

A “Time when Principles Make Best Politics”?  
The United States’ Response to the Genocide in East Pakistan

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The Department of History

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## ABSTRACT

### A “Time when Principles Make Best Politics”? The United States’ Response to the Genocide in East Pakistan

Richard D. Pilkington

On 25 March 1971, fearing the secession of East Pakistan, the military dictator, President Yahya Khan unleashed his country’s West-Pakistani-dominated armed forces in a brutal campaign of massacre and repression in the East. During nine months of operations, the army butchered at least one million people. Though very much aware of the nature of the atrocities in East Pakistan, and despite vociferous public criticism at home, the US Government not only refused to intervene militarily and economically, but also failed to publicly condemn the actions of the Islamabad authorities.

President Richard Nixon and his National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, dominated the formulation of US foreign policy at the time of the crisis. In his memoirs, Kissinger argued that US inaction throughout the emergency was justified on the grounds that Yahya was acting as the main channel for secret communications in a major strategic initiative aimed at securing rapprochement between the US and China. In the absence of much important primary-source material, secondary works have perpetuated this view.

In contrast, using evidence from recently declassified documents, this thesis argues that the initial US reaction was divided into two phases. Only after 27 April 1971, when it sprang fully into life, did the secret China initiative come to dominate Nixon and Kissinger’s policy. Up until this watershed event, however, a complex mixture of more mundane motives drove the US response. This revisionist posture, therefore, directly contradicts Kissinger’s contention.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AID	Agency for International Development
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
NEA	Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Department of State
NSC	National Security Council
NSDM	National Security Decision Memorandum
NSSM	National Security Study Memorandum
OMC	Office of Munitions Control, Department of State
SRG	Senior Review Group
UNGC	United Nations Genocide Convention
USIS	United States Information Service
WSAG	Washington Special Actions Group

## 1. Historiographical Introduction

We faced a dilemma. The United States could not condone a brutal military repression in which thousands of civilians were killed and from which millions fled to India for safety. There was no doubt about the strong-arm tactics of the Pakistani Military. But Pakistan was our sole channel to China; once it was closed off it would take months to make alternative arrangements.<sup>1</sup>

On 25 March 1971, fearing the secession of East Pakistan, the military dictator, President Yahya Khan, unleashed his country's West Pakistani-dominated armed forces in a brutal campaign of massacre and oppression in the East. During nine months of operations, the army butchered at least one million people, and terrorized ten million refugees into fleeing their homeland for the safety of India. Though very much aware of the nature of the atrocities in East Pakistan, and despite vociferous public criticism at home, the US Government not only refused to intervene militarily and economically, but also failed to publicly condemn the actions of the Islamabad authorities.

In his memoirs written some eight years later, Henry Kissinger, President Richard Nixon's Assistant for National Security Affairs during the crisis,<sup>2</sup> argued that US inaction at the time of the slaughter was justified on the grounds that Yahya was acting as the main channel for secret communications aimed at securing rapprochement between the US and China.<sup>3</sup> In the shared view of Kissinger and Nixon, failing to support Yahya

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<sup>1</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co., 1979), 854.

<sup>2</sup> Although Kissinger's formal title was Assistant for National Security Affairs, he was more commonly referred to as National Security Advisor.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this thesis, 'China' refers to the mainland People's Republic of China, with its capital at Peking. 'Taiwan' refers to Nationalist China. For the sake of consistency with quotations from documents of the period, I have adopted the still-familiar Wade-Giles system for Chinese transliteration, along with the contemporary names and spellings of various places in South Asia. Thus, I use 'Peking' rather than 'Beijing', and 'Dacca' rather 'Dhaka'. While I acknowledge that this approach perpetuates the use of older systems of naming and transliteration, often associated with imperialistic attitudes, I believe it avoids confusion, and makes this thesis more readily understandable to the reader.

risked not only losing their key intermediary, but also offending Peking, as China and Pakistan were close allies in Asia. Uninvited interference with regard to East Pakistan threatened to delay the strategic China initiative, and imperiled the venture in the long term.

Kissinger's memoirs, *White House Years*, clearly favored the perspective of the US Executive. In the absence until recently of much declassified material, the seventy-seven-page justification contained therein has, since its publication in 1979, provided the most widely accepted account of the reasons behind the US response. Both Nixon, and his Chief of Staff, Bob Haldeman, published their own reminiscences on the period the year before Kissinger, yet they barely touched upon events in East Pakistan. Not surprisingly, therefore, in the absence of much classified primary material, the Kissinger explanation has dominated understanding for over two decades. Yet, since 1980, there has remained a small but persistent fly buzzing around in Kissinger's soothing ointment.

One year after the former National Security Advisor published his memoirs, Christopher Van Hollen went to press with a twenty-three-page article in *Asian Survey*. Van Hollen, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (NEA) between 1969 and 1972, explained, "The thesis of this essay is that many of Kissinger's assumptions and conclusions are incorrect." Although he accepted that the China initiative was "the single most important factor" in shaping Nixon and Kissinger's reaction to the crisis, Van Hollen argued that the "United States did not have to remain mute to the Pakistani army's repressions in East Pakistan to protect the White House opening to China." Because of the recent Sino-Soviet split, rapprochement, after



all, was very much in Peking's own geopolitical interests.<sup>4</sup> The article focused primarily on the lead-up to and the events of the Indo-Pakistan War that finally resolved the crisis in December 1971,<sup>5</sup> and did not examine in detail the changing motivations behind US inaction in the critical early phases of the clampdown.

The secondary literature on the subject has been limited in terms of its quantity and quality, owing to a lack until recently of primary-source materials. While several works have reflected on the US response, they have done so only briefly, having relied heavily on Kissinger's recollection, press coverage, Congressional records, and the few government documents of import leaked or formally declassified and released into the public domain.<sup>6</sup> These secondary works are prone to generalization and sometimes error, and tend to adopt Kissinger's catchall justification of US inaction under constraint of the China initiative. In addition, they often focus on the events after the summer of 1971 that led to the Indo-Pakistan War of December, rather than on the crucial early phases during which Nixon and Kissinger formulated US policy in response to the genocide. The main contributions are briefly discussed below.

Roger Morris published his celebrated work, *Uncertain Greatness*, in 1977. Once a member of Kissinger's National Security Council (NSC) staff, Morris resigned in 1970, following the US invasion of Cambodia. He dedicated some eight pages of a much broader work to a general discussion of the early phases of the East Pakistan crisis, linking it to the China initiative. Unfortunately, he made a crucial error in suggesting the

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<sup>4</sup> Christopher Van Hollen, "The Tilt Policy Revisited: Nixon-Kissinger Geopolitics and South Asia," *Asian Survey* 20 (1980): 340, 360.

<sup>5</sup> Indian victory in the Indo-Pakistan War of December 1971 ended the crisis on the subcontinent. West Pakistan was defeated in the East, which subsequently attained independence as Bangladesh.

<sup>6</sup> For example, the 'Anderson Papers' leaked in 1971 contained some White House documents on the East Pakistan crisis.

Pakistan channel to Peking sprang fully into life in March 1971, one month earlier than it actually did, so unintentionally promoting Kissinger's China justification as the principal reason behind US inaction throughout the crisis.<sup>7</sup> This widely read work has, therefore, accidentally encouraged an over-simplistic and misleading understanding of the shifting motivations behind the formulation of early White House policy. The error is discussed in detail later in this thesis.

In 1983, Mohammed Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan wrote a fifteen-page article on the response of the major powers to the "heroic struggle" in East Pakistan, published in the *Indian Political Science Review*.<sup>8</sup> Basing his work mainly on newspaper reports and Kissinger's memoirs, he dedicated only one page to a superficial discussion of US policy in the initial period between the end-of-March clampdown and the fruition of the China initiative in Kissinger's trip to Peking in early July. Four years later, Sanjoy Banerjee broadly applied a political science model, based on the late dependency theory of client relations between a superpower and a state in a divided society, to analyze the American response to the crisis as a whole. He argued very generally that, based on empirical evidence, Pakistan was an American client and, when challenged by the Indians and Bengalis, the United States was "motivated to protect its credibility as a guarantor of client states through the tilt policy."<sup>9</sup> In 1990, Rashid-ul-Ahsan Chowdhury discussed US foreign policy in South Asia during 1971 in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*. He described events occurring before the July trip to Peking in eight of the

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<sup>7</sup> Roger Morris, *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 215.

<sup>8</sup> Mohammed Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, "The Bangladesh Liberation Movement and the Big Powers: Some Involvements," *Indian Political Science Review* 17 (1983): 66.

<sup>9</sup> Sanjoy Banerjee, "Explaining the American 'Tilt' in the 1971 Bangladesh Crisis: A Late Dependency Approach," *International Studies Quarterly* 31 (1987): 201. 'Tilt' refers to Nixon and Kissinger's deliberate bias towards the Government of Pakistan as the probability of war on the subcontinent continued to develop after the China trip.

twenty-nine pages, relying upon Kissinger's and Van Hollen's memoirs, supported by press articles, the Congressional record, and a limited number of declassified documents from the White House Presidential Files. He concluded, rather obviously, that with regard to the crisis as a whole, White House focus was not regional but global, and that Nixon and Kissinger succeeded in implementing a tilt policy in favor of Pakistan, despite a more evenhanded approach to affairs on the subcontinent by the two previous administrations.<sup>10</sup> In 1998, Imtiaz H. Bokhari analyzed Kissinger's management of the crisis to December but, like Bhuiyan, dedicated only a small, largely descriptive, section of his twenty-three-page article to the initial phases of the reaction, relying on newspaper sources and *White House Years*.<sup>11</sup>

The standard works on US response to genocide, perhaps because of the unavailability of sufficient documentary material at the time of their publication, have sidestepped the issue of East Pakistan. Peter Roynane's *Never Again? The United States and the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide since the Holocaust* (2001) is perhaps misleadingly titled, as it begins its discussion with the case of Cambodia in 1975, omitting any reference to South Asia four years previously.<sup>12</sup> Samantha Power mentions the crisis only in passing, dedicating just one paragraph of her 620-page Pulitzer Prize-

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<sup>10</sup> Rashid-ul-Ahsan Chowdhury, "United States Foreign Policy in South Asia, 1971," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. Humanities* 35 (1990): 83. Chowdhury, like Kissinger and Morris, applied the China initiative explanation to the crisis as a whole, failing to distinguish between clear phases in the formulation of the US response. Chowdhury, 61, 63, 66.

<sup>11</sup> Imtiaz H. Bokhari, "Playing with a Weak Hand: Kissinger's Management of the 1971 Indo-Pakistan Crisis," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 22 (1998): 1-23. Bokhari, like Chowdhury, adhered to the catchall China initiative explanation propounded by Kissinger and Morris. Bokhari, 4, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Roynane, *Never Again? The United States and the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide since the Holocaust* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

winning tome, *"A Problem from Hell" America and the Age of Genocide*, to a superficial summary of events in East Pakistan and US inaction.<sup>13</sup>

Until the beginning of the declassification of primary materials under the Thirty-Year Rule, and the subsequent publication of major documentary series on the crisis, these and other authors of more general works on US foreign policy, found themselves groping in the dark. Surprisingly, however, despite the recent availability of much important primary material, no detailed, analytical secondary account of the US response has been published to date.

In 1999, Roedad Khan published a collection of US government documents on the crisis, closely followed by the compilations of Enayetur Rahmin (2000) and F. S. Aijazuddin (2002).<sup>14</sup> The first truly important materials to appear, however, were *National Security Archive Briefing Books No. 66*, and *No. 79* (2002).<sup>15</sup> These vital documents for the first time gave a peek behind the curtain at the inner workings of the Nixon-Kissinger Administration, as it formulated its response to the East Pakistan situation in the light of overtures to Peking. That same year, Archer Blood, the US Consul General in Dacca at the start of the crisis, published his memoirs detailing his experiences during the clampdown, his reporting of the atrocities to Washington, his

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<sup>13</sup> Samantha Power, *"A Problem from Hell" America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Harper Collins Perennial, 2003), 82.

<sup>14</sup> Roedad Khan, compiler, *The American Papers: Secret and Confidential India-Pakistan-Bangladesh Documents, 1965-1973* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Enayetur Rahmin and Joyce L. Rahmin, compilers, *Bangladesh Liberation War and the Nixon White House, 1971* (Dhaka: Pustaka, 2000). F. S. Aijazuddin, compiler, *The White House and Pakistan: Secret Declassified Documents, 1969-1974* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> William Burr, compiler, *The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger's Secret Trip to China, September 1970-July 1971. National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*, updated 27 February 2002, retrieved from the National Security Archives Internet site on 26 January 2006 at the following address <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/>>. Sajit Gandhi, compiler, *The Tilt: The US and the South Asia Crisis of 1971. National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 79*, updated 16 December 2002, retrieved from the National Security Archives Internet site on 26 January 2006 at the following address <<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/>>.

outrage at US inaction, and his dissent from White House policy. He devoted the royalties from his book to charitable works in Bangladesh.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, not until the publication of *US Foreign Relations Series Volumes XI* and *E-7*, on the South Asia crisis, in summer 2005, did materials providing a comprehensive record of the White House response become generally available.<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey Warner briefly summarized these in a review article that appeared in *International Affairs* later that year.<sup>18</sup>

Making use of this newly available primary material, this thesis seeks to fill the gap in the secondary literature by providing a detailed account and analysis of the US reaction to the genocide in East Pakistan. It focuses on the *key response period*, during the first three months between the brutal clampdown, commencing 25 March 1971, and the public announcement of Kissinger's visit to Peking on 15 July, during which Nixon and Kissinger formulated the US response to the tragedy. After the *key response period*, no new substantial developments occurred in East Pakistan, with regard to either the ongoing human rights contraventions or humanitarian disaster, until the outbreak of the Indo-Pakistan War in December. By mid-July, Nixon's 1972 visit to Peking had already been agreed, and the world was aware of Sino-American rapprochement.

This thesis is structured around nine sections, as detailed below:

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<sup>16</sup> Archer K. Blood, *The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh: Memoirs of an American Diplomat* (Dhaka: University Press, 2002), ix.

<sup>17</sup> Louis J. Smith, compiler, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971*, updated May 2005, retrieved from the Department of State Internet site on 1 May 2006 at the following address <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/45587.pdf>>. Louis J. Smith, compiler, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-72*, updated June 2005, retrieved from the Department of State Internet site on 1 May 2006 at the following address <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e7/>>.

<sup>18</sup> Geoffrey Warner, "Review Article: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Breakup of Pakistan, 1971," *International Affairs* 81 (2005): 1097-1118.

*Systems of Forces* identifies three layers of context in the crisis: domestic, regional, and global.<sup>19</sup> It discusses the events in Pakistan that led to the secession struggle in the East, the genocidal reaction of Islamabad, and the regional tensions on the subcontinent between India and Pakistan. Finally, it portrays the historical relationships between India and Pakistan and the major powers, and the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s that encouraged rapprochement between Washington and Peking.

*US Mindset* describes the apparatus used by Nixon and Kissinger to dominate and personalize foreign policy decision-making in Washington, largely to the exclusion of the Department of State and the remainder of the bureaucracy. It explores the *realpolitik* and national-interest worldview of Nixon and Kissinger, which excluded ethical idealism from their decision-making process. It goes on to discuss Nixon and Kissinger's philosophy that held the reintroduction of China into world affairs as crucial in establishing an equilibrium between the major powers and, therefore, a sustainable world peace, before describing the significant US effort and investment, made over several years, in pursuit of Sino-American rapprochement.

Having established the context and environment in which the administrative battle over the US response to East Pakistan was fought, *phase one* analyzes the reaction between 25 March and 27 April when the Pakistani channel to Peking unexpectedly sprang into life. *Let's Do Something!* considers the response of the moral idealists. Archer Blood accused the Government of Pakistan of "selective genocide," and relayed reports of the atrocities from Dacca to Washington. He and members of his staff formally dissented from US official policy, which failed even to condemn Yahya. Blood's actions sparked a minor rebellion at the Department of State in Washington before his

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<sup>19</sup> Banerjee, 202.

subsequent removal at Nixon's behest. Kenneth Keating, US Ambassador to India, supported Blood, justifying his own stance on both moral grounds and US interests in South Asia as a whole. US public concern and condemnation is discussed in terms of the press, Congress, the response of intellectuals, and the formation of US-based pro-Bangladesh associations.

*Let's Not Bother!* analyzes the apathetic responses of Joseph Farland, US Ambassador to Pakistan, the Department of State in Washington, and Nixon and Kissinger who dominated the formulation of US policy. In securing US interests, State<sup>20</sup> favored the use of both carrot and stick in dealing with Islamabad, generally awaiting instruction from the White House, yet unilaterally suspending new licenses for military supplies through the Office of Munitions Control, which fell under its purview. Farland, Nixon, and Kissinger all favored the exclusive use of the carrot, if forced to act, but initially sought to do nothing. New documentary evidence suggests that the China initiative was not the principal factor in determining the US response during *phase one*, but was only part of a complex mixture of motivations that included moral apathy and Nixon's liking for Yahya and Pakistan, in contrast to his aversion to Indira Gandhi and India.<sup>21</sup> This evidence contradicts the confused and confusing explanations proffered by Kissinger in two separate sections of his memoirs.

*Let's Rejoice!* discusses how the Pakistani channel to Peking sprang into life on 27 April, and analyzes why and how this influenced US policy during *phase two*, which extended henceforward until the announcement of Kissinger's trip to China. Up until this point, mention of the secret China initiative was conspicuously absent from Nixon and

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<sup>20</sup> 'State' refers to the Department of State.

<sup>21</sup> Indira Gandhi was Prime Minister of India during the crisis.

Kissinger's private conversations on the formulation of the US response to East Pakistan. Nothing had been heard through the Pakistani channel for over four and a half months, and Kissinger was so discouraged as to have sent instructions to Paris in an attempt to open a new conduit on the very day the breakthrough occurred. Immediately after the good news of 27 April, Nixon issued the famous East Pakistan policy memorandum on which he wrote, "To all hands: Don't squeeze Yahya at this time,"<sup>22</sup> and references to the China initiative suddenly started to appear in Nixon and Kissinger's private conversations concerning South Asia.

*Let's "Shake the World!"* From 1 May onwards, refugees flooded into India. By the time of Kissinger's departure for Peking, the number had increased from 900,000 to 6,700,000, the daily influx often exceeding 100,000 destitute human beings. This section analyzes the reasons behind this mainly Hindu migration, the relief aid offered by the US Government, and the hindrance of the humanitarian response by New Delhi. By the end of May, Washington believed that, in part because of the human inundation of northern India, an Indo-Pakistan war loomed large on the horizon. Meanwhile, Nixon and Kissinger continued their ever more fruitful negotiations with Peking, and became steadily more dependent on Yahya as the designated conduit and acknowledged facilitator of Kissinger's clandestine mission. Consequently, Nixon and Kissinger considered good relations with Islamabad increasingly vital, just when the mounting refugee crisis suggested the need for strong action.

*Let's Pamper Pakistan!* As the human misery and atrocities continued on the subcontinent, Nixon and Kissinger adopted a policy of "quiet diplomacy" in an attempt to both appease Yahya, and to privately guide him towards some form of political

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<sup>22</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 28 April 1971, document no. 9, Gandhi. Underline original.



accommodation to help solve the refugee problem. The US failed to condemn the Pakistani President publicly, to discontinue the supply of military spares to Islamabad, or to suspend economic aid. In a mid-year self-assessment on policy in South Asia, NSC staffers conceded that these tactics were failing to substantially address the crisis.

