet Union shared some of the blame for the war since it had helped to arm the Indian military. He was successful in pressuring the Soviets to influence India into accepting the cease-fire by explaining to them that he had peaceful intentions and good will towards them. At this time, Nixon told the Soviet Union that he "has long sought a genuine change in U.S. Soviet relations."⁸⁸ Vorontsov (**ID**) responded, saying that the Soviet Union guaranteed that India would not attack West Pakistan and that it would urge India to accept a cease-fire. However, he did not want to do this publicly. To his credit, this was exactly what happened. Yahya surrendered his forces on December 17th and the Indians accepted a cease-fire.⁸⁹ The Soviets' influence on India, through the Indo-Soviet treaty, to accept a ceasefire, was a sign to Nixon that the Soviet Union was truly serious about seeking a *détente* with the United States.

⁸⁶ Singh, "Can the U.S. and India Be Real Friends?," 1017.

⁸⁷ Nixon, *RN*, 530.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Consequently, East Pakistan had been freed from West Pakistani control and a new nation, Bangladesh, was born.

Since the beginning of the Indo-Pakistani conflict, which began in March 1971 with West Pakistan's invasion of East Pakistan, the Nixon administration desperately tried to avoid antagonizing Pakistan's military dictator Yahya Khan or to publicly criticize or condemn him. This was because Nixon wanted to allow Yahya to establish order in his country without any outside interference. India's interference in Pakistan's affairs by encouraging guerilla attacks against Pakistan's military angered Nixon and his administration because he feared that these attacks could help to topple Pakistan's disoriented government. If this were to happen, then Nixon feared it would impact his ongoing discussions with China, since Pakistan's Yahya Khan was the mediator between the two countries. This was also one of the reasons why Nixon did not condemn Yahya's invasion of East Pakistan.

While Nixon had this self-serving reason for not condemning Yahya, Nixon worked behind the scenes trying to help Yahya resolve the political situation within Pakistan. Nixon gradually advised Yahya that he needed to move towards an acceptance of autonomy for East Pakistan in order to resolve the secession crisis. Had Nixon publicly condemned Yahya, he would have lost this influence. This behind the scenes persuasion worked to help India, as well, since resolving Pakistan's political situation would have helped to end its refugee problem. So, the Nixon administration did not lack concern for India's welfare and its refugee problem, as historian Baldev Raj Nayar believes.⁹⁰ India, however, perpetuated its refugee problem by interfering in Pakistani politics. Nixon and his administration worked hard behind the scenes to resolve the root

⁹⁰ Baldev Raj Nayar, "Treat India Seriously," 134.

of the problem, instability in Pakistan; however, with India's interference, Pakistan was not able to concentrate on resolving its problems. Despite the tensions that India's interference caused between the U.S. and India, the U.S. did not carry out any actions to harm the country before the onset of the war. It threatened to cut off aid to India if it started a war, but the U.S. never took any action to harm India before the December 1971 war. In fact, the U.S. provided millions of dollars in aid to India through international organizations for refugee relief.

Historian Nayar believes that the U.S. should have sided with India, despite its belligerency towards Pakistan, simply because both the U.S. and India were democracies.⁹¹ However, Nixon was not going to support an aggressor, especially since it went against his interests. Nevertheless, he would not harm India, either. Historian Stephen Cohen believes that the real reason that the U.S. was a steadfast supporter of Pakistan, as opposed to India, was because Pakistan was a Cold War ally of the U.S.⁹² This does not tell a complete story, however. While the fact that Pakistan was a Cold War ally to the U.S. did play a role in the friendly relations between the two nations, the U.S. did not show favoritism towards Pakistan before the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971 commenced. The Nixon administration worked to convince both parties that war was not in their best respective interests (or in the U.S.'s interests). However, since Nixon viewed India as the aggressor who caused the war, he cut off aid to India after the war began in early December 1971.

Only after the war began did Nixon "tilt" towards Pakistan. This was because India was aligned with the Soviet Union, according to an August 1971 treaty signed

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Stephen P. Cohen, "U.S. Weapons and South Asia," 134.

between the two countries. Therefore, Nixon felt obliged to give support to Pakistan in order to balance its own Cold War rivalry with the Soviet Union. The regional Indo-Pakistani conflict had expanded into the international arena, as Nixon feared it would. However, despite U.S. assistance, West Pakistan was not able to defeat India. Consequently, East Pakistan, which renamed itself Bangladesh after the war, gained its independence. Overall though, it was not a total loss for the U.S., as Nixon's communications with the Soviet Union during the war, which helped to force a ceasefire between India and Pakistan, resulted in closer relations between the two chief Cold War rivals.

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