*White House Options* analyzes the choices available to Nixon and Kissinger, should they have wished to adopt a more forceful policy with regard to public stance, armed intervention, military supply, or economic aid. Armed intervention was not possible owing to the Vietnam syndrome, yet the options to withhold supplies of military spares or to suspend economic aid remained. At the beginning of 1971, the US provided 25 percent of Pakistan's foreign assistance budget, yet Nixon refused to tie aid to the pursuit and achievement of political accommodation in the East.

*Aftermath* summarizes events during and after Kissinger's secret visit to China. It briefly describes Washington's increased fears of an Indo-Pakistan war, and the possibility of the crisis escalating into a showdown between the major powers, as China and the US supported Islamabad, whereas the Soviets allied themselves with New Delhi. The crisis was resolved in December 1971, when India invaded East Pakistan, quickly defeated the West Pakistan troops based there, and secured the independence of the new nation of Bangladesh. Despite some rattling of sabers, the major powers did not engage in direct military intervention.

While the US press, public and Congress do not always agree with the Executive in its handling of international issues concerning human rights, the bureaucracy and the White House normally form a united front. Yet, study of the reaction to the East Pakistan crisis reveals convincingly that response across the US Government is not always

monolithic, nor is it consistently one of moral apathy. The case of East Pakistan reveals both the advantages and dangers associated with the personalization of power in the hands of a few, and is perhaps the most interesting, yet least studied, example of US response to genocide.

This thesis seeks to demonstrate that Nixon and Kissinger dominated the apparatus of power to such an extent that they were able to pursue their own controversial policy during the *key response period* in South Asia, without due regard for dissenting opinion within the US Government, or the need to reveal the existence of their China initiative. The *key response period*, which extended from 25 March to 15 July 1971, was divided into two clear phases, separated by the Pakistani channel to Peking springing into life on 27 April. New primary evidence suggests that during *phase one*, concern over Pakistan's role in the China initiative did not primarily drive the US response. This directly contradicts Kissinger's memoirs, in which he attempts to broadly apply this 'more acceptable' excuse for US reluctance to act. Instead, Nixon and Kissinger sought to do as little as possible during *phase one*, owing to a complex mixture of motivations that included moral apathy and Nixon's liking for Yahya and Pakistan, but aversion to Indira Gandhi and India. Concern for the China initiative did not play a controlling part. During this time, Yahya was only one of several potential messengers from whom nothing had been heard for several months in respect of the still embryonic China initiative.

Only in *phase two* did the urge to secure rapprochement with Peking grow to dominate the formulation of US policy. The crisis in South Asia worsened into a major refugee emergency and the possibility of war between India and Pakistan began to loom

large. However, attempts to develop a relationship with Peking became ever more fruitful, and in arranging Kissinger's visit, the President and his National Security advisor placed more and more of their eggs into Yahya's welcoming basket. Consequently, the increasing pressure to intervene more forcibly was offset by substantial incentives to desist, and the US adhered to a policy of "quiet diplomacy" to appease Yahya, and encourage him to seek political accommodation in the East.

## 2. Systems of Forces

This section identifies three layers of context in the East Pakistan crisis – domestic, regional, and global – and thus provides a lens through which to properly view the emergency as it unfolded.

### *Domestic Fission*<sup>23</sup>

After the partition of India in 1947, the Muslim nation of Pakistan comprised two geo-culturally distinct wings, one in the East and the other in the West of the subcontinent, separated by over 1,000 miles of Hindu-dominated Indian territory. Geographic separation presented numerous communications challenges, and encouraged orientation towards different markets and crop production. Moreover, at partition West Pakistan comprised thirty-four million people, speaking mainly Punjabi and Sindi, attached geographically to the Muslim world of the Middle East and the Arabian Sea. In contrast, the forty-two million citizens of East Pakistan spoke almost exclusively Bengali, and looked outwards to India and Southeast Asia. Importantly, the West saw the East as populated by inferior converts, not of pure Muslim stock, but descended from Indian

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<sup>23</sup> This section is based on the following works: Syed Aziz-al Ahsan, "Bengali Nationalism and the Relative Deprivation Hypothesis," *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 15 (1988): 81-90; Wardatul Akmam, "Atrocities against Humanity during the Liberation War in Bangladesh: A Case for Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 4 (2002): 543-559; Mohammed Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, *Emergence of Bangladesh and Role of the Awami League* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1982); S. K. Chakrabarti, *The Evolution of Politics in Bangladesh, 1947-1978* (New Delhi: Associated, 1978); Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 394-397; G. W. Choudhury, *The Last Days of United Pakistan* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1974); Christopher Jaffrelot, ed., *A History of Pakistan and its Origins* (London: Anthem Press, 2002); Rounaq Jahan, *Pakistan: Failure in National Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); Rounaq Jahan, "Genocide in Bangladesh," in *Century of Genocide: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Samuel Totten, William S. Parsons, and Israel W. Charny (New York: Routledge, 2004), 294-319; Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Anthony Mascarenhas, *The Rape of Bangladesh* (Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1971); Omar Noman, *Pakistan: A Political and Economic History since 1947* (New York: Kegan Paul International, 1990); and Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990).

racism and corrupted by Hindu culture; the majority of the vast peasant population of the East embraced non-mainstream Sufism, unlike their Sunni co-religionists of the West. The next twenty-four years witnessed growing alienation between these distinct regions, as the central government, based in Islamabad, failed in its nation-building project. Finally, in 1971, the East seceded to form the new state of Bangladesh.

At the birth of Pakistan, underlying geo-cultural differences between East and West were temporarily transcended as Muslims sought to unify against the perceived Hindu menace. After independence, however, this threat receded, leaving a shared Islamic identity and the Muslim League, which had spearheaded and dominated the joint political battle for an independent Muslim nation, as the unifying forces between the two wings. However, the bureaucrats and professionals of the Muslim-minority provinces of British India, who had worried most about the perceived threat of Hindu dominance over an independent, but united, subcontinent, had always controlled the League's leadership and power base. At partition, these leaders and administrators of the Muhajir fled westwards, where they joined with the elite of the Punjabi-dominated army,<sup>24</sup> and united executive, bureaucratic, and military authority in the West wing. Consequently, the Bengalis of the East were grossly underrepresented in all institutions, save those of the legislative arena, yet the legislators held little power. In the absence of a shared understanding of the Lahore and Pakistan Resolutions of the 1940s, which had sought to define the level of autonomy of each wing within a united Pakistan, the western Muhajir-Punjabi axis dominated the power structure of the new nation, causing resentment in the East.

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<sup>24</sup> Some 80 percent of the Pakistani Army was of Punjabi origin and, in 1955, only 14 of 908 officers hailed from East Pakistan. Jahan, 25.

Members of this bureaucratic-military elite were initially unwilling to allow the formation of democratic institutions, as they were unable to establish power bases in the East, where the majority of the population resided. They feared a fully representative democracy would result in their loss of power to Bengalis, whom they generally considered ethnically and religiously inferior. The domestic political history of Pakistan until 1971 is the story of the West's continued attempts to cling to power while maintaining national unity. The East responded by resisting the introduction of Urdu as the sole national language, and recording its displeasure with the center by voting the Muslim League out of office, thus bringing the Bengali vernacular elite to regional legislative power in the 1954 provincial elections. In the absence of an effective nation-building program, the Muslim League and Islam had been the key uniting factors between East and West. Now the former stood utterly defeated.

During 1958, in the light of riots in the East Pakistan Provincial Assembly and mass demonstrations in the West, General Ayub Khan seized power and declared martial law in a military coup. His rule began an extended period of military control, and witnessed a further centralization of power in favor of the West. Institutional under-representation and its apparently inevitable economic consequences exacerbated the underlying geo-cultural tensions between the two wings. During the 1960s, as Pakistan's economy grew as a whole, an increase in inter-wing economic disparity, driven by investment policies that continually favored the West, served only to increase the expectations of the Bengali vernacular elite. In 1949-50, the gross domestic product per capita in the West was only 8 percent higher than that in the East; by 1968-69, the

difference was 62 percent.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the East's hard currency earnings from jute exports were consistently directed out of Bengal to support development of the West wing. The hopelessly inadequate protection afforded East Pakistan during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War merely confirmed the region's vulnerability and its quite junior status compared with that of the West. In response, the Awami League, a major political party of the Bengali vernacular elite, published a Six-Point party manifesto in 1966, which focused on the need for political and economic regional autonomy in East and West, and demanded that the federal government be responsible only for defense and foreign affairs, yielding tax-gathering powers to the two federating units.

Meanwhile, throughout the 1960s, the political awareness of the Bengali population grew as the vernacular elite expanded, both university and college enrollment in the East increasing by over 100 percent between 1959-60 and 1965-66.<sup>26</sup> This had two effects: first, it supplied a large base of politically active students; and, second, students and former-student professionals provided a mechanism and a network to spread Awami League support throughout the countryside. As discontent grew in the East, so did the ability to resist.

Violent anti-government protests in the East and West forced Ayub to step down in March 1969, to be replaced by General Yahya Khan, head of the Pakistan Army. Although Yahya immediately declared martial law, dissolved the legislative assemblies, and abrogated the constitution, he kept a commitment made by Ayub, and announced fully democratic elections to be held in December 1970. Seats in the proposed new National Assembly, which was charged with the important task of drawing up a

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<sup>25</sup> Jahan, 31, 79-80.

<sup>26</sup> Jahan, 214.

replacement constitution within 120 days, were to be apportioned to reflect to some extent the relative sizes of regional populations. Although the East, with its greater populace, could potentially gain a majority or otherwise control the new National Assembly, most observers believed that a varied mix of political parties would come to power, leaving neither wing, nor one particular grouping, in a position to dominate.<sup>27</sup> As Yahya explained when he visited Washington in October 1970, he anticipated a “multiplicity” of parties in both East and West, fighting against one another and leaving the president as the real power in the country.<sup>28</sup>

Yahya did not, however, foresee the consequences of one particular contingent event. On the night of 12 November 1970, a cyclone-induced tidal wave flooded East Bengal, claiming over 300,000 lives, and reeking devastation and havoc in coastal areas. Islamabad’s relief effort was extremely poor and much criticized. As the election campaign entered its crucial final stages, Mujibur Rahman, leader of the Awami League, seized upon and exploited the inadequacies in the response as a timely and extreme illustration of West Pakistan’s indifference to the East. On 26 November, he accused Islamabad of “almost cold-blooded murder.”<sup>29</sup>

Resentment helped fuel an unexpected landslide victory for the autonomist Awami League, still promoting its Six-Point Program, in the December elections, in which it secured 167 of the 169 National Assembly seats assigned to the East. It neither won nor contested any seats in the West, yet it gained a clear overall majority in the 313-

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<sup>27</sup> At the time of the East Pakistan crisis, the populations of the two wings were as follows: West Pakistan – 55 million, East Pakistan – 75 million. Akram, 546.

<sup>28</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 850.

<sup>29</sup> Press Conference with Mujibur Rahman, Dacca, 26 November 1971, quoted in Blood, 116.



seat National Assembly as a whole. Pakistanis were about to see real power shift from West to East for the first time.

As the Awami League achieved political success, the ambitions of the Bengali vernacular elite increased still further. However, the Pakistan People's Party, which had secured a majority in the West, but with roughly only one-half of the number of seats gained by the Awami League, refused to cooperate in forming the new National Assembly. Zulficar Ali Bhutto, its leader, feared the surrender of power to the East, which favored better relations with India and a reduction in military expenditure, in direct contrast to his own policies, and his talk of a 'thousand-year war' against the Hindus. Consequently, two days before it was due to convene, Yahya postponed the first meeting of the National Assembly, scheduled for 3 March 1971. Thus, he severely disappointed Bengali aspirations at a time when the autonomist Awami League was able to supply the political vehicle, and the vernacular elite the mobilizing mechanism, for mass action in East Bengal and direct confrontation with Islamabad. Mujibur Rahman, leader of the Awami League, called a general strike in East Pakistan, bringing the wing to a grinding halt, and insisted on both a loosely federated Pakistan under the Six Point Program, and the immediate resumption of the democratic process. After weeks of apparently fruitless negotiations between East and West, Yahya sought to maintain the unity of Pakistan through the application of military might. On the evening of 25 March 1971, he unleashed his country's West Pakistani-dominated armed forces in a brutal campaign of massacre and oppression in the East.

The struggle against greater autonomy lasted until December 1971, when India successfully invaded East Pakistan, where it defeated the West Pakistan Army, and

supported the establishment of an Awami League government at the helm of a newly independent Bangladesh. During the intervening nine-month period, between one and three million East Bengalis were killed, nearly a quarter of a million girls and women systematically raped, and some ten million refugees fled to safety across the international frontier to India. The main motivation behind the atrocities appears to have been to terrorize the East Pakistan population into submission, bringing the East once again firmly under the heel of Islamabad. In order to achieve this, the Pakistan Army intentionally targeted specific groups with a view to eliminating organized resistance. Thus, politicians, intellectual leaders, student activists, and Bengali police and troops fell victim to numerous massacres. Importantly, West Pakistani authorities similarly targeted the Hindu population of East Bengal, which they perceived as subversive. As the atrocities continued, Bengali nationalists, trained in East Pakistan and India, resisted the clampdown by pursuing a campaign of guerilla actions against the West Pakistani authorities in the East.

The United Nations Genocide Convention (UNGC) excludes political and social groups from its protection. Hence, only the atrocities perpetrated against the Hindu population, in whole or in part, potentially fit within the definition of genocide, as contained in this international standard.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, several scholars have written extensively on the inadequacies of the UNGC, and proffered their own replacement definitions. Wardatul Akmam provides a comprehensive analysis, applying various scholarly definitions of genocide to the atrocities in East Pakistan. He concludes that, whereas the actions against the Bengali nation as a whole would only potentially qualify

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<sup>30</sup> Under Article II of the UNGC, genocide is limited to acts committed against national, ethnical, racial, or religious groups. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, United Nations, 9 December 1948, reproduced in Chalk, 44.

as genocide under the definition of Yehuda Bauer, those perpetrated against the Hindu population would do so under definitions advanced by Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, Vahakn Dadrian, Helen Fein, and Jack Porter.

### *Regional Tension*

As the British left the subcontinent in 1947, Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan were born in blood. Ten million people sought security in the lands of their own faiths and, as they fled, some one million were massacred in inter-communal violence. Rape, looting, and murder were commonplace. The consequent psychological scarring and mistrust was compounded in the eyes of many Pakistanis by calls from various Indian leaders for reunification of what they considered only a temporarily divided subcontinent. Pakistani suspicions of Indian intentions failed to fully dissipate over the following decades.<sup>31</sup>

The ongoing contest for the disputed territory of Kashmir fuelled continuing tension in the region. At partition, Hari Singh, the Hindu ruler of the Muslim-majority state opted to join India. Pakistan, however, held his decision to be invalid, as he had already fled Kashmir and was no longer in control. The new Muslim nation argued that the residents of the territory should determine their own fate. India and Pakistan immediately went to war, each seeking to control the contested area. A ceasefire was agreed only in 1949, and the Line of Control established that divided the disputed state. Pakistan governed Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas, while India controlled the remainder of the territory. The dispute, however, was never satisfactorily resolved and, in September 1965, inspired in part by India's poor performance in a 1962 war against

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<sup>31</sup> Sisson, 43-44. Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 348.

China, Pakistan again tried to wrestle control of the whole of Kashmir, by infiltrating guerilla units into the territory. Consequently, India and Pakistan again went to war, this time for three weeks, before agreeing to return to their original positions. In 1971, the Line of Control, originally intended as a temporary measure, still divided the two antagonists; Indian and Pakistani troops had fought two wars over Kashmir, regular clashes continued to occur along the border, and levels of tension remained high.<sup>32</sup>

As the East Pakistan crisis began, Islamabad perceived India as the principle threat to its national existence. New Delhi viewed Pakistan as not only a military enemy, but also a psychological menace, for a strong and successful Pakistan might attract the loyalties of Muslims to the south, so destabilizing India. Hence, in 1971, Hindu India held a vested interest in maintaining a weakened Muslim neighbor.<sup>33</sup> The Indian reaction to the East Pakistan crisis, and especially the massive influx of refugees, may only be fully understood when considered in this context.

### *Global Stress*

During the emergency of 1971, the US and China allied with Pakistan, while the Soviet Union sided with India. A history of US relations with Islamabad sheds light on how the US-Pakistan alliance developed, and on Washington's ability to influence Yahya at the time of the crisis. Similarly, an appreciation of the ties that bound Pakistan to China illuminates the relationship that permitted Islamabad to act as a conduit to Peking, and made Nixon and Kissinger wary of offending China through any forceful action against its South Asian ally. Again, knowledge of Moscow's continuing close friendship with

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<sup>32</sup> Sisson, 38-50. Wolpert, 353-354, 374-375.

<sup>33</sup> H. W. Brands, *India and the United States: The Cold Peace* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 128.

New Delhi, and its deteriorating relationship with Peking, is essential to understanding, respectively, Nixon and Kissinger's attitude to India throughout the crisis, and how the opportunity for Sino-American rapprochement developed. This subsection, therefore, places the developments in East Pakistan within an overarching geopolitical context.

British withdrawal from the subcontinent in 1947 created the opportunity for American involvement, as Washington pursued its anti-Communist Cold War policy of containment.<sup>34</sup> In the 1950s, the US feared Soviet aspirations with regard to the warm-water ports of the Arabian Sea, situated near the Persian Gulf and the increasingly important reserves of Middle-Eastern oil.<sup>35</sup> When India maintained a policy of non-alignment, Pakistan became the obvious candidate for US support in South Asia.<sup>36</sup> Strategically located on the borders of both China and the Soviet Union, Pakistan's location offered the US a launching pad for spying operations over, and possible military incursions into, the sovereign territory of both Communist powers.<sup>37</sup> Pakistan reciprocated the desire for an alliance. Fearing Indian intentions and its continuing isolation, Islamabad was anxious to secure the support of a wealthy superpower.<sup>38</sup> In 1950, President Harry S. Truman initiated a 'Point Four' technical assistance agreement, and the US announced that Pakistan would receive military aid in February 1954.<sup>39</sup> In

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<sup>34</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, "US Weapons and South Asia: A Policy Analysis," *Pacific Affairs* 49 (1976): 49. Shirin Tahir-Kheli, *The United States and Pakistan: The Evolution of an Influence Relationship* (New York: Praeger, 1982), 1-2.

<sup>35</sup> Rashmi Jain, *US-Pak Relations, 1947-1983* (New Delhi: Radiant, 1983), 9.

<sup>36</sup> Bimal Prasad, "The Super Powers and the Subcontinent," *International Studies* 13 (1974): 720.

<sup>37</sup> Syed Rifaat Hussain, "Pakistan and the Superpowers (1947-1988): An Evaluation," *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture* 10 (1989): 21. Tahir-Kheli, 1-2.

<sup>38</sup> Jain, 2, 14.

<sup>39</sup> Jain, 11. Tahir-Kheli, 1-2.

return, the US established a “massive” electronic intelligence gathering and spy-plane facility in Peshawar.<sup>40</sup>

As the US enthusiastically provided military equipment with a view to containment, Pakistan happily increased its military strength in the face of the perceived military threat from India.<sup>41</sup> Between 1954 and 1965, Pakistan received over \$600 million in defense equipment and services from the US, including M-47 and M-48 Patton tanks and B-57 light-attack jet-bombers, together with defense support assistance of approximately equal value.<sup>42</sup> The net result of the program was that, by the mid-1960s, US arms represented some 80 percent of Pakistan’s arsenal of modern weapons.<sup>43</sup> By comparison, in the same period, India received only \$90 million of military assistance from the US, less than 10 percent of that accepted by its Muslim neighbor.<sup>44</sup> In addition, between 1958 and 1968, the US provided Pakistan with \$2.8 billion of economic aid. The annual commitment approached \$400 million in the early 1960s, representing 35 percent of Pakistan’s development budget, 45 percent of its imports, or 55 percent of its total foreign economic assistance.<sup>45</sup> American support provided a vital lifeline to Pakistan, and military aid in particular “profoundly” affected Pakistani domestic politics, predictably strengthening the hand of the military.<sup>46</sup> The US supplied military matériel on the

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<sup>40</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, 53. Tahir-Kheli, 25. Peshawar is situated in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan.

<sup>41</sup> Tahir-Kheli, 25.

<sup>42</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, 50, 52. Jain, 15.

<sup>43</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, 52.

<sup>44</sup> The US granted military assistance to India only after the Indo-Chinese War of 1962, see below. Stephen P. Cohen, 50.

<sup>45</sup> Jain, 15.

<sup>46</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, 54.

understanding that it would never be used against India but, as the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965 would prove, Washington could not control the use of arms once shipped.<sup>47</sup>

The year 1962 proved to be a watershed, as war between India and China triggered a realignment of major-power interests on the subcontinent. The Soviets had refused to take sides in a Sino-Indian border dispute that had continued for some time. However, in October, as the Cuban Missile Crisis brought the US and Soviets to the brink of war, Moscow decided to better secure its Eastern borders by finally backing Peking's position. In response to this shift in fortunes, China promptly invaded the territory disputed with India, captured 4,000 Indian prisoners, and called for negotiations with New Delhi. The US replied by committing itself to supply arms in support of India. The war ended in November 1962, following Chinese unilateral withdrawal.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, President John F. Kennedy sought to provide improved protection for India, the world's largest burgeoning democracy, and a possible ally in containing China.<sup>49</sup> After the Chinese invasion, the US provided India with equipment for six mountain divisions, machinery for several ammunition and arms factories, engineering supplies, and the nucleus of a modern air defense system. New Delhi even requested the supply of supersonic aircraft.<sup>50</sup> Islamabad became acutely distressed as its superpower backer commenced supplying arms to its perceived enemy. Consequently, President Ayub Khan sought to reduce Islamabad's dependence on the US, and find allies among the major powers of Asia.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, 55.

<sup>48</sup> Brands, 103-104. Prasad, 722-723.

<sup>49</sup> Brands, 99, 108. Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 141.

<sup>50</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, 52-53.

<sup>51</sup> Brands, 108-109. Kux, 145, 149.

Recalling the old Arab proverb, 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend', Pakistan considered China an obvious partner, and Islamabad actively sought to normalize relations with Peking. Pakistani objections encouraged the US to deny the supply of sophisticated weapons systems to India. Nevertheless, this concession was not sufficient to discourage Sino-Pakistani rapprochement. Ironically, Washington's refusal to meet India's request for supersonic aircraft drove New Delhi ever closer to the Moscow, which proved only too ready to meet India's demands.<sup>52</sup>

The relationship between the US and Pakistan continued to sour. When Ayub visited both Peking and Moscow in early 1965, and refused to offer the US substantial backing over Vietnam, President Lyndon Johnson cancelled Ayub's trip to Washington, scheduled for April.<sup>53</sup> Worse was to come. Pakistan used US-supplied arms against India, in direct contravention of agreements with Washington, during the second Indo-Pakistan War, which erupted on 6 September 1965. Two days later, the US suspended all military and economic aid to both India and Pakistan.<sup>54</sup> The embargo had three effects. First, it brought the war to an early halt, as Pakistan was heavily dependent on US supplies to maintain its armed forces, far more so than India. Second, it severely hurt Pakistan, both militarily and psychologically, sparking resentment and the collapse of US prestige in Islamabad. Third, it provided Washington with an opportunity to reshape its arms policy with regard to South Asia. The perceived Communist threat to the subcontinent had receded, and new satellite technology reduced the need for the US base in Peshawar. Pakistan was turning towards China, and India remained unhappy at the limited quantities

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<sup>52</sup> Prasad, 724.

<sup>53</sup> Kux, 150-168.

<sup>54</sup> Brands, 112. Kux, 150-168.



and types of matériel it had received from the US. Moreover, the US did not wish to be seen as throwing fuel onto the fire of Indo-Pakistani mutual resentment.<sup>55</sup>

In 1965, therefore, the warm relationship between the US and Pakistan ended, never to be rekindled. The arms embargo was partially relaxed in March 1966, but only to allow the sale of non-lethal end-use items, such as medical, transportation, and communications equipment.<sup>56</sup> Although full US economic aid effectively resumed the following month, average annual flows amounted to only \$150 million, as compared with \$400 million in the early 1960s.<sup>57</sup> In April 1967, the US announced it would sell spares for previously supplied military equipment on a cash basis, and resume grant-aid training on a small scale.<sup>58</sup> However, the embargo on lethal end-use items remained firmly in place, the gap in supply being readily filled by the Chinese.<sup>59</sup> Far from contented, Islamabad refused to extend the lease on the US facility in Peshawar, which was due to expire in 1969.<sup>60</sup>

As Nixon entered the White House,<sup>61</sup> Pakistan, once a close ally of the US, had taken its own more neutral geopolitical course, and the special friendship between Islamabad and Washington no longer existed. The stand-off over US military supply to India at the time of Kennedy's presidency had encouraged Pakistan to engage with China, a relationship cemented following the serious rupture in ties between Washington and Islamabad over the war of 1965. Economic aid from the US, though still substantial, had more than halved over the last decade, and full military supply had not been resumed.

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<sup>55</sup> Brands, 113. Stephen P. Cohen, 56, 58. Kux, 150-168. Prasad, 727-728.

<sup>56</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, 62. Jain, 28.

<sup>57</sup> Jain, 26.

<sup>58</sup> US concessions with regard to the arms embargo applied to both Pakistan and India.

<sup>59</sup> Jain, 28. Kux, 168-179. Prasad, 734-735.

<sup>60</sup> Kux, 168-179.

<sup>61</sup> Nixon's first term was 1969-1972.

Pakistan had sought to develop relations with other powers in Asia in order to mitigate its reliance on the US, but had failed to do so in a way that the US understood and supported. Elsewhere, the relationship between Washington and New Delhi remained lukewarm at best. As the Nixon Administration came to power, its policy on the subcontinent was merely to “avoid adding another complication to . . . [its] agenda.”<sup>62</sup>

In February 1971, the US Embassy in Islamabad prepared a paper defining the US relationship with Pakistan. It noted that Pakistan preferred to maintain good relations with the US to ensure the continued flow of economic aid, and to avoid over-dependence on China. As Peking had not sought to promote revolution, or interfere in Pakistan’s domestic affairs, the report suggested that the Sino-Pakistan relationship was not “seriously inimical to our [US] interests.” US political concern with regard to Pakistan was limited to it being the world’s fifth most populous country, and the resulting influence it might exert in West Asia and the Middle East. US economic interests were essentially developmental, as commercial opportunities remained limited, and Pakistan was not a source of essential raw materials for US manufacturers.<sup>63</sup>

Yet, despite these minimal national interests, Nixon, a Republican, brought to the White House an unusually warm attitude to Islamabad. “Nixon was received [there] with respect while he was out of office; he never forgot this.”<sup>64</sup> However, owing to ongoing martial rule and its relatively small economic stature as compared with its democratic neighbor to the south, Pakistan was not a favorite of American liberals. Kissinger believed India, in contrast, “basked in Congressional warmth and was subject to

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<sup>62</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 848.

<sup>63</sup> Pakistan Policy Appraisal Paper, c. 2 February 1971, Khan, 468-480.

<sup>64</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 848-849.

Presidential indifference.”<sup>65</sup> Initially, Nixon did not significantly change US policy towards Pakistan, save for one concession:<sup>66</sup> in October 1970, just before Yahya visited the White House and Nixon encouraged him to act as intermediary with Peking, the US President approved a one-time exception package of lethal military hardware for Pakistan, which included three hundred armored personnel carriers and seventeen military aircraft.<sup>67</sup> Nixon’s sympathy for Yahya and Islamabad had begun to show.

In early 1971, relations between Washington and New Delhi were particularly strained owing to US Embassy officials meeting opposition leaders and being accused of interference in Indian domestic affairs, as well as protests over the one-time exception.<sup>68</sup> Yet, Washington and New Delhi had never enjoyed a particularly warm relationship. Since partition, India had pursued a policy of non-alignment, and consequently enjoyed a much closer association with the Soviets than the US found comfortable.<sup>69</sup> Since the mid-1950s, Moscow sought to reduce New Delhi’s dependence on the West by exporting industrial machinery in an attempt to develop India’s key industries.<sup>70</sup> Although Moscow had expeditiously sided with Peking in the 1962 Sino-Indian War, this proved only a small anomaly in its ongoing friendship with New Delhi. When the US refused to deliver supersonic jets to India after the war of 1962, the Soviets provided MiG-21 fighters;<sup>71</sup> between 1965 and 1970, the Soviet bloc supplied India with \$730 million in military equipment.<sup>72</sup> In contrast, save for the limited supplies of arms to India between 1962 and 1965, US aid to India took a strictly economic form. Nevertheless, US financial

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<sup>65</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 848.

<sup>66</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 849.

<sup>67</sup> Jain, 31.

<sup>68</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 849.

<sup>69</sup> Prasad, 721.

<sup>70</sup> Prasad 731-732.

<sup>71</sup> Prasad, 722-723.

<sup>72</sup> Brands, 130.

assistance was substantial: New Delhi received \$4.2 billion between 1965 and 1971, including some \$1.5 billion while Nixon was in office.<sup>73</sup> However, although India remained officially non-aligned in early 1971, it leaned considerably closer to the Soviet Union than the United States.

While Sino-Indian relations remained strained after the war of 1962, the friendship between China and Pakistan flourished. Peking sought primarily to collude against India, but also to preempt any attempt by Moscow to exert its influence, and to give Islamabad the opportunity to further reconsider its close relationship with Washington.<sup>74</sup> In 1963, Islamabad and Peking signed a trade agreement, Chou En-lai visited Pakistan, and China announced a change in policy, supporting Pakistan's demands for a plebiscite in Kashmir. The following year, China extended a \$60 million interest-free loan and, in 1965, Chou visited Islamabad three times before the onset of the Indo-Pakistan War.<sup>75</sup> Peking supported Islamabad during the conflict, condemning India for its 'aggression', and distracted India by placing Chinese troops on high alert along the Sino-Sikkim frontier.<sup>76</sup> Following the war, China replaced the US as Pakistan's main weapons supplier, providing large quantities of hardware, including T-29 and T-54 tanks, and MiG-19 fighters;<sup>77</sup> between 1965 and 1970, China supplied Pakistan with \$135 million of military equipment.<sup>78</sup> Importantly, in June 1966, Peking agreed to provide the machinery and technical expertise to establish a heavy machinery complex at Taxila.<sup>79</sup> The close relationship between China and Pakistan continued into the 1970s, thus placing Yahya in

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<sup>73</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 848.

<sup>74</sup> Sisson, 248.

<sup>75</sup> Niloufer Mahdi, "Sino-Pakistan Relations: Historical Background," *Pakistan Horizon* 39 (1986): 63-65.

<sup>76</sup> Mahdi, 65-67.

<sup>77</sup> Kux, 168-179. Mahdi, 65-67. Prasad, 730-731.

<sup>78</sup> Brands, 130.

<sup>79</sup> Mahdi, 65-67.

a strong position to act as a conduit to Peking on behalf of a friendly and sympathetic Nixon.

While the realignment of relations between the major powers and the subcontinent occurred during the 1960s, another geopolitical event of great importance and direct relevance continued to develop: a deep fissure in the Communist world in the form of the Sino-Soviet split. Ideological differences, including Peking's objection to the Soviet search for 'peaceful coexistence' with the West,<sup>80</sup> and national rivalry led to the Soviet Union withdrawing all technical advisers and economic aid from China in 1959. Four years later, Peking took great offense, as the Soviets signed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with the US and UK, accusing Moscow of joining the West in an anti-Chinese plot.<sup>81</sup>

The Sino-Soviet relationship soured still further in the mid-1960s, and border-clashes occurred with increasing frequency. Following the signing of a treaty with Ulan Bator, from 1966 onwards the USSR began to establish military bases in Mongolia, and transfer combat units from Western Europe to its Far-Eastern frontiers. As the Soviets rolled into Prague in the summer of 1968, Peking began to wonder which country would be next. In March 1969, a severe border-clash occurred over disputed territory along the Ussuri River in Manchuria, leaving dozens of Soviets dead; 100,000 Soviet demonstrators reportedly attacked the Chinese Embassy in Moscow in response, while Peking Radio claimed over 250 million had protested across China. Further military exchanges occurred throughout the spring and summer along the Amur River and the

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<sup>80</sup> In 1959, Moscow and Washington agreed to suspend atmospheric nuclear testing at a time when Peking sought to further develop its own nuclear arsenal.

<sup>81</sup> R. K. I. Quested, *Sino-Russian Relations: A Short History* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 115-129. In addition, see Kissinger, *White House Years*, 166-167, 171-177, 685.

Sinkiang-Kazakhstan frontier. In 1964, the USSR had only twelve divisions stationed along the 4,000-mile Chinese border; in 1970, it had over forty, and a clear rift existed between Moscow and Peking.<sup>82</sup> An urgent meeting between Chou En-lai and the Soviet Prime Minister, Aleksei Kosygin, served to prevent further deterioration in the relationship.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, substantial Sino-Soviet tensions remained, presenting Nixon with an opportunity to encourage rapprochement between China and the US from his 1969 inauguration onwards.

Meanwhile, in China, the Cultural Revolution had erupted in 1965. Spurred on by Mao Tse-tung, Red Guards conducted purges of all those perceived to embrace bourgeois thoughts, intellectualism, or modernism. Universities closed, and China recalled nearly all its ambassadors from abroad, though often keeping the embassies open.<sup>84</sup> The revolution soured almost immediately, generating a fissure in Chinese politics. Two main factions emerged: Lin Biao insisted that China should combine with the Soviets to force the US out of Southeast Asia; Chou En-lai argued that Vietnam had weakened the Americans, and China could now safely negotiate with Washington.<sup>85</sup>

In November 1968, Chou called for talks with the new Nixon Administration, but the pro-Soviet faction blocked his attempts at rapprochement. Nevertheless, Sino-Soviet clashes over the coming months gave Chou's arguments greater force. In early 1970, China and the US reconvened stilted ambassadorial talks in Warsaw, but it was not until the fall of 1970 that Chou was finally able to convince Mao that the US was not a threat

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<sup>82</sup> Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), 353-355. Quoted, 130-153. In addition, see Kissinger, *White House Years*, 166-167, 171-177, 685.

<sup>83</sup> Quoted, 140. In addition, see Kissinger, *White House Years*, 184-186.

<sup>84</sup> Hersh, 352-353.

<sup>85</sup> John Robert Greene, *The Limits of Power: The Nixon and Ford Administrations* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 108.

to China, but a valuable counterweight against Soviet pressure. After receiving Mao's backing, Chou won a clear victory in the internal feud with Lin Biao.<sup>86</sup> Thus, towards the end of 1970, China was ready and willing to engage in a process of rapprochement with the United States.

In summary, by early 1971, the once-close relationship between the US and Pakistan had ended, but the US continued to provide substantial economic aid, and Nixon exhibited a distinct personal sympathy for Yahya. Pakistan had developed a close association with its new arms supplier, China. Ironically, though Sino-Pakistani rapprochement had once soured relations between Islamabad and Washington, Nixon now considered such ties a considerable asset. India, though still officially non-aligned and in receipt of considerable amounts of US financial aid, leaned more closely to Moscow than Washington, while tension remained between New Delhi and Peking. Importantly, the Sino-Soviet split had developed, encouraging rapprochement between China and the United States.

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<sup>86</sup> Warren I. Cohen, ed., *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*, vol. 4, *America in the Age of Soviet Power, 1945-1991* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 187. Warren I. Cohen, *America's Response to China: A History of Sino-American Relations*, 4th ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 197. Hersh, 353-355, 363-364.

### 3. US Mindset

#### *Apparatus of Power*

When President Richard Nixon entered office in 1969, he was determined to run foreign policy from the White House. He had visited over eighty countries while a Congressman and then Vice President, and brought with him a passion for international affairs, and a wealth of experience.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, Kissinger believed no American president had a greater knowledge of foreign issues.<sup>88</sup> Consequently, Nixon set about constructing the apparatus of power that would realize his wish. By early 1971, the President and his National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger dominated the State Department and other governmental agencies under a centralized system that facilitated the personalization of US foreign policy.

Robert Strong argues that Nixon wanted to act as his own Secretary of State for three reasons: ideologically, the President believed State and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to be “excessively liberal;” politically, he desired personal credit for his foreign policy initiatives; and psychologically, he wanted to avoid direct confrontation with dissenting officials.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, on recruiting Kissinger after his election victory, Nixon had expressed his views on the “untrustworthiness” of State, and the “incompetence” of the CIA.<sup>90</sup> Kissinger generally concurred, believing the bureaucracy to be unimaginative, and inclined to stifle presidential leadership.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Greene, 78.

<sup>88</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 704-705.

<sup>89</sup> Robert A. Strong, *Bureaucracy, and Statesmanship: Henry Kissinger and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 57.

<sup>90</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 14-15. In addition, see H. R. Haldeman and Joseph DiMona, *The Ends of Power* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1978), 122. Gregory D. Cleva, *Henry Kissinger and the American Approach to Foreign Policy* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1989), 201-202.

<sup>91</sup> Strong, 60-64.



In what Roger Morris refers to as the “coup d’état at the Hotel Pierre,” during the transition period after the elections Nixon and his new National Security Adviser “conceived and began what would become a seizure of power unprecedented in modern foreign policy.”<sup>92</sup> In a New York hotel, Morton Halperin, Deputy Assistant Director of Defense, proposed a new National Security Council (NSC) system in a paper endorsed by Kissinger, and approved by Nixon on 28 December 1968.<sup>93</sup> The NSC had originally been established at the same time as the CIA under the National Security Act of 1947, with a view to integrating domestic, foreign, and military policies in matters of national security. Statutory members included the President, Vice President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>94</sup> However, the NSC had faded into the background under Kennedy and Johnson, who chose to use informal meetings to direct policy on key issues.<sup>95</sup> Using Halperin’s blueprint, Nixon and Kissinger reinvigorated the NSC system under a new structure that usurped the power of State.

The formal NSC apparatus comprised interdepartmental committees, each normally chaired by the relevant Assistant Secretary of State. These reported to the Senior Review Group (SRG), chaired by Kissinger, which acted as the filter and conduit to the full NSC, chaired by Nixon. Importantly, the SRG replaced the Senior Interdepartmental Group, formed in 1967 to provide presidential advice on foreign policy issues, which was chaired and controlled by the Under Secretary of State. The National Security Adviser, not State therefore, would henceforth regulate the flow of information,

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<sup>92</sup> Morris, 46.

<sup>93</sup> Hersh, 29-31. Richard M. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), 341.

<sup>94</sup> Hersh, 25.

<sup>95</sup> Hersh, 26. Nixon, *Memoirs*, 341.

advice, and decisions to and from the President. Nixon would issue National Security Study Memoranda (NSSMs), which would be assigned to the appropriate interdepartmental committees for response. The President's decisions, in theory based on these studies, would be communicated by National Security Decision Memoranda (NSDMs).<sup>96</sup> The NSC system would have its own staff, recruited by Kissinger, and provide a focal point for coherent interagency long-range planning, a formal mechanism for monitoring the implementation of foreign policy directives, and a means of efficiently formulating timely advice. It would also provide Nixon and Kissinger with the formal vehicle by which to elaborate and impose their views on foreign policy.<sup>97</sup>

Nixon and Kissinger compounded the effects of their initial coup by four means. First, they rapidly expanded the NSC staff from twenty-eight in 1969 to fifty-two in 1971, so obviating the need to frequently employ State resources.<sup>98</sup> Second, Kissinger stopped top NSC personnel meeting with Nixon to discuss matters in which they were expert. Only in exceptional cases did they attend meetings between the National Security Adviser and the President. Thus, Kissinger became the sole channel, the two-way valve, through which all information and decisions had to flow.<sup>99</sup> Third, in June 1969, Nixon ordered a substantial reduction in the number of meetings of the full NSC, instructing Kissinger to bring issues to him directly.<sup>100</sup> Consequently, full NSC meetings became a formality, during which the President and his National Security Adviser controlled the agenda and proceedings, and for which the NSC staff prepared Nixon's responses to

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<sup>96</sup> Joan Hoff, "A Revisionist View of Nixon's Foreign Policy," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26 (1996): 110-112. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 42. Strong, 58-59. Small, 51-55.

<sup>97</sup> Cleva, 201-202. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 23, 39. Strong, 79-94.

<sup>98</sup> Barry Rubin, *Secrets of State: The State Department and the Struggle over US Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 150. Small, 53.

<sup>99</sup> Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 189.

<sup>100</sup> The first full NSC meeting during the crisis convened on 16 July 1971, over three months after the clampdown had commenced. Van Hollen, 345, note 14.

anticipated questions concerning decisions already made privately, and presented as *faits accomplis*.<sup>101</sup> Four, Nixon appointed Kissinger, who already controlled the SRG, as chair of several other important committees, including the Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG), tasked with determining immediate US responses in times of international crisis.<sup>102</sup> As a result of these steps, Nixon and Kissinger's grasp on power continued to tighten.

While strengthening the NSC, Nixon further weakened State by appointing William Rogers, an "adequate administrator," as Secretary.<sup>103</sup> As the President's Chief of Staff noted, "The Secretary of State was a figurehead."<sup>104</sup> Although a "tug of war"<sup>105</sup> developed between Kissinger and Rogers, the Secretary proved no match for the National Security Adviser, who nearly always received Nixon's support.<sup>106</sup> After all, as Kissinger observed, "in the final analysis the influence of . . . [the] Presidential Assistant . . . [derived] almost exclusively from the confidence of the President, not from administrative arrangements."<sup>107</sup>

Despite the power that they already exerted through the newly implemented NSC system, Nixon and Kissinger consolidated their position still further. Standard diplomacy demanded that all contact with foreign governments be made through State Department channels, so ensuring proper coordination between various agencies, each being given the opportunity to mold policy. However, on key initiatives, Nixon and Kissinger preferred to use backchannels and secret diplomacy, which they believed offered greater flexibility.

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<sup>101</sup> Isaacson, 203-204. Rubin, 145.

<sup>102</sup> Isaacson, 204.

<sup>103</sup> Small, 37. In addition, see C. L. Sulzberger, *The World and Richard Nixon* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1987), 169-170. Rogers was Nixon's former law-practice partner.

<sup>104</sup> Haldeman, 235.

<sup>105</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 28-29.

<sup>106</sup> Hoff, 110. Small, 54.

<sup>107</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 47. In addition, see Strong, 60-64.

Thus, they worked around and beyond State and even the NSC system, as opposed to through them.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, Kissinger set up a backchannel to the Soviets within the first few weeks of his coming to office in 1969.<sup>109</sup>

As Kissinger observed in his memoirs, “Eventually, though not for the first one and a half years, I became the principal adviser. Until the end of 1970 I was influential but not dominant. From then on my role increased as Nixon sought to bypass the delays and sometimes opposition of departments.”<sup>110</sup> “Once he had set a policy direction, he almost invariably left me to implement the strategy and manage the bureaucracy.”<sup>111</sup> The NSC organization had usurped the power of a weak Secretary of State, and effectively placed foreign policy directly under the control of the President and his National Security Adviser. Moreover, Nixon and Kissinger often worked outside the bureaucratic system altogether, employing backchannels and secret diplomacy. By early 1971, therefore, the apparatus of power had developed into “essentially a two-man system.”<sup>112</sup> The personalization of US foreign policy had occurred.

### *Nixon-Kissinger Worldview*

Nixon had originally been a staunch anti-communist, viewing the world through the lens of idealism. Nevertheless, by the time he became President, he had converted to the realist perspective already shared by his National Security Adviser.<sup>113</sup> On entering office, Nixon and Kissinger believed a multi-polar system had replaced the post-WWII

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<sup>108</sup> Cleva, 201-202. Isaacson, 205-209. Strong, 60-64.

<sup>109</sup> Isaacson, 205-209.

<sup>110</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 48.

<sup>111</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 163.

<sup>112</sup> Van Hollen, 357. In addition, see “Volume Summary,” Louis J. Smith and David H. Herschler, compilers, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972*, updated June 2003, retrieved from the Department of State Internet site on 1 May 2006 at the following address <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/i/>>.

<sup>113</sup> “Volume Summary,” Smith and Herschler, *Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972*.

bipolar world; Western Europe and Japan had healed, the communist world had split between the USSR and China, and newly powerful nations had emerged elsewhere. As the Soviets approached nuclear parity, and budgetary concerns threatened America's ability to make international commitments, disenchantment over Vietnam provided a signal that a new approach to foreign policy was required.<sup>114</sup> "Nixon found himself in a position of having to guide America through the transition from dominance to leadership."<sup>115</sup> This realist awareness precipitated the announcement of the Nixon Doctrine in 1969, and the pursuit of Vietnamization in Southeast Asia.<sup>116</sup> Under the Doctrine, the US would honor treaty obligations and provide a nuclear shield for its allies. However, in cases of external aggression, America would furnish only economic aid and matériel, the nation directly threatened being responsible for the manpower employed in its own defense. The US would sanction direct military involvement in a foreign crisis only if an ally were attacked by a major power and aiding that ally in its defense were in the US national interest.<sup>117</sup> Vietnamization sought to hand the prosecution of the Vietnam War to the South Vietnamese, while US troops withdrew from the arena. It was thus consistent both with the realist agenda and the Nixon Doctrine.

Realism further manifested itself in Nixon and Kissinger's search for a balance of power in the pursuit of national interests measured in terms of strength and security.<sup>118</sup> As Nixon explained in his first Foreign Policy Report, "Our objective in the first instance,

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<sup>114</sup> Cleva, 183. Greene, 231-232, 235. Isaacson, 143. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 703-704, 731. "Volume Summary," Smith and Herschler, *Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972*. Strong, 88.

<sup>115</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 704.

<sup>116</sup> Greene, 79.

<sup>117</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 224-225. Nixon, *Memoirs*, 394-395.

<sup>118</sup> "Volume Summary," Smith and Herschler, *Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972*.

is to support our interests in the long run with sound foreign policy. . . . Our interests must shape our commitments, rather than the other way round.”<sup>119</sup> The desire for a stable equilibrium was demonstrated in policies of détente with the Soviets and rapprochement with the Chinese.<sup>120</sup>

Realist philosophy, however, left little space for moral ideals. Kissinger best explained his attitude to this conundrum at a gathering of Nobel Laureates in Paris, many years after the East Pakistan crisis. In the words of Walter Isaacson, his biographer, the former National Security Adviser observed:

More than a dozen of his relatives had been killed in the holocaust, he said, so he knew something of the nature of genocide. It was easy for human rights crusaders and peace activists to insist on perfection in this world. But the policymaker who has to deal with reality learns to seek the best that can be achieved rather than the best that can be imagined. It would be wonderful to banish the role of military power from world affairs, but the world was not perfect, as he had learned as a child. Those with true responsibility for peace, unlike those on the sidelines, cannot afford pure idealism. They must have the courage to deal with ambiguities and accommodations, to realize that great goals can be achieved only in imperfect steps. No side has a monopoly on morality.<sup>121</sup>

As the East Pakistan crisis erupted, US foreign policy lay in the hands of two individuals intent on reducing direct US military commitments overseas, and who embraced the formation of a new global power equilibrium as the cornerstone of their worldview. Importantly, to paraphrase Stalin, the US President’s one-time archenemy, to make their omelet, Nixon and Kissinger were more than ready to break a few eggs along the way.

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<sup>119</sup> First Annual Foreign Policy Report to Congress, Nixon, 18 February 1970, document no. 60, Smith and Herschler, *Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972*.

<sup>120</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon*, vol. 2, *The Triumph of a Politician, 1962-1972* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 439-440.

<sup>121</sup> Isaacson, 766-767. Isaacson’s source: Kissinger off-the-record talk to Nobel Laureates, Paris, 18 January 1988, tape courtesy of the Elie Wiesel Foundation; *Washington Times*, 22 January 1988.

## *Reopening the Door*

China's relationship with the US had collapsed following the Communist takeover in 1949 and the Korean War (1950-1953). Save for a small group of Sinologists who promoted the need to heal the rift, the vast majority of informed Americans considered China an expansionist threat that had necessitated US involvement in Vietnam. Improvements would not be possible until ideological change had occurred. Sovietologists supported this view, urging dialogue with Moscow, while at the same time discouraging the development of any links with Peking that might spoil such a strategy. The Nixon Administration did not concur. "We were convinced that increasing American foreign policy options would soften, not harden, Moscow's stance."<sup>122</sup>

By 1971, rapprochement with the Chinese had been on Nixon's mind for some time.<sup>123</sup> He first publicly raised his ideas on the subject in an article published in *Foreign Affairs* in October 1967:<sup>124</sup>

Any American policy toward Asia must come urgently to grips with the reality of China. . . . Taking the long view, we simply cannot afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations, there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hates and threaten its neighbors. There is no place on this small planet for a billion of its potentially most able people to live in angry isolation. . . . Only as the nations of non-communist Asia become so strong – economically, politically and militarily – that they no longer furnish tempting targets for Chinese aggression, will the leaders in Peking be persuaded to turn their energies inward rather than outward. And that will be the time when dialogue with mainland China can begin. For the short run, then, this means a policy of firm restraint, of no reward, of a creative counterpressure [sic] designed to persuade Peking that its interests can be served only by accepting the basic rules of international civility. For the long run, it means pulling China back into the world community –

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<sup>122</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 719-721. Quotation: 721.

<sup>123</sup> Nixon's interest in rapprochement with the Chinese predated that of Kissinger. Evelyn Goh, "Nixon, Kissinger, and the 'Soviet Card' in the US Opening to China, 1971-1974," *Diplomatic History* 29 (2005): 501. Hersh, 352. Isaacson, 336.

<sup>124</sup> Hoff, 116. Nixon, *Memoirs*, 545.

but as a great and progressing nation, not as an epicenter of world revolution."<sup>125</sup>

During his years as an anti-Communist idealist, Nixon had characterized China as a "dangerous, aggressive enemy."<sup>126</sup> Yet, the President's ever-increasing adoption of realist philosophy during the 1960s severely diluted this view. China in isolation was a threat to world peace; Peking must be included in a new balance of world powers.<sup>127</sup>

Clearly, the "short run" described in the 1967 article did not last many years in Nixon's opinion, as one of his first directives to NSC staff was an order to explore opportunities for Sino-American rapprochement.<sup>128</sup> This was the first of several NSSMs issued with a view to taking positive steps towards China. In March 1969, Nixon discussed the matter with French President, Charles de Gaulle, in Paris, who concurred with his view that the West ought to seek better relations with Peking.<sup>129</sup> By the end of the year, Kissinger had stated in a press briefing, "It seems to us impossible to build a peace, which we define as something other than just the avoidance of a crisis, by simply ignoring 800 million people."<sup>130</sup> However, Nixon believed his first "serious" step towards better relations came in his Foreign Policy Report to Congress in February 1970,<sup>131</sup> in which he declared:

We will continue to probe every available opening that offers a prospect for better East-West relations, for the resolution of problems large or small, for greater security for all. . . . This is also the spirit in which we

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<sup>125</sup> Richard M. Nixon, "Asia After Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs* 46(1) (Oct. 1967): 113-125, reprinted as document no. 3, Smith and Herschler, *Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972*.

<sup>126</sup> Morris, 202.

<sup>127</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose contends that Nixon's anti-Communist credentials were crucial in preventing a crippling right-wing backlash after he had publicly announced Kissinger's trip. Indeed, without Nixon to lead it, the Republican right was unable to mount any effective opposition. Ambrose, 654.

<sup>128</sup> Greene, 109.

<sup>129</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Nixon and de Gaulle, Versailles, 1 March 1969, extracted as document no. 14, Smith and Herschler, *Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972*.

<sup>130</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 192.

<sup>131</sup> Nixon, *Memoirs*, 545.



have resumed formal talks in Warsaw with Communist China. No nation need be our permanent enemy.<sup>132</sup>

Nixon and Kissinger sent these two public signals to Peking in the full knowledge that the Sino-Soviet split might encourage a positive Chinese response.<sup>133</sup>

Although Nixon and Kissinger sought to include China in the international system in order to eliminate the possibility of a rogue threat to world peace, they also had more-specific aims. First, they intended to establish a new equilibrium of the three major powers – China, the Soviet Union, and the US – through a system of triangular diplomacy. In his memoirs, Kissinger insisted that he and Nixon did not seek rapprochement with Peking simply to use a ‘China card’ against the Soviets, thus forcing Moscow to seek better relations with Washington, for this was only part of the answer.<sup>134</sup> As he explains, quoting an October 1971 memorandum he sent to Nixon:

We want our China policy to show Moscow that it cannot speak for all communist countries, that it is to their advantage to make agreements with us, that they must take into account possible US-PRC [China] cooperation – all this without overdoing the Soviet paranoia. . . . The Chinese want to relieve themselves of the threat of a two-front war, introduce new calculations in Moscow about attacking or leaning on the PRC [China], and perhaps make the USSR more pliable in dealing with Peking. Specifically from us they want assurances against US-USSR collusion.<sup>135</sup>

Second, many believed that the solution to Vietnam lay in the capitals of the major Communist powers. Without continued aid from either the Soviets or Chinese, Hanoi would be unable to continue the war. Triangular diplomacy within a new power equilibrium would perhaps present the US with an opportunity to disengage from

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<sup>132</sup> First Annual Foreign Policy Report to Congress, Nixon, 18 February 1970, document no. 60, Smith and Herschler, *Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972*. The Warsaw talks came to naught, but are briefly discussed in the *China Investment* subsection of this thesis.

<sup>133</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 685, 693, 1049. Nixon, *The Real War*, 134. In addition, see Hoff, 117. Isaacson, 352.

<sup>134</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 763-765.

<sup>135</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 765.

Vietnam without leaving its policy in Southeast Asia in disarray.<sup>136</sup> Third, Kissinger felt the “drama” of Sino-American rapprochement would act as a boost for a US public demoralized over Vietnam – “a reminder of what America could accomplish as a world leader.”<sup>137</sup> If they could succeed in ending the ongoing feud with China, Nixon and Kissinger believed both the United States and the world had much to gain.

### *China Investment*

There are three important reasons to consider Nixon and Kissinger’s first practical steps towards better relations with Peking. Study reveals the amount of time and effort they had already invested in the initiative at the time of the East Pakistan crisis, the fragility of the rapprochement process, and the relative merits of the alternative conduits available to the President and his National Security Adviser.

The US began to send public signals of its willingness to see a thaw in the frosty Sino-American relationship in 1969, when it loosened passport restrictions on its citizens traveling to China, allowed limited grain shipments, and suspended naval patrols in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>138</sup> Then, after his reconciliatory statement towards China in his first Foreign Policy Report, the President approved a partial relaxation of trade controls in April 1970. Nixon and Kissinger confirmed this signal later that year when both made further public statements for Chinese consumption.<sup>139</sup> The President granted an interview to *Time* magazine during October in which he claimed, “If there is anything I want to do

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<sup>136</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 194. Morris, 207. Nixon, *Memoirs*, 345. The Soviets supplied much of Hanoi’s weaponry overland by rail through China. By restricting these supplies, through cooperation with either Moscow or Peking, Washington would significantly increase the pressure on Hanoi to negotiate an end to the confrontation in Vietnam.

<sup>137</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 194.

<sup>138</sup> Hersh, 356. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 722-723.

<sup>139</sup> Nixon, *Memoirs*, 545.

before I die, it is to go to China.”<sup>140</sup> Two months later, in another interview with correspondents from the same publication, Kissinger admitted, “Our China strategy has been to develop a dialogue with them for its own sake and then to have a counterweight with the Soviets.”<sup>141</sup> On 18 December 1970, China attempted to send a positive response. During an interview with journalist Edgar Snow, Mao said he would be happy to talk with Nixon in Peking. Unfortunately, Snow did not relay this news to Washington until “sometime later.” This general invitation was finally published in *Life* magazine in April 1971.<sup>142</sup> However, before this, on 25 February 1971, Nixon made a clear statement of his intentions in his second Foreign Policy Report: “When the Government of the People’s Republic of China is ready to engage in talks, it will find us receptive to agreements that further the legitimate national interests of China and its neighbors.”<sup>143</sup> In early 1971, therefore, both Nixon and Mao had issued unmistakable public signals concerning their general intent. Unfortunately, however, nothing concrete had resulted; dates for talks had not even been proffered, much less the participants and agenda considered and agreed. The possibility of rapprochement appeared very real; the question remained of how to convert such indications into a tangible success. Meanwhile, Nixon and Kissinger had resorted to their preferred secret diplomacy in an attempt to finesse a breakthrough.

The President and his National Security Adviser sought to use backchannels after missing an opportunity to reengage with the Chinese in ambassadorial talks held in Warsaw in early 1970. One hundred and thirty-four such sterile, mid-level meetings had

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<sup>140</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 369.

<sup>141</sup> Record of interview with *Time* magazine correspondents, Kissinger, Washington, 9 December 1970, document no. 80, Smith and Herschler, *Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972*.

<sup>142</sup> Hersh, 366-367. Quotation: 367. Nixon, *Memoirs*, 547, 550.

<sup>143</sup> Record of radio address coinciding with the Second Annual Foreign Policy Report to Congress, Nixon, 25 February 1971, document no. 85, Smith and Herschler, *Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972*.

been held between the virtual isolation of the Chinese in the early 1950s, and the end of 1968. Unfortunately, the agreement of a minor repatriation accord had been their only concrete achievement.<sup>144</sup> In September 1969, Nixon and Kissinger instructed the US Ambassador to Poland, Walter Stoessel, Jr., to contact the Chinese with a view to restarting the talks, which had broken down the previous year. This approach occurred when Chou En-lai's faction was temporarily in the ascendancy in Peking, and so the Chinese agreed to meeting no. 135, held on 20 January 1970.<sup>145</sup> Stoessel, as instructed, announced the US would be prepared to send a representative to Peking, or receive a Chinese envoy in Washington. At the next meeting, on 20 February, of the two options, the Chinese accepted the former.<sup>146</sup>

By the summer of 1969, Nixon had already decided to concentrate on broader issues, rather than the specific grievances for so long painstakingly and pointlessly expounded in earlier Warsaw talks.<sup>147</sup> In his memoirs, Kissinger explained that to overcome the "misconceptions of two decades," talks had to take place not between blinkered 'experts' set in their ways, but at the highest levels of government.<sup>148</sup> Even when the offer of high-level discussions had been received and accepted, however, Rogers insisted on setting preconditions, and presenting long-standing grievances reflecting the entrenched attitudes in State.<sup>149</sup> Kissinger had not yet achieved his dominant status as Nixon's foreign policy confidant. Consequently, he and State reached an impasse that delayed further discussions. A meeting was finally scheduled for 20 May

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<sup>144</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 165, 684-685.

<sup>145</sup> Hersh, 359-360. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 193.

<sup>146</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 687.

<sup>147</sup> Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 722-723.

<sup>148</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 686.

<sup>149</sup> Hersh, 360-362. Isaacson, 336-337. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 690, 692-693.

1970, but the American incursion into Cambodia that spring led the Chinese to cancel the talks.<sup>150</sup> In his memoirs, Kissinger described this lost opportunity as “providential,” as the US Government was “simply not ready to speak with a single voice.”<sup>151</sup> However, the experience reinforced Nixon and Kissinger’s view that secret diplomacy through backchannels, “unencumbered by vested bureaucratic interests and traditional liturgy,” would provide them with maximum flexibility should they ever be offered a second bite at the apple.<sup>152</sup> They soon began an “intricate minuet” with Peking.<sup>153</sup>

After the collapse of the Warsaw project, Nixon and Kissinger had “no idea how to approach the Chinese leaders.”<sup>154</sup> Clutching at perhaps the largest available straw, in June 1970, they instructed General Vernon Walters, US Military Attaché in Paris, to attempt to contact his Chinese counterpart there, with a view to establishing a backchannel that bypassed the State department and the need for any foreign go-between.<sup>155</sup> Walters tried twice, once in June and again in September 1970, but failed to elicit any response.<sup>156</sup> Unfortunately, during this time Chou En-lai’s faction was still rebuilding its credibility following the Cambodian adventure.

In September 1970, Kissinger placed a second iron in the Parisian fire, encouraging his good friend Jean Sainteny, the former French Delegate General in Hanoi and then Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, to convey to the Chinese Ambassador to Paris the fact that the US wished

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<sup>150</sup> Hersh, 362.

<sup>151</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 693.

<sup>152</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 698.

<sup>153</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 187.

<sup>154</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 688.

<sup>155</sup> Hersh, 364.

<sup>156</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 696.

to establish direct contact.<sup>157</sup> On 18 January 1971, news reached Kissinger that Sainteny had finally succeeded in his mission the previous December, and that the Chinese Ambassador had contacted Peking, but was awaiting a response.<sup>158</sup> At the start of the East Pakistan crisis, therefore, no direct backchannel through Paris had yet sprung to life. Meanwhile, however, Nixon and Kissinger had also attempted to bring two indirect, and therefore less convenient, conduits into operation, through Presidents Nicolae Ceaușescu of Romania and Yahya Khan of Pakistan.

In August 1969, Nixon became the first US president to pay a state visit to a Communist country – Romania. He had been warmly received there, while out of office in 1967, and considered a return trip a useful means of encouraging Eastern European countries to act more independently of Moscow. Ceaușescu had a good relationship with Peking, and Nixon used the opportunity of the visit to ask the Romanian President to make approaches to China at the highest level; Ceaușescu agreed.<sup>159</sup> On 17 December 1969, Chou En-lai used the Romanian channel to signal that China was interested in establishing “normal relations” with the West, but added little else.<sup>160</sup> It was not until 26 October 1970, when Ceaușescu visited the White House during a trip to the US in celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, that the two Presidents again broached the subject.<sup>161</sup> The next day, in a meeting with Kissinger, Ceaușescu

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<sup>157</sup> Memorandum, Smyser to Kissinger (Secret), 7 November 1970, “Letter from Your Friend in Paris, and Other Chinese Miscellanea [sic],” document no. 5, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 52, 698.

<sup>158</sup> Memorandum, Smyser to Kissinger (Secret), 7 November 1970, “Letter from Your Friend in Paris, and Other Chinese Miscellanea [sic],” document no. 5, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

<sup>159</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 156-157, 180-181.

<sup>160</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 191.

<sup>161</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 699.

confirmed he would again communicate US interest in establishing a secret channel of communication, and make the White House aware of any Chinese response.<sup>162</sup>

On 11 January 1971, one month after the Pakistani conduit had sprung into life (see below), the Romanian channel once again bore fruit. Vice Premier Gheorghe Radelescu had visited Peking during November of the previous year, and had received a message from Chou, whose faction had finally gained the upper hand in Peking. The Romanian Ambassador, Corneliu Bogdan, read the communication aloud in the White House Map Room. It was almost identical to that just received through the Pakistani channel, and contained an invitation from the Chinese Premier for the US to send an envoy to Peking. Having already sent a response via Islamabad, Nixon scribbled the instruction, "I believe we may appear too eager. Let's cool it – Wait for them to respond to our [Pakistan] initiative."<sup>163</sup> Consequently, Kissinger did not issue an immediate reply, but chose to wait. Only some three weeks later, on 29 January, when Bogdan announced he would soon be visiting Bucharest, did the National Security Adviser respond. The reply was similar to that sent via Islamabad, however not written, but oral.<sup>164</sup>

In his memoirs, which deliberately sought to promote the importance of the Pakistani conduit, Kissinger asserted, "Contrary to expectations, the Romanian channel turned out to be one-way."<sup>165</sup> He appears to have conveniently forgotten the above evidence to the contrary. Indeed, as Ceaușescu made a state visit to China in June 1971, when the Pakistani channel was fully operational, the White House consciously avoided

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<sup>162</sup> Memorandum of Conversation (Top Secret), Kissinger and Ceaușescu, Washington, 27 October 1970, document no. 4, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

<sup>163</sup> Memorandum (Top Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 12 January 1971, "Conversation with Ambassador Bogdan, Map Room, January 11, 1971," document no. 9, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

<sup>164</sup> Memorandum of Conversation (Top Secret), Kissinger and Bogdan, Washington, 29 January 1971, document no. 10, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 704.

<sup>165</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 181.

bringing the Romanian channel back into play.<sup>166</sup> Although Kissinger did have legitimate concerns that “it would be difficult for Bucharest to avoid briefing Moscow,”<sup>167</sup> it appears that the Romanian conduit was both functional and two-way. Though the form and timing of the US response of January 1971 clearly indicated White House preference for the Pakistani channel, the Romanian option remained a possible alternative for communicating with the Chinese.

By the time of the East Pakistan crisis, the conduit via Yahya and Islamabad had become not the exclusive, but the preferred, link between Washington and Peking. In 1969, during a short stopover in Pakistan, just a day before visiting Ceaușescu on the same world trip, Nixon had similarly implored Yahya to make overtures to China. Like his Romanian counterpart, the Pakistani President had agreed.<sup>168</sup> About this time, Kissinger also approached the Pakistani Ambassador to Washington, Agha Hilaly, whose sister he had taught at Harvard, with a view to establishing a secure backchannel.<sup>169</sup> On 19 December 1969, two days after the Romanian conduit had conveyed China’s wish to establish “normal relations,” the Pakistani channel confirmed the same news through Hilaly, and on 23 December the Pakistani Ambassador relayed Chinese interest in resuming the Warsaw talks, which were subsequently reconvened, only to fall through in May of the following year.<sup>170</sup>

On 25 October 1970, as the Pakistani President, like his Romanian counterpart, visited the US to attend the United Nations anniversary celebrations, Nixon met with

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<sup>166</sup> Memorandum (Top Secret), Lord to Kissinger, 4 June 1971, document no. 71.A.21, Aijazuddin.

<sup>167</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 704.

<sup>168</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 180-181. Nixon, *Memoirs*, 546.

<sup>169</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 181-182.

<sup>170</sup> This interest manifested itself in the convening of meeting no. 135, on 20 January 1971. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 191.



Yahya in the Oval Office.<sup>171</sup> Nixon explained, “It is essential that we open negotiations with China,” and that the US would be prepared to “establish links secretly.”<sup>172</sup> Yahya visited Peking in person that November,<sup>173</sup> but it was not until 9 December, two days after the Pakistani elections, that Hilaly delivered a handwritten message from Chou En-lai to Kissinger in Washington.<sup>174</sup> Declaring himself to be speaking not only for himself, but also on behalf of Mao and Lin Piao, Chou explained:

In order to discuss this subject of the vacation of Chinese territories called Taiwan, a special envoy of President Nixon’s will be most welcome in Peking. . . . We have had messages from the United States from different sources in the past but this is the first time the proposal has come *from a Head, through a Head, to a Head. The United States knows that Pakistan is a great friend of China and therefore we attach importance to the message.*<sup>175</sup>

Nixon and Kissinger took this to be not only a positive response, but also a clear indication of Chinese preference for the Pakistani conduit.<sup>176</sup> This was convenient for the US because of Islamabad’s geographical proximity to China and, in contrast to Bucharest, its lack of close ties to Moscow. However, there was nothing in Chou’s memorandum to suggest that use of the Pakistan conduit was a necessary condition of communication with the Chinese. Acknowledging Peking’s focus on the Taiwan problem, in their written reply of 16 December, Nixon and Kissinger asked for discussions on a wider range of issues, and suggested a meeting of envoys to prepare the

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<sup>171</sup> This meeting took place one day before Nixon met Ceaușescu under similar circumstances.

<sup>172</sup> Memorandum of Conversation (Top Secret), Nixon and Yahya, Washington, 25 October 1970, document no. 3, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

<sup>173</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 700.

<sup>174</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 701.

<sup>175</sup> Memorandum (Top Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, c. 10 December 1970, “Chinese Communist Initiative,” document no. 6, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*. Emphasis added.

<sup>176</sup> This view was reflected in the lack of urgency and the oral form of Nixon and Kissinger’s response via the Romanian channel, over one month later, which signaled a US preference for the Pakistani channel back to the Chinese.

way for higher-level talks in the Chinese capital.<sup>177</sup> The White House appeared to be getting a second bite at the apple just seven months after the collapse of the Warsaw talks.

At the outbreak of the East Pakistan crisis, Nixon and Kissinger had invested two years of public and private efforts in establishing effective contact with the Chinese leadership. Though nothing concrete had been arranged, substantial progress had been made and, enticingly, the arrangement of what the President and his National Security Adviser considered vital high-level talks with the Chinese Communists was more likely than it had ever been. Pakistan had been established as the preferred, though not a necessary, conduit. Nevertheless, the fragility of the enterprise remained quite clear.

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<sup>177</sup> Memorandum of Record (Top Secret), 16 December 1970, untitled, document no. 8, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

#### 4. Phase One – Let’s Do Something!

##### *“Selective Genocide”*

Archer Blood, US Consul General in Dacca, was a respected and capable individual. He received the US Foreign Service’s Meritorious Honor Award for his work following the November 1970 cyclone in East Pakistan, and considered himself well advised of the local situation.<sup>178</sup> Yet, as Yahya unexpectedly unleashed his West Pakistani-dominated armed forces on the night of 25 March 1971, Blood was hosting a dinner for sixteen at his home in the city.<sup>179</sup> He had placed his faith in progress through negotiation, but suddenly found himself perched with his guests on the roof of his own home, “watching with horror the constant flash of tracer bullets across the dark sky and listening to the more ominous rattle of machine gun fire and the heavy clump of tank guns” in the distance.<sup>180</sup>

Surprised and ill-prepared, Blood soon became isolated. Dacca lay 1,000 miles from the US Embassy in Islamabad and, for some weeks, no US officials were allowed to visit Dacca from the West. The army imposed a strict curfew, banned travel outside the city, cut the inter-wing telephone service, as well as that in East Pakistan, and the delivery of mail became delayed and uncertain. Nevertheless, Blood determined to peer through the fog of ‘war’ as best he could, using the wireless communication facility in the consulate to relay news of atrocities perpetrated in the East to the US Embassy in Islamabad and the Department of State in Washington.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Blood, 23.

<sup>179</sup> Blood, 94.

<sup>180</sup> Blood, 193-194, 196. Quotation: 196.

<sup>181</sup> Blood, xvi, 202.

On 28 March 1971, Blood sent a telegram entitled “Selective Genocide.”<sup>182</sup> He began:

Here in Dacca we are mute and horrified witnesses to a reign of terror by the Pak military.”<sup>183</sup> The West Pakistan authorities in the East had “marked for extinction” the Awami League hierarchy, student leaders, university faculty, and members of the National and Provincial Assemblies. “Moreover, with the support of the Pak military, non-Bengali Muslims are systematically attacking poor people’s quarters and murdering Bengalis and Hindus. . . . There is no rpt [repeat] no resistance being offered in Dacca, to military. . . . We should be expressing our shock at least privately to the GOP [Government of Pakistan].<sup>184</sup>

The next day, he reported that American priests in Old Dacca had witnessed the army, without provocation, “set houses afire and then gun down people as they left their homes.” Blood believed the casualty figures to be very high, and Hindus to be “the particular focus of the campaign.” Troops were looting, and standing by as non-Bengalis did the same. Reports received suggested that the West Pakistani Army had killed 1,800 policemen and, of the 1,000 soldiers of the East Pakistan Rifles, a Bengali regiment based in part at Peelkhana Camp, some 700 had been killed and 200 captured. The objectives of the army appeared to be to terrorize the population into submission, and eliminate those elements of society it perceived as a threat to the Martial Law Administration.<sup>185</sup>

On 30 March, Blood transmitted the testimony of an American visiting Dacca University, who had been told that the students of Iqbal Hall had been shot down in their rooms or as they fled. The visitor had seen twenty-five bodies, the others having been rapidly disposed of by the army. At Rokeya Hall for girls, the troops had set the building

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<sup>182</sup> Telegram (Confidential), Blood to Department of State, 28 March 1971, document no. 125, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>183</sup> Standard US diplomatic abbreviations: ‘Pak’ – Pakistan/Pakistani; ‘Paks’ – Pakistanis. No derogatory connotation consciously implied.

<sup>184</sup> Telegram (Confidential), Blood to Department of State, 28 March 1971, document no. 125, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>185</sup> Telegram (Confidential), Blood to Department of State, 29 March 1971, document no. 126, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

ablaze, and had mown down the occupants with machine-gun fire as they had sought to flee. Although possibly exaggerating, contacts had suggested some 1,000 students and faculty had been killed, some of the bodies rotting in two mass graves exposed by heavy rain.<sup>186</sup>

On the last day of March, Blood issued a situation report entitled Army Terror Campaign Continues in Dacca . . .” By then, Hindus were “undeniably the special focus of military brutality,” large fires being observed in the predominantly Hindu areas of Dacca. A consulate officer had observed truckloads of prisoners being driven into Peelkhana camp, followed by steady firing of one shot per ten seconds for some thirty minutes. The firing had already started before the official had arrived. Back at Dacca University, a non-Awami League businessman had visited Rokeya Hall, where he had observed six female bodies “apparently raped, shot, and hung by their heels from ceiling fans.”<sup>187</sup> While admitting, “We are still hard put to estimate number of casualties,” Blood suggested that, besides the troops of the East Pakistani Rifles, the military had killed 600-800 policemen, 500-1,000 students and faculty, and 4,000-6,000 in the old area of the city.<sup>188</sup> Even after the army had established firm control over Dacca, it continued wanton acts of violence, paying special attention to the Hindu population.<sup>189</sup>

Under the circumstances, Blood had done well to gather so much detailed evidence of widespread atrocities, which he had then relayed back to his superiors in Islamabad and Washington. Yet, despite its knowledge, the US Government maintained a “deafening silence.” Yahya, having imposed strict press censorship and deported foreign

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<sup>186</sup> Telegram (Confidential), Blood to Department of State, 30 March 1971, document no. 127, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>187</sup> Telegram (Confidential), Blood to Department of State, 31 March 1971, document no. 6, Gandhi.

<sup>188</sup> Telegram (Confidential), Blood to Department of State, 31 March 1971, document no. 5, Gandhi.

<sup>189</sup> Blood, 205.

journalists from the East, portrayed the wing as calm and the situation as under control. Despite Blood being its own man on the spot, Washington conveniently referred to such propaganda from Islamabad in describing accounts issuing from the East as conflicting, and so refused to condemn the clampdown.<sup>190</sup> Nevertheless, the *New York Times* reported on its front page that Senator Edward Kennedy (Dem - MA) had “effectively” accused the US Government of deliberately suppressing reports of indiscriminate killing. Although the Senator had refused to reveal his sources, his aides had confirmed that Blood’s telegrams were circulating widely in the Washington bureaucracy.<sup>191</sup>

In the absence of what they believed to be an appropriate Washington response, consular officers approached Blood on 6 April with a prepared message entitled “Dissent from U.S. Policy toward East Pakistan,” to which they had attached twenty signatures. In January 1969, William Rogers, the Secretary of State, had informed all posts that the airing of divergent views was welcomed, and had established a dissent channel and a task force to encourage greater openness. The Consul General duly forwarded the message to State in Washington and the Embassy in Islamabad. Indeed, he attached his own memorandum concurring with the view expressed. The message argued that then-current US policy served “neither our moral interests broadly defined nor our national interests narrowly defined.” The US Government was “bending over backwards to placate the West Pak dominated Government,” and had “evidenced what many will consider *moral bankruptcy*.” Although the “overworked term *genocide* . . . [was] applicable,” and despite the latest Pakistan policy document describing US interests in the region as humanitarian,

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<sup>190</sup> Blood, 209, 213.

<sup>191</sup> Benjamin Welles, *New York Times*, 2 April 1971, p. 1.

not strategic,<sup>192</sup> the US government had wrongly chosen not to intervene on the grounds that the clampdown was an internal matter of a sovereign state.<sup>193</sup> The same day, nine junior officers from State's Pakistan desk signed a memorandum in support of Blood's position.<sup>194</sup>

Blood's actions created a considerable stir in Washington, for he had not only dissented, but had neglected to give the telegram a high security rating. Morris quoted "White House sources" that claimed Joseph Sisco, Assistant Secretary of State (NEA), upon hearing of the dissent, telephoned Kissinger saying, "My people have left the reservation."<sup>195</sup> As Rogers explained to the National Security Adviser on the day the "goddam message" was received, "It's miserable. They bitched about our policy and have given it lots of distribution so it will probably leak. It's inexcusable. . . . You know we are doing everything we can about it. Trying to get the telegrams back as many as we can."<sup>196</sup> Thus, the US bureaucracy engaged in a clampdown of its own.

Sisco promptly called a meeting in which he made it clear to the junior officers dissenting in Washington that condemnation was "premature," and in which he made it

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<sup>192</sup> The response to NSSM 118, dated 3 March 1971, had recommended strong action in the "very unlikely" event of West Pakistani military intervention in the East. "We [the US] should be willing to risk irritating the West Pakistanis in the face of such a rash act on their part, and the threat of stopping aid should give us considerable leverage." For, although the US preferred a united Pakistan, it should be able to adjust to the emergence of two separate states without serious damage to its interests. Response to National Security Study Memorandum 118 (Secret), c. 3 March 1971, document no. 123, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>193</sup> Telegram (Confidential), Blood to Department of State, 6 April 1971, document no. 8, Gandhi. Emphasis added.

<sup>194</sup> Blood, 248. Morris, 218.

<sup>195</sup> Morris 220-221. Quotation: 220. Sisco, who chaired the NSC Interdepartmental Group for NEA, was a close friend of Kissinger throughout the crisis and after. In Sisco's obituary in the *Washington Post*, Kissinger explained, "I loved Joe. He was the best type of Foreign Service officer and absolutely indispensable to me." Joe Holley, "Diplomat Joseph J. Sisco dies at 85," *Washington Post*, 24 November 2004, p. B07, retrieved from the Washington Post Internet site on 17 May 2006 at the following address: <[http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A8945-2004Nov23\\_2.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A8945-2004Nov23_2.html)>.

<sup>196</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Kissinger and Rogers, 6 April 1971, document no. 20, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*. In addition, see Kissinger, *White House Years*, 853.

obvious that he was not “buying.”<sup>197</sup> Joseph Farland, US Ambassador to Islamabad, ordered the Consuls General in Karachi, Peshawar, and Lahore, whom Blood had placed on the distribution list, to destroy all copies;<sup>198</sup> and, the day after its receipt, State reclassified the offending article as *Secret*.<sup>199</sup> Sisco drafted an immediate reply on behalf of State in Washington, castigating Blood for not using a higher security clearance, and noting that, while State was “naturally concerned at the loss of life,” it remained “impossible to establish at this time . . . any reliable set of facts regarding recent events in the area.”<sup>200</sup>

As Washington sought to hide behind the fog of ‘war’, Blood fired off a second salvo. On 10 April 1971, he followed up his dissent telegram with a more specific explanation of his position. He quoted extensively from the response to NSSM 118 to justify his stance, and argued that the East Pakistan crisis was not a distinctly internal issue owing, in part, to an international obligation to condemn genocide.<sup>201</sup> It should be noted, however, that in 1971 the US had not ratified the United Nations Genocide Convention, and so had no legal duty to act, though its moral obligation obviously remained.<sup>202</sup>

It is unclear to what extent the Washington clampdown was carried out to block leaks, or prevent embarrassment internally. However, the actions subsequently taken against Blood appear far from reasonable. When the Consul General visited Islamabad to

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<sup>197</sup> Morris 220-221. Quotations: 220.

<sup>198</sup> Blood, 246-248.

<sup>199</sup> Gandhi, note 6.

<sup>200</sup> Telegram (Secret), Rogers to Blood, 6 April 1971, document no. 129, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>201</sup> Telegram (Secret), Blood to Department of State, 10 April 1971, document no. 130, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*. In addition, see footnote 192.

<sup>202</sup> The US Senate ratified the United Nations Genocide Convention (UNGC), with reservations, in February 1986, 37 years after Truman had taken it to the Hill. The UNGC obligates parties rather non-specifically to “undertake to prevent” genocide. Power, 165.



receive the Meritorious Honor Award for his actions after the cyclone, Embassy officers gave him the impression they believed he had “clearly gone off at the deep end.”<sup>203</sup> Indeed, when meeting Kissinger in May, Farland was happy to dismiss Dacca reporting as “grossly exaggerating the amount of bloodshed and killing there.” Unfortunately, the Ambassador did not trouble himself to offer any specific, first-hand evidence to support his claim.<sup>204</sup> Nixon took matters beyond simply discrediting Blood; the President ordered the Consul General’s removal from his post, which the latter vacated on 5 June 1971.<sup>205</sup>

Interestingly, Blood was not the only person to lose his position. In a conversation between Nixon, Kissinger, and Farland on 28 July 1971, Farland observed, “And the head of USIS [United States Information Service] was just as tendentious in his reporting. Got rid of him. Shakespeare [head of USIS] got him out. . . . The one remaining, who is very critical of the situation, this fellow Eric Griffel who is head of AID [in Dacca, Agency for International Development], he will be out in September. I wish he were out now. I don’t think you could pull him out without . . . repercussions on the Hill.” Nixon offered, encouragingly, “Sick bastards. You just keep right on after it on this thing.”<sup>206</sup> Thus, after the issue of the “Dissent” telegram, Nixon and Farland engaged in a concerted and deliberate policy of removal. Again, although it remains unclear whether this was to

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<sup>203</sup> Blood, 286-288. Quotation: 288.

<sup>204</sup> Memorandum of Conversation (Top Secret), Kissinger and Farland, Palm Springs, CA, 7 May 1971, document no. 42, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>205</sup> Blood, 258, 289, 323. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 854. After his dismissal, State transferred Blood back to Washington, where he was granted a post in personnel. On 24 June 1971, for his actions over the atrocities, Blood was given the Herter Award, established in 1969 by the American Foreign Service Association, for “extraordinary accomplishment involving initiative, integrity, intellectual courage, and creative dissent.” As others moved on, he reached the position of Acting Director General of the Foreign Service, only to be encouraged to move on himself when Kissinger became Secretary of State in 1973. Thereafter, he worked as Diplomatic Advisor to the Army War College and Deputy Chief of Mission in New Delhi, until his retirement in 1982. Blood, 324, 344-348. Quotation, 324.

<sup>206</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Nixon, Kissinger, and Farland, Washington, 28 July 1971, document no. 141, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

block leaks, or prevent embarrassment internally, it should be noted that the latter could be conveniently achieved under the justification of the former.

Before his enforced exit, however, Blood continued to provide regular reports on atrocities throughout East Pakistan. US citizens in Chittagong witnessed “numerous incidents of cold-blooded murder of unarmed Bengalis by Pak military.”<sup>207</sup> Even more disturbingly, in April and May Blood and his colleagues became convinced that the army was engaged in a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Hindus. Although they did not agree that a deliberate policy to expel the Hindu population existed, even the normally skeptical officers of the Embassy in Islamabad conceded that Hindus were being singled out for harsh treatment, and were concerned over Pakistani Government propaganda that blamed Hindus for their role in the crisis.<sup>208</sup> On 14 May, Blood filed a Situation Report entitled “Slaughter of Hindus,” in which he spoke of numerous reliable eye-witness accounts of the army targeting Hindu villages, and killing all the adult males. Although he could not quantify the scale of the slaughter exactly, he suggested the cumulative toll was in the thousands.<sup>209</sup> Five days later, he itemized systematic army attacks on Hindu villages reported by reliable witnesses, including members of the Consulate General staff. The villages concerned were now deserted save for army and non-Bengali looters, over 10,000 victims having been forced into flight. Prophetically, Blood suggested that India’s refugee problems were only just beginning.<sup>210</sup>

Just before leaving Dacca, Blood summarized the situation for Hindus:

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<sup>207</sup> Situation Report, Blood to Department of State, 24 April 1971, extracted in Blood, 204-205. Quotation: 205.

<sup>208</sup> Blood, 218.

<sup>209</sup> Situation Report, Blood to Department of State, 14 May 1971, extracted in Blood, 217.

<sup>210</sup> Situation Report, Blood to Department of State, 19 May 1971, extracted in Blood, 219-220.

Evidence of a systematic persecution of the Hindu population is too detailed and too massive to be ignored. While the Western mind boggles at enormity of a possible planned eviction of ten million people, the fact remains that the officers and men of the Pak Army are behaving as if they have been given carte blanche to rid Pakistan of 'these subversives' and they have been both encouraging and acquiescing in the persecution of Hindus by Biharis<sup>211</sup> and Muslim Bengalis. That many Hindu homes and villages have not only been looted, but also occupied by non-Hindus suggests that the Army intends the dislocation of Hindus to be permanent.<sup>212</sup>

It is not the purpose of this thesis to construct a case for ethnic cleansing or genocide committed against the Hindu population of East Pakistan. However, Blood's reports of the specific and systematic targeting of Hindus in terms of their slaughter and removal through terror, the theft of their possessions and occupation of their homes, and the defamatory propaganda campaign orchestrated against them, suggests a *prima facie* case worthy of detailed investigation.

Blood and his colleagues sought to penetrate the fog of 'war', and supply Washington with the supporting evidence of atrocities it needed, should it have chosen to adopt a moral stance against "Selective Genocide" in East Pakistan. The detailed information they forwarded on a timely basis gave the White House the justification and opportunity for stronger action, which it failed to accept. Even as Blood and his colleagues strongly dissented from what they considered to be the US Government's "moral bankruptcy," unwittingly sparking a minor rebellion at State in Washington along the way, more powerful forces were at work, intent on adopting a conciliatory line with Islamabad. They conveniently dismissed Blood's reports as exaggerated and unreliable,

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<sup>211</sup> 'Bihari' refers specifically to an inhabitant of the neighboring state of Bihar, but is used generally to refer to all non-Bengalis.

<sup>212</sup> Situation Report, Blood to Department of State, 25 May 1971, extracted in Blood, 222.

even though subsequent events would prove this was not the case. However, even if the White House and Foggy Bottom had turned a deaf ear, others were prepared to listen.<sup>213</sup>

*“Time when Principles Make Best Politics”*

Kenneth Keating, the US Ambassador to New Delhi, was one of the first to respond to the shocking news relayed by Blood.<sup>214</sup> The Consul General had included the US Embassy in India on the distribution list of his “Selective Genocide” telegram, and Keating promptly added his weight to the call for action. On 29 March, Keating described himself as “deeply shocked at the massacre by Pakistani military,” and concurred with Blood in that the US should “publicly and prominently deplore this brutality,” and “privately lay it on the line with the GOP [Government of Pakistan].” Indeed, he went further than the Consul General, demanding Washington announce the “unilateral abrogation of the one-time exception military supply agreement,” and suspend all military deliveries. For, Keating observed, *“This is time when principles make best politics.”*<sup>215</sup>

Perhaps Keating’s most insightful contribution to the US policy debate, however, came two weeks later, in a telegram entitled “South Asian Realities and United States Interests.” He declared:

Some home truths are apparent: Pakistan is probably finished as a unified state; India is clearly the predominant actual and potential power in this area of the world; Bangla Desh with limited potential and massive problems is probably emerging. There is much the United States can do to promote its interests in South Asia and beyond by timely accommodation

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<sup>213</sup> Foggy Bottom is a metonym for the Department of State in Washington.

<sup>214</sup> Keating was a lawyer, a Republican, and a former Representative and then Senator for New York. He was appointed US Ambassador to New Delhi in May 1969, and served there until July 1972, after which he became US Ambassador to Israel.

<sup>215</sup> Telegram (Confidential), Keating to Department of State, 28 March 1971, document no. 3, Gandhi. Emphasis added.

to these new realities. . . . The longer the hostilities continue, the more United States interests will be adversely affected.

He continued to argue that inaction risked the radicalization of East Pakistan, international criticism of US military and economic support to West Pakistan, destruction and waste of resources in Pakistan as a whole, increased humanitarian relief costs, and the danger of escalation. The current US policy would not change Islamabad's attitude, or end the hostilities quickly. Consequently, the US should immediately adopt a policy of public condemnation, and terminate military supply and economic assistance.

In sum, the United States has interests in India, West Pakistan, and 'Bangla Desh' which probably cannot be equally well served. Where the necessity for choice arises we should be guided by the new power realities in South Asia which fortunately in the present case largely parallel the moral realities as well.<sup>216</sup>

Yet, the NSC staff, Nixon, and Kissinger, men normally preoccupied with the larger picture, were surprisingly reluctant to consider the effects of the clampdown on the region of South Asia as a whole.

On 16 April, NSC staff prepared a report to Kissinger that outlined recommendations on US policy during the crisis, which relayed the opinions of the embassies in Islamabad and New Delhi. Unlike Keating, Farland based his findings primarily on the consideration of domestic politics in Pakistan rather than on the regional picture. Yet, NSC staff took the trouble to both abstract and attach the Ambassador to Pakistan's reasoning and recommendations, while simply appending the Ambassador to

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<sup>216</sup> Telegram (Secret), Keating to Department of State, 12 April 1971, reproduced in telegram (secret), John N. Irwin II, Under Secretary of State, to US UN Mission, 13 April 1971, Khan, 527-529.

India's telegram (see above) to the report, dismissively observing that it contained only his "familiar views on the subject."<sup>217</sup>

As the crisis progressed, Nixon and Kissinger's attitude toward Keating and India became ever clearer. In a private telephone conversation between the first two, Nixon observed, "Look, even apart from the Chinese thing, I wouldn't do that [take a strong stance against Yahya] to help the Indians, the Indians are no goddamn good."<sup>218</sup> In a conference call between the President, his National Security Adviser, and the US Ambassador to New Delhi, Keating attempted to explain the Indian position and his regional concerns over the crisis. Yet, Nixon and Kissinger simply railroaded him, Nixon declaring, "Like all of our other Indian ambassadors, he's been brainwashed," and asking Keating, "Where are your sandals?"<sup>219</sup>

Keating, like Blood, continued to champion the cause for strong US policy during the *key response period*. Nevertheless, Nixon and Kissinger conveniently ignored the Ambassador to New Delhi's views, believing him to have been "taken over by the Indians."<sup>220</sup> Before the end of July, they even discussed the possibility of his removal.<sup>221</sup> Yet, while Keating was certainly sympathetic to India's predicament, there is little evidence to suggest his concerns were anything other than legitimate and objective.

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<sup>217</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Harold H. Saunders and Samuel Hoskinson, NSC staff, to Kissinger, 16 April 1971, document no. 28, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>218</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Nixon and Kissinger, 4 June 1971, document no. 136, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>219</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Nixon, Kissinger, and Keating, 15 June 1971, document no. 137, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>220</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 854.

<sup>221</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Nixon and Kissinger, 27 July 1971, document no. 108, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*. Nixon suggested Keating's immediate removal, but Kissinger suggested that such an action would create too much political damage for the President at that time, and that Nixon should wait until the situation was calmer.

Indeed, Keating was one of the few to fully consider the regional implications of the crisis, and his assessment of 12 April proved remarkably prophetic.

### *US Public Space*

As the clampdown in Dacca began, the West Pakistani authorities confined all foreign journalists to the Intercontinental Hotel, before seizing their notes and film, and deporting them the following day.<sup>222</sup> Only Simon Dring of the London *Daily Telegraph* and Arnold Zeitlin of *Associated Press* eluded the initial roundup for several days, but they too were soon expelled.<sup>223</sup> Consequently, the opportunities to report on the crisis in the international press were somewhat limited. Nevertheless, the deportees, evacuees, and, in due course, refugees from East Pakistan provided sufficient information to support regular and prominent articles in American newspapers, along with frequent discussion of US policy in editorials.

On 28 March, Sydney Schanberg, recently expelled from Dacca, reported on the front page of the *New York Times*, “The Pakistani Army is using artillery and heavy machine guns against unarmed civilians.”<sup>224</sup> Two days later, the *Washington Post* relayed Simon Dring’s report in the London press: top Awami League members arrested; hundreds dead and mass graves at Dacca University halls of residence; hundreds more killed in the devastation as the army started fires and shot civilians in the old section of Dacca.<sup>225</sup> Reports of atrocities continued to receive prominent coverage.<sup>226</sup> Perhaps

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<sup>222</sup> Kux, 186.

<sup>223</sup> Blood, 199.

<sup>224</sup> Sydney Schanberg, *New York Times*, 28 March 1971, p. 1. Four years later, Schanberg reported on the Khmer Rouge clampdown in Cambodia, some of his experiences being portrayed in the film, *The Killing Fields*.

<sup>225</sup> Simon Dring, *Daily Telegraph* (London), reproduced in *Washington Post*, 30 March 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents* (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, 1971), 345-348.

Anthony Mascarenhas of the London *Sunday Times* provided the most vivid coverage in an award-winning article relayed to newspapers across the globe. Mascarenhas spent ten days in East Pakistan at the end of April, six traveling with army officers based at Comilla. He witnessed, first-hand, campaigns against Hindus in “village to village and door to door” army “kill and burn missions.” Uncircumcised Hindu males were bludgeoned, shot, and loaded onto trucks for disposal, their villages razed to the ground. Mascarenhas declared, “This is *genocide* conducted with amazing casualness.”<sup>227</sup>

A *New York Times* editorial on 31 March called on the US Government to demand an end to the bloodshed, withhold all military supplies, and allow economic aid only if a major portion were allocated to relief in East Pakistan.<sup>228</sup> On 7 April, it declared, “On any basis, the United States would have a humanitarian duty to speak out against the bloodbath in Bengal.”<sup>229</sup> Press condemnation of the US Government stance continued throughout the *key response period*, and became particularly vocal in June, when the *New York Times* revealed that US military supplies were still being delivered to Pakistan, despite State Department assurances to the contrary.<sup>230</sup> Thus, despite Yahya’s attempts to prevent independent press access to East Pakistan, and Islamabad’s official propaganda, the US press still managed to make knowledge of the atrocities widely available to the American public, and generally adopted editorial stances at variance with US Government policy.

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<sup>226</sup> See, for example, Sydney Schanberg, *New York Times*, 7 April 1971, p. 1; Sydney Schanberg, *New York Times*, 14 July 1971, p. 1.

<sup>227</sup> Anthony Mascarenhas, *Sunday Times* (London), reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 358-373. Emphasis added.

<sup>228</sup> Editorial, *New York Times*, 31 March 1971, p. 44.

<sup>229</sup> Editorial, *New York Times*, 7 April 1971, p. 42.

<sup>230</sup> Tad Szulc, *New York Times*, 22 June 1971, p. 1. In addition, see *Washington Daily News*, 15 June 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 477-478; Editorial, *New York Times*, 17 June 1971, p. 40; *Washington Daily News*, 30 June 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 407-408; and Editorial, *New York Times*, 14 July 1971, p. 34.



Many US intellectuals joined the newspapers in support of the Bengali victims. Crisis committees were formed at several US universities, the most energetic being at Harvard, Chicago, Berkeley, Washington, and New York, where activities included symposia, seminars, fundraising, and the writing of press articles and letters to Congress. In early April 1971, several groups of intellectuals spoke out on the atrocities. Members of the Bangladesh League of US Scholars, in Washington, demanded US action to halt what they called genocide, and White House recognition of the Bangladeshi government-in-exile that had formed in India. The Association for Asian Studies urged the Pakistani Government to end the destruction, and the US Government to provide humanitarian relief. In addition, a group of Harvard economists, including Edward S. Mason, Robert Dorfman, and Stephen Marglin, called upon the US Government to cease all military and economic aid to Pakistan until Islamabad withdrew its forces from the East. In due course, over two-dozen US intellectuals combined to issue a statement condemning Islamabad's actions and urging a return to legitimate, responsible government.<sup>231</sup>

The month of April also saw the formation of Bangladesh Associations at several US locations where concentrations of East Bengali students and expatriates could be found. These included Texas, Indiana, and Stanford Universities, and the cities of Los Angeles, Boston, and Washington. By June 1971, such associations had been established in fourteen US cities. Of these, the Bangladesh Information Center, Washington, and the Friends of East Bengal, Philadelphia, were the two most prominent. Their activities were similar to those of the student crisis committees, and included educational, publicity, and

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<sup>231</sup> A. B. M. Mahmood, "The Bangladesh Liberation War: The Response of US Intellectuals," *Indian Journal of American Studies* 13 (1983): 87-88.

fundraising work, through news bulletins, public lectures, teach-in programs, and lobbying.<sup>232</sup>

Acutely aware of reports of atrocities in the press, and of Blood's telegrams circulating within State, members of Congress quickly moved to influence the US Government's position.<sup>233</sup> On 1 April, Senator Edward Kennedy called on the US Government and Republican Executive to denounce the "indiscriminate killing,"<sup>234</sup> while Senator Fred R. Harris (Dem - OK) demanded the immediate suspension of all US military and economic aid to Pakistan.<sup>235</sup> Two weeks later, Senators Walter Mondale (Dem - MN) and Clifford Case (Rep - NJ) introduced a Senate Resolution calling for the suspension of all military sales. On 4 May, Mondale joined nine other Senators in writing to Rogers to demand that the latter ensure the US voted against providing foreign exchange assistance to Pakistan at World Bank consortium talks,<sup>236</sup> unless Islamabad mounted an immediate and appropriate relief effort, and Red Cross workers were allowed access to the East.<sup>237</sup>

Bipartisan Congressional support for a stronger US stance continued throughout the *key response period*,<sup>238</sup> and Kennedy remained particularly vocal concerning the need

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<sup>232</sup> A. M. A. Muhith, *American Response to Bangladesh Liberation War* (Dhaka: University Press, 1996), 12-17.

<sup>233</sup> Benjamin Welles, *New York Times*, 2 April 1971, p. 1.

<sup>234</sup> Statement by Senator Edward Kennedy (Dem - MA) in the Senate, 1 April 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 520-521.

<sup>235</sup> Statement by Senator Fred R. Harris (Dem - OK) in the Senate, 1 April 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 521-522.

<sup>236</sup> The Pakistan consortium was organized by the World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) to provide economic assistance to Islamabad. It comprised representatives from Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States, the World Bank, and the International Development Association. Document no. 42, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*, note 5.

<sup>237</sup> Letter, Senator Walter Mondale (Dem - MN) et al. to Rogers, 4 May 1971, untitled, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 536.

<sup>238</sup> See Statement by Senator Frank Church (Dem - ID) in the Senate, 18 May 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 543-545; Statement by Senator William B. Saxbe (Rep - OH) in the Senate, 22 June

for humanitarian relief.<sup>239</sup> After returning from a visit to the camps in India, on 10 June Representative Cornelius E. Gallagher (Dem - NJ) announced the presence of some five million refugees, and insisted that the US immediately cease all military and economic aid to Pakistan.<sup>240</sup> On 1 July, he introduced House Resolution 9160 with a view to securing his demands.<sup>241</sup> This was a reflection of the Senate's proposed William B. Saxbe (Rep - OH)-Frank Church (Dem - ID) amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act, which aimed to block all military and economic aid until the return to East Pakistan of the refugees in India. An NSC paper of 30 July noted that, in addition to those Congressmen specifically mentioned above, Senator Edmund Muskie (Dem - ME) and Representative John E. Moss (Dem - CA) had been "particularly outspoken in their criticism of the Administration's policy."<sup>242</sup>

In the US public space, the press relayed news of the atrocities and demanded a much firmer Government stance. Intellectuals and rapidly formed Bangladesh Associations called for official condemnation and, often, for further action in terms of the suspension of economic and military aid to Islamabad. In addition, both Republican and Democratic Congressmen lent their voices in support of the victims in East Pakistan, and the refugees in India. By the end of the *key response period*, several House and Senate

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1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 557-558; Statement by Senator Frank Church in the Senate, 7 July 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 562-564; and Statement by Senator William B. Saxbe in the Senate, 12 July 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 567-568, in which he wished to add the names of twenty-nine bipartisan cosponsors to the proposed Saxbe-Church amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act.

<sup>239</sup> See Statement by Senator Edward Kennedy in the Senate, 3 May 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 533-534; Letter, Senator Edward Kennedy to Rogers, 27 May 1971, untitled, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 555-556; and Statement by Senator Edward Kennedy in the Senate, 22 June 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 556-557.

<sup>240</sup> Statement by Representative Cornelius E. Gallagher (Dem - NJ) in the House of Representatives, 10 June 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 547-553.

<sup>241</sup> Statement by Congressman Cornelius E. Gallagher in the House of Representatives, 1 July 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 559-561.

<sup>242</sup> NSC paper, "Cutting Off Military and Economic Assistance," 30 July 1971, document no. 19, Gandhi.

Resolutions had been tabled to restrict the powers of the US Executive in determining its response. The public pressure on the White House was considerable. Yet, as with the protestations of Blood and Keating, Nixon and Kissinger again chose largely to ignore the furor.

## 5. Phase One – Let's Not Bother!

### *Inertia in Islamabad*

Throughout the *key response period*, and even during *phase one*, when Farland had no knowledge whatsoever of the China initiative, the US Embassy in Islamabad proved reluctant to adopt either a moral or a forceful stance with regard to East Pakistan. Consequently, the formation of opinion there sheds light on how readily some US Government officials and executives were able to justify a policy of inaction, even in isolation of an arguably more important global objective.

As Ambassador to Islamabad, Joseph Farland was a Republican political appointee, who had come to the post in September 1969. He was a lawyer, a former Federal Bureau of Investigation agent, and had served previously as Ambassador to Panama and to Santa Domingo.<sup>243</sup> Although the last US policy paper on Pakistan had been prepared as long ago as 1964, it took Farland until February 1971 to proffer a replacement.<sup>244</sup> Noting the lack of American political and economic interests in the country, he concluded merely, “Our primary objective is to maintain and, to the extent feasible, improve the . . . relationship we have with Pakistan.”<sup>245</sup> Like everyone else, Farland had failed to predict the Awami League success in the general election and, on the evening of 25 March, he too was unaware of the impending clampdown in the East.<sup>246</sup>

Farland had received copies of Blood's atrocity reports, including that entitled “Selective Genocide.” Yet, on 31 March, in discussing his preliminary reaction to the crisis, he first displayed the moral apathy that he exhibited throughout the *key response*

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<sup>243</sup> Kux, 183-184.

<sup>244</sup> Airgram (Secret), Farland to Department of State, 2 February 1971, Khan, 467.

<sup>245</sup> Pakistan Policy Appraisal paper, c. 2 February 1971, Khan, 468-480.

<sup>246</sup> Memorandum of Conversation (Top Secret), Kissinger and Farland, Palm Springs, CA, 7 May 1971, document no. 42, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*. Blood, 193-194.

*period*. While admitting “we can hold no brief” for what he conceded appeared to be a “brutal, ruthless and excessive use of force by Pak military,” he declared:

Since we are not only human beings but also government servants, however, righteous indignation is not in itself an adequate basis for reaction to events now occurring in East Pakistan. . . . The struggle is between Pakistani and Pakistani, . . . [and the] problems remain essentially internal to Pakistan. . . . *We believe firmly that we should keep our options open so as to promote our interests as events continue to unfold.*<sup>247</sup>

He confirmed in a telegram six days later that the issue was “an internal affair and should remain so.” In addition, he observed, “We have shared the disinclination, felt by so many Americans today, over a USG [US Government] involvement in a situation where US interests are not clearly at stake.” He went on to suggest that a public statement of US sympathy with the people of Pakistan, combined with the private use of Nixon’s “excellent” relationship with Yahya, was the appropriate way for the US response to proceed.<sup>248</sup> Adopting a realist attitude, in the absence of any immediate threat to US interests Farland helped lower the veil of sovereignty over East Pakistan in the hope of ignoring the ugliness of the crisis and any consequent need to act. Any mention in detail of the atrocities perpetrated, or of the regional context, was conspicuous by its absence from these and subsequent reports from the Embassy in Islamabad.

On 13 April, a further telegram from Farland gave greater insight into his motivation for inaction. He revealed a strong stance would “reduce to a minimum, if not eliminate entirely, our influence with GOP [Government of Pakistan].”<sup>249</sup> Just over a week later, Farland again revealed his concerns that a more forceful policy would risk

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<sup>247</sup> Telegram (Confidential), Farland to Department of State, 31 March 1971, document no. 128, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*. Emphasis added.

<sup>248</sup> Telegram (Secret), Farland to Department of State, 6 April 1971, document no. 21, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>249</sup> Telegram (Secret), Farland to Department of State, 13 April 1971, Khan, 532-536.

undermining US-Pakistan relations to the extent that “the duties of . . . [his] post could well be turned over to a chargé d’affaires.” Again, on each occasion, he failed to discuss the atrocities in detail, and again he viewed the crisis solely within the domestic context rather than the regional situation.<sup>250</sup>

Farland’s reaction calls to mind Zygmunt Bauman’s argument concerning the role of the modern bureaucrat in the Holocaust. Drawing on the work of Max Weber, who had identified the growing rule of reason as a central attribute of modernity, Bauman contended that modern, rational bureaucracy demanded efficiency, loyalty, compliance, and discipline under authority. The resulting substitution of technical for moral responsibility defused the conscience of the individual, leading to the social production of moral indifference towards victims. In addition, the hierarchical and functional divisions of labor combined with the dehumanizing quantification of victims as bureaucratic objects to create a distance between administrator and victim that removed the moral inhibition of the former, and rendered the latter morally invisible in the eyes of otherwise rational officials.<sup>251</sup>

Bauman used his contention to explain the moral apathy exhibited by German bureaucrats in arranging the Holocaust. Yet, his argument concerning the substitution of technical for moral responsibility under the bureaucratic process appears to apply equally well to those engaged in determining third-party responses. It is not suggested that Farland had no legitimate reason to adopt a conciliatory approach towards the Government of Pakistan. However, the Ambassador’s blinkered focus on his own

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<sup>250</sup> Farland’s inability to consider the larger picture is highlighted in the subsection “*Time when Principles Make Best Politics.*”

<sup>251</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 11, 21-27, 98-104.

immediate technical responsibilities, as manifested in his concentration on maintaining working relations with the West Pakistanis, the fear of his post becoming trivial, and his domestic rather than regional outlook,<sup>252</sup> combine with the invisibility of East Pakistani victims in his reports to suggest that Farland in many ways behaved as a morally apathetic administrator, caught in the headlights of modern, rational bureaucracy.

One further motivation also came into play. During *phase two*, at a meeting in Palm Springs on 7 May, Kissinger informed Farland of the China initiative, and charged the Ambassador with arranging his secret trip. Farland voiced “mild complaints about living in Pakistan and expressed the hope that if the China meeting came off successfully, a new post could be offered.”<sup>253</sup> Nixon appointed Farland Ambassador to Tehran in May 1972.<sup>254</sup>

### *Shrugs in State*

If Blood and Keating preferred to threaten Yahya, and Farland wished to entice him, then the State Department in Washington sought to offer both carrot and stick. On the one hand, as Christopher Van Hollen argued, State believed that the crisis would only be resolved if Yahya was encouraged through private diplomatic channels to offer genuine political concessions in the East.<sup>255</sup> On the other, however, State was prepared to support such encouragement through the application of pressure in limiting military and economic aid to the Government of Pakistan.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> This outlook contrasts markedly with that of Farland’s counterpart, Keating, in New Delhi.

<sup>253</sup> Memorandum of Conversation (Top Secret), Kissinger and Farland, Palm Springs, CA, 7 May 1971, document no. 42, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>254</sup> Blood, 342.

<sup>255</sup> Van Hollen, 345. See *Historiographical Introduction* for biographical information.

<sup>256</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 854.



State's willingness to use its stick placed it at odds with the Executive. Indeed, as Kissinger observed in his memoirs, "On no issue – except perhaps Cambodia – was the spilt between the White House and departments so profound as on the India-Pakistan crisis in the summer of 1971."<sup>257</sup> The friction began almost immediately as State unilaterally banned the issuance and renewal of munitions supply licenses to Pakistan as the crisis broke out.<sup>258</sup> Only pressure from Congress and the US public compelled Nixon to subsequently accept State's decision.<sup>259</sup> By July, Kissinger was so frustrated at State's continuing wish to see an end to the trickle of military supplies under licenses issued before the ban that, in the middle of a Senior Review Group Meeting, he raved, "The President always says to tilt toward Pakistan, but every proposal I get is in the opposite direction. Sometimes I think I am in a nut house."<sup>260</sup>

In his memoirs, Kissinger preferred to put the unauthorized ban on new and renewed licenses down to State's "traditional Indian bias."<sup>261</sup> However, Van Hollen insisted that the views in State were based on genuine concern over the risk to US relations with India, and abhorrence that US weaponry was being used against the Bengalis.<sup>262</sup> Despite ongoing disagreements with Nixon and Kissinger's policy, however, State generally toed the official White House line. In addition, it complied in sweeping Blood's message of dissent under the carpet, and colluded in the removal of the Consul General from his post.

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<sup>257</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 863-864.

<sup>258</sup> The Office of Munitions Control fell directly under the Department of State's purview. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 854.

<sup>259</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 856.

<sup>260</sup> Van Hollen's Informal Notes of Senior Review Meeting, Washington, 30 July 1971, quoted in Van Hollen, 347. Van Hollen wrongly dates the meeting as having taken place on 31 July 1971.

<sup>261</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 854. In addition, see Van Hollen, 343-344.

<sup>262</sup> Van Hollen, 344.

*Waiting in the White House*

Yahya's clampdown in the East came as a complete surprise to the White House. Nevertheless, an awareness of the possibility of secession had been circulating in Washington since the announcement of the election results, becoming a matter of ever-greater concern as talks between Yahya, Bhutto, and Mujibur Rahman continued to make little progress. On 16 February 1971, Kissinger issued NSSM 118, requesting an interagency study of US options should the East attempt to secede.<sup>263</sup> At an SRG meeting on 6 March, Kissinger described the subsequent reply, prepared under the chairmanship of Sisco, as "a very good paper."<sup>264</sup>

The report reaffirmed that, as an independent East Pakistan would be "vulnerable to internal instability, economic stagnation and external subversion, . . . our consistent position has been that U.S. interests are better served by a unified Pakistan." This was more so the case as the East also provided "a moderating influence over West Pakistani hostility toward India." Despite having "no realistic alternative" but to support unity if it wished to maintain satisfactory relations with Islamabad, the report noted that *the US should be able to adjust to the emergence of two separate states without serious damage to its interests*; both new entities would wish to maintain ties with the US in order to balance their relations with China, and to continue receiving economic and military assistance. Consequently, while separation remained uncertain, the US should maintain its ongoing position of expressing support for unity, and continuing to suggest that the issue was an internal matter for Pakistan to resolve. If separation should appear

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<sup>263</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Kissinger to Rogers, Laird, and Helms, 16 February 1971, document no. 115, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>264</sup> Minutes of Senior Review Group Meeting (Secret), Washington, 6 March 1971, document no. 6, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

imminent, however, then the US ought to work closely with both East and West, letting the leaders of the former know Washington would be prepared to recognize an independent East Pakistan. Importantly, given the relative size of West Pakistani forces in the East as compared with the vast local population, the report concluded that military intervention by West Pakistan was “very unlikely,” and recommended, “We should be willing to irritate the West Pakistanis in the face of such a rash act on their part, and the threat of stopping aid should give us considerable leverage.”<sup>265</sup> Thus, the “very good paper,” discussed less than three weeks before the clampdown occurred, observed that the US was quite able to adjust to a divided Pakistan, without risk to its interests, and should act strongly to discourage any attempt by Islamabad to hold the country together by the use of force. Such advice, however, though apparently much appreciated at the time of its giving, would be rapidly discarded at the time of its possible use.

In his memoirs, Kissinger noted, “At the beginning of 1971 none of our senior policymakers expected the subcontinent to jump to the top of our agenda. It seemed to require no immediate decisions except annual aid programs and relief efforts.”<sup>266</sup> Indeed, only Joel Woldman, a South-Asian specialist at the Pakistan desk of State’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research, had suggested a military clampdown likely, but his report of December 1970 was duly ignored.<sup>267</sup> Kissinger firmly believed, both before and during the crisis, that force would not hold Pakistan together, a view that reflected the position of the SRG.<sup>268</sup> Thus, on 26 March, when Kissinger informed Nixon, “The West Pakistani

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<sup>265</sup> Response to National Security Study Memorandum 118 (Secret), c. 3 March 1971, document no. 123, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>266</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 849.

<sup>267</sup> Chowdhury, 60. Morris, 213.

<sup>268</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 851-852. Minutes of Senior Review Group Meeting (Secret), Washington, 6 March 1971, document no. 6, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

army has moved to repress the East Pakistan secession movement,” he shared the same sense of shock experienced by Blood, Farland, State, and the international community in general.<sup>269</sup> At the hastily convened WSAG meeting later that day, Kissinger explained, “I have no idea what caused the breakdown of the talks. I was as much surprised as anyone else.”<sup>270</sup>

While a largely unprepared White House considered its position, India led the ensuing barrage of international condemnation of Yahya’s actions. On 31 March, Indira Gandhi expressed her “deep anguish and grave concern at recent developments,”<sup>271</sup> and alleged a “massive attack by armed forces, despatched from West Pakistan, has been unleashed against the entire people of East Bengal with a view to suppressing their urges and aspirations.”<sup>272</sup> Even the Soviets, not noted for championing human rights issues, backed their Indian ally, demanding an end to the bloodshed on 2 April.<sup>273</sup> Caught unprepared, one would have expected the US to have adopted the recommendations contained in the response to NSSM 118, and join with other governments in firing a further volley of condemnation in the direction of Islamabad. Instead, Nixon and Kissinger decided they would “not do anything.”<sup>274</sup>

An NSC paper for an SRG meeting on 19 April, and there discussed in full knowledge of Blood’s atrocity reports, reassessed US options with regard to the crisis. It

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<sup>269</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 26 March 1971, document no. 10, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>270</sup> Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting (Top Secret), Washington, 26 March 1971, document no. 11, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>271</sup> India initially wished to maintain a united Pakistan for three reasons: first, an independent East Bengal could have destabilized neighboring West Bengal, in India, which may even have sought to join it; second, secession could have exposed the new state to radical influence; and, third, East Pakistan acted as a restraining influence on the hawks in the West. See Record of telephone conversation, Nixon, Kissinger, and Keating, 15 June 1971, document no. 137, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>272</sup> Indira Gandhi, 31 March 1971, quoted in Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*, 30.

<sup>273</sup> Kux, 189.

<sup>274</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Nixon and Kissinger, 30 March 1971, document no. 15, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

concluded that “Pakistan as a unitary state cannot survive,” and considered how, despite the US having “no vital security interest in South Asia as a whole,” Washington might maintain “constructive” relations with Islamabad, work “cooperatively” with East Pakistan, and “support . . . [its] relatively greater interest in India.” Noting that the US provided one-quarter of Pakistan’s external aid, supplied military spares, and was processing the one-time exception arms package,<sup>275</sup> the report observed that the US could “probably affect the course, direction, and pace of political negotiations.” This was especially the case as US leverage was at that time enhanced because of Pakistan’s low foreign exchange reserves, which “could be exhausted within a few months unless international relief . . . [was] forthcoming,” the World Bank and International Monetary Fund being reluctant to provide further assistance.<sup>276</sup>

Without recommending a particular strategy, the paper outlined three options: “hands-off,” “selective influence,” and “all out effort.” The last of these had the advantages of encouraging better relations with East Pakistan and, importantly, India, and reducing the likelihood of a protracted war. Nevertheless, it risked rupture of ties with Islamabad, ran counter to US policy of noninterference in “internal affairs,” and increased the opportunity for radical and Chinese influence in the West wing. Such an “all out effort” involved: a strong letter to Yahya, indicating no discussion of political or military assistance until the bloodshed had ended and negotiations resumed; public criticism of West Pakistan Army actions; recognition of Bangladesh once the Bengalis had gained substantial control; cancellation of the one-time exception package and

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<sup>275</sup> In April, the one-time exception package had been ordered, but not shipped. Indeed, it was not dispatched during the crisis.

<sup>276</sup> Paper for the NSC Senior Review Group (Secret), c. 16 April 1971, document no. 132, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

military supply of ammunition and spares for lethal end items; suspension of all “unobligated” economic assistance until negotiations were underway; provision of humanitarian relief; and denial of debt relief assistance.<sup>277</sup> Clearly, the US had a wealth of options at its disposal. Yet, the SRG avoided making a recommendation. Instead, unwilling to commit to a decision, the participants agreed to seek Nixon’s guidance.<sup>278</sup> Washington continued to drag its feet until the end of April when, triggered by the resurgence of the China initiative, the White House finally formulated a clearer policy.

### *Nothing from Nixon*

During *phase one*, between 25 March and 27 April, Nixon and Kissinger sought to do as little as possible in response to the crisis. Consequently, US actions amounted to little more than the evacuation of non-essential American officials and citizens from Dacca, and talk of offering humanitarian relief. This subsection discusses the steps taken as part of this limited response and the techniques employed to avoid doing more. Moreover, it reconstructs the complex web of motives that influenced the US President and his National Security Adviser during this initial phase.

On the very day news of the crisis reached desks in Washington, Kissinger observed:

I talked to the President briefly before lunch. His inclination is the same as everybody else’s. He doesn’t want to do anything. He doesn’t want to be in a position where he can be accused of having encouraged the split-up of Pakistan. He does not favor a very active policy. This probably means we would not undertake to warn Yahya against a civil war.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Paper for the NSC Senior Review Group (Secret), c. 16 April 1971, document no. 132, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>278</sup> Minutes of Senior Review Group Meeting (Secret), Washington, 19 April 1971, document no. 32, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>279</sup> Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting (Top Secret), Washington, 26 March 1971, document no. 11, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

Participants at the same WSAG meeting agreed – the US “should continue its policy of non-involvement.”<sup>280</sup> Kissinger made his statement in front of officials before whom he could not mention the China initiative, yet even in private, he and Nixon adopted the same line. In a telephone conversation between the two only three days later, Nixon explained, “The main thing to do is to keep cool and not do anything. There’s nothing in it for us either way.” Neither mentioned the China initiative.<sup>281</sup> Consequently, the US failed even to condemn the slaughter and, instead, limited its public statements to expressions of concern over the loss of life and calls for a peaceful resolution. Although it did protest over the expulsion of all foreign journalists from the East, and privately expressed alarm that American weapons were being used on Bengali civilians, the US also made a point of defeating Indian attempts to bring the crisis to the attention of the United Nations Security Council.<sup>282</sup> Nixon and Kissinger successfully avoided creating a rift between Washington and Islamabad. However, their actions were consistent with neither the recommendations of NSSM 118, nor the position adopted by many in the US press and Congress.

The only area in which the US proved quick to act was in the evacuation of its own citizens. At the WSAG emergency meeting on 26 March, State received instructions to make preparations for a mass exodus, should it become necessary.<sup>283</sup> Following Blood’s recommendations, supported by Farland, the evacuation of all save essential

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<sup>280</sup> Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting (Top Secret), Washington, 26 March 1971, document no. 11, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>281</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Nixon and Kissinger, 30 March 1971, document no. 15, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>282</sup> Paper for the NSC Senior Review Group (Secret), c. 16 April 1971, document no. 132, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>283</sup> Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting (Top Secret), Washington, 26 March 1971, document no. 11, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

officials began on 4 April 1971.<sup>284</sup> Even this action, however, was characterized as a “thin out” so as not to offend Islamabad.<sup>285</sup>

Nixon and Kissinger adopted several tried and tested tactics in order to justify the official US stance to both the public and themselves. As discussed above, Blood’s inconvenient reports of atrocities were characterized as unreliable, and Keating was dismissed as having been “taken over by the Indians.”<sup>286</sup> Thus, with the added assistance of propaganda from the Government of Pakistan, which portrayed the rapid emergence of stability and calm, the US sidestepped pressure to take a stronger official line by pointing to conflicting evidence swathed in the fog of ‘war’.

In addition, the US Government was happy to draw down the veil of sovereignty over what it portrayed as a domestic issue. Yahya could barely conceal his appreciation; as he gushed in a letter to Nixon of 17 April, “I am deeply gratified that your government has made it clear . . . that the United States recognises the current events in East Pakistan as an internal affair.”<sup>287</sup> As Power argues, the “UN charter had made noninterference in sovereign states a sacred principle,”<sup>288</sup> and this point had certainly not been lost on Kissinger. He contended in his memoirs, “For better or worse, the strategy of the Nixon Administration on humanitarian questions was not to lay down a challenge to sovereignty that should surely be rejected, but to exert our influence without public confrontation.”<sup>289</sup> While respect for domestic sovereignty as a pillar of international law was often strangely

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<sup>284</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Rogers to Nixon, 3 April 1971, document no. 18, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>285</sup> Paper for the NSC Senior Review Group (Secret), c. 16 April 1971, document no. 132, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*. Van Hollen, 342.

<sup>286</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 854.

<sup>287</sup> Letter, Yahya to Nixon, 17 April 1971, untitled, document no. 29, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>288</sup> Power, 151.

<sup>289</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 855, 914. Quotation: 855.



absent from Nixon and Kissinger's policy decisions in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, among other countries, it provided a convenient justification for inertia in South Asia.

As discussed above,<sup>290</sup> despite both Keating and NSC staff recognizing relatively greater US interests in India, Nixon and Kissinger focused on the domestic, rather than regional, aspect of the crisis during *phase one*. By failing to fully address the emergency in its more complex regional form, the President and his National Security Adviser again discouraged the need to develop a more proactive policy. Thus, the fog of 'war', the veil of sovereignty, and domestic focus, combined with the inertia inherent in large-scale government bureaucracies to facilitate the lethargic formulation of a much-limited US response.

The web of motives behind Nixon and Kissinger's *phase one* policy is both difficult to precisely discern and complex. The President and his National Security Adviser shared a worldview based in realism as opposed to moral idealism, and on avoiding direct US intervention in international affairs, except in the cause of preserving important American national interests.<sup>291</sup> As NSC papers made clear before and during April, no such interests existed in South Asia, so Nixon and Kissinger felt little urge to act. In addition, however, several more-specific factors came into play.

Despite their reputations as "hard-boiled" realists, Nixon and Kissinger "often permitted personal feelings about foreign leaders to color their national security decisions."<sup>292</sup> The President exhibited a fondness for Yahya, and an empathy with Pakistan. In contrast, however, he disliked Indira Gandhi, and had little time for India.

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<sup>290</sup> See subsections *Nothing from Nixon* and "*Time when Principles Make Best Politics.*"

<sup>291</sup> See subsection *Nixon-Kissinger Worldview*.

<sup>292</sup> Melvin Small, *The Presidency of Richard Nixon* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1999), 107.

Nixon had visited Pakistan on no fewer than six occasions, including once as President,<sup>293</sup> and had been received with respect there while he was out of office. Kissinger claims, “He never forgot this.”<sup>294</sup> Such warmth had manifested itself in the extension of the one-time exception arms deal in October 1970 and, as Kissinger reminded those attending an SRG meeting on 9 April, Nixon continued to maintain “a special feeling for Yahya.”<sup>295</sup> According to the National Security Adviser, however, India remained “subject to Presidential indifference,” and Nixon’s comments after meeting Indira Gandhi were “not always printable.”<sup>296</sup> As the President himself put it somewhat more forcibly in a private telephone conversation of 4 June, “I wouldn’t do that [take a strong stance against Yahya] to help the Indians, the Indians are no goddamn good.”<sup>297</sup>

Beyond occasional general references to the bloodshed, specific discussion of the atrocities and victims of the crisis remained conspicuously absent from the statements of Nixon and Kissinger throughout the *key response period*. Such moral apathy is particularly noticeable in several comments by Kissinger immediately following the clampdown. On 29 March, the day after Blood sent his “Selective Genocide” telegram, during a private telephone conversation Nixon enquired, “Got anything on the wires or anything of interest?” His National Security Adviser replied indifferently, “There’s nothing of any great consequence Mr. President. Apparently Yahya has got control of

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<sup>293</sup> Kux, 179. Kux lists five occasions before Nixon became President. Nixon also made a state visit during a world trip in 1969.

<sup>294</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 848-849. In addition, Kissinger suggests that the “bluff, direct military chiefs of Pakistan were more congenial to . . . [Nixon] than the complex and apparently haughty Brahmin leaders of India.” Kissinger, *White House Years*, 849. Perhaps one further factor in determining Nixon’s preference for Pakistan was the close alliance between Washington and Islamabad cemented under Nixon’s vice-presidency during the 1950s, while India continued to pursue a policy of non-alignment.

<sup>295</sup> Minutes of Senior Review Group Meeting (Secret), Washington, 9 April 1971, document no. 23, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*. In addition, see Memorandum of Conversation (Secret), Kissinger, Saunders, and Keating, Washington, 3 June 1971, document no. 64, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>296</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 848.

<sup>297</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Nixon and Kissinger, 4 June 1971, document no. 136, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

East Pakistan.”<sup>298</sup> Two days later, at an SRG meeting, in response to a comment on the large number killed at Dacca University, Kissinger observed, “They didn’t dominate 400 million Indians all those years by being gentle.”<sup>299</sup> By the end of July, in a strange perversion of logic, a morally indifferent Nixon had even gone so far as to call those who dissented from official US policy the “sick bastards.”<sup>300</sup> The Nixon-Kissinger initial response, therefore, appears to have been based in moral apathy, wrapped in a fondness for Yahya and Pakistan, and covered in a ‘thick skin’ of realist philosophy.

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<sup>298</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Nixon and Kissinger, 29 March 1971, document no. 14, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>299</sup> Minutes of Senior Review Group Meeting (Secret), San Clemente CA, 31 March 1971, document no. 17, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>300</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Nixon, Kissinger, and Farland, Washington, 28 July 1971, document no. 141, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

## 6. Phase One – Let’s Rejoice!

In his memoirs, Kissinger groped for a simple, acceptable justification for White House indifference with regard to East Pakistan, and found it in the convenient catchall explanation of the China initiative – a strategic project in pursuit of a more stable, peaceful world. In trying to stretch this explanation to cover *phase one* of the crisis, however, Kissinger’s argument became both confused and confusing. In the chapter dedicated to the China initiative itself, Kissinger noted that, in January 1971, of the *two* active conduits to Peking,<sup>301</sup> the White House had only a “slight preference for the Pakistani channel.”<sup>302</sup> Yet, one hundred and fifty pages later, in a separate section dedicated to the discussion of East Pakistan, the former National Security Adviser listed one of his two major tasks throughout April as preserving the Pakistani conduit, the “*sole* channel” to Peking.<sup>303</sup> Given that nothing had been heard from the Chinese through either conduit since the January assessment, Kissinger had no obvious legitimate reason to promote the importance of the Islamabad connection later in his memoirs. Yet, he did not offer any justification for this quite marked inconsistency, yet convenient change of emphasis. One feels compelled to ask, therefore, when did the Pakistani channel become important?

Sino-American relations continued to improve in early 1971 when, in a gesture referred to as ‘Ping-Pong Diplomacy’, Peking invited members of the US table tennis team to visit China, where they were received by Chou En-lai on 14 April. In reply, that same day, the US announced it would be taking steps to ease the twenty-year embargo of

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<sup>301</sup> In addition to the Pakistani channel, the Romanian channel flowed both ways. Kissinger therefore contradicts himself. See *China Investment* subsection.

<sup>302</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 704.

<sup>303</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 854. Emphasis added. In addition, see Kissinger, *White House Years*, 913.

trade with China, to expedite visas for Chinese visitors to the US, and to relax currency controls.<sup>304</sup> Despite this public dance, however, the Chinese had not made use of the backchannels since the start of the year. Peking had last employed the Romanian channel to deliver a message that arrived on 11 January, and Nixon and Kissinger had not heard anything via the Pakistani conduit since receipt of Chou's message on 9 December the previous year – a full four months earlier. Kissinger was so anxious at having received no response that, fearing the Chinese trusted neither the Pakistani nor the Romanian conduit, on 27 April, he sent urgent instructions to Sainteny to approach the Chinese Ambassador in Paris with a view to establishing an alternative means of secret communication.<sup>305</sup> Throughout *phase one* of the crisis, and for several months beforehand, therefore, far from operating as a crucial link to Peking, the Pakistani channel had been a disappointment, so much so that, at the end of April, Kissinger had actively sought to replace it. Moreover, the China initiative remained extremely fragile, and mention of it was conspicuously absent from the published records of private conversations on South Asia between Nixon and Kissinger during this initial period. It would appear that Kissinger's confusing attempt in his memoirs to overextend the China initiative catchall into *phase one* is inconsistent with the evidence recently revealed on the subject. Instead of concern over the China initiative, the initial, limited US response was determined by the complex mix of reasons discussed above, including inertia and moral apathy, many of which have since become familiar in characterizing American reaction to more-recent mass atrocities elsewhere. Pakistan's role in the China initiative, while it may have

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<sup>304</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 709, 712. Nixon, *Memoirs*, 548.

<sup>305</sup> Letter, Alexander Haig, Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs, to Walters, 27 April 1971, untitled, document no. 16, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

swayed Nixon and Kissinger unconsciously, was not the driving factor in the formulation of their initial policy.

Only on 27 April 1971, the very day Kissinger had sought to create a new conduit through Paris, did the Pakistani channel, and therefore the secret China initiative, spring fully into life.<sup>306</sup> It was from this point forward that the China initiative played a prominent, and ever more dominant, role in the formulation of the US response to the East Pakistan crisis. Hilaly delivered to Kissinger the Chinese reply to Nixon's message of 16 December. Chou welcomed the idea of high-level discussions, and declared:

The Chinese Government reaffirms its willingness to receive publicly in Peking a special envoy of the President of the U.S. . . . or even the President of the U.S. himself . . . it is entirely possible for public arrangements to be made through the good offices of President Yahya Khan.<sup>307</sup>

Nixon and Kissinger took this as clear confirmation of Chinese preference for the Pakistani channel, and immediately stopped delivery of the message to Paris.<sup>308</sup> The die was cast: not only was the China initiative alive and well, but also Islamabad would now move to center stage.

The President and his National Security Adviser referred to the receipt of this missive in terms more usually associated with the description of religious ecstasy. In his memoirs, Kissinger portrays himself as having "experienced, amid the excitement, a moment of elation and inner peace," while Nixon was apparently "excited to the point of

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<sup>306</sup> Ironically, 27 April 1971 was also the day Blood received his Meritorious Honor Award from Farland in Islamabad, for work in disaster relief following the November cyclone.

<sup>307</sup> Memorandum of Record, 27 April 1971, "Message from Premier Chou En-lai," document no. 17, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

<sup>308</sup> Letter, Haig to Walters, 27 April 1971, untitled, document no. 16, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*. The document bears the handwritten comment, "Never delivered because it crossed with Pak. note."

euphoria at the prospect before us.”<sup>309</sup> Indeed, in a private conversation at the time, Kissinger admitted, “Mr. President, I have not said this before but I think if we get this thing working, we will end Vietnam this year.”<sup>310</sup> Clearly, little would be allowed to stand in the way of this suddenly revitalized strategic initiative.

Before leaving on vacation the next day, Kissinger swung into action, and accomplished three important things. First, he handed Hilaly an interim reply.<sup>311</sup> Second, he sent Nixon a memorandum outlining three packages of policy options on East Pakistan. He emphatically recommended, despite acknowledging the risk to future relations with India and East Pakistan, that the US continue economic aid, back the World Bank consortium finance initiative, and provide food assistance. Moreover, he advised the continuation of military supplies but, “in order not to provoke the Congress from cutting off all [military] aid,” the withholding of shipments of “more controversial items.” On 2 May, Nixon duly initialed his approval of Kissinger’s recommendation, and added the now famous handwritten comment, “To all hands: Don’t squeeze Yahya at this time.” The word ‘don’t’ was underlined three times.<sup>312</sup>

Whereas Nixon’s “Squeeze” memorandum is well known, one important fact about it has generally remained hidden. For, as noted above, the National Security Adviser took a third action before leaving on vacation. In the words of Alexander Haig, Kissinger’s deputy, in a memorandum to Nixon:

Henry asked me, for reasons only you and he are aware of, that it would be most helpful if in approving this paper [“Squeeze” memorandum] you

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<sup>309</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 711, 717. Quotations: 717 and 711, respectively.

<sup>310</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Nixon and Kissinger, 27 April 1971, document no. 18, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*. See subsection *Reopening the Door* for discussion of the relationship between Sino-American rapprochement and possible US withdrawal from Vietnam.

<sup>311</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 718-719.

<sup>312</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 28 April 1971, document no. 9, Gandhi. Underline original. In addition, see Kissinger, *White House Years*, 856.

could include a note to the effect that you want no actions taken at this time which would squeeze West Pakistan.<sup>313</sup>

This short extract not only ties “Squeeze” policy more specifically to Kissinger than Nixon, but also directly links the China initiative to the first clear elaboration of East Pakistan policy, issued one month into the crisis, but immediately after the receipt of Chou’s message. During May and June, Nixon and Kissinger finally began to refer to the China initiative, sometimes obliquely, in private conversations on South Asian policy,<sup>314</sup> for only in *phase two* of the *key response period* did it come to dominate White House thinking.

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<sup>313</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Haig to Nixon, 28 April 1971, document no. 71.D.8, Aijazuddin. Underline original – in red.

<sup>314</sup> See Record of telephone conversation, Nixon and Kissinger, 23 May 1971, document no. 55, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*; Record of conversation, Nixon and Kissinger, Washington, 26 May 1971, document no. 135, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*; and Record of telephone conversation, Nixon, Kissinger, and Keating, 15 June 1971, document no. 137, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.



## 7. Phase Two – Let’s “Shake the World!”

### *Refugees and Relief*

*Phase two* of the *key response period* began on 27 April 1971, when Nixon and Kissinger received Chou’s message, and lasted until 15 July, when the President announced the China initiative to the world. During this time, a wave of East Pakistani refugees flooded into India in pursuit of safety, pushing the subcontinent towards war. However, as the reasons suggesting the US take a stronger line with Islamabad steadily increased, so did Nixon and Kissinger’s dependence on Yahya for facilitating the National Security Adviser’s increasingly likely secret trip to Peking. As *phase two* progressed, the US continued to place its China eggs into Yahya’s welcoming basket.

Between the end of April and the middle of July 1971, some six million East Bengali refugees fled to safety in India, having been terrorized into escaping their homeland by the activities of the West Pakistan Army. Before the crisis was resolved in December, some ten million internationally displaced persons had inundated northern India in one of the greatest exoduses in modern history.<sup>315</sup> The following table summarizes the scale of the human catastrophe.<sup>316</sup>

Week Ending	Refugees in India (millions)	Increase (millions)	Av. Daily Inc. (thousands)
17 Apr.	0.1	0.1	4.5
1 May	0.9	0.8	57.1
15 May	2.4	1.5	107.1
29 May	3.6	1.2	85.7
12 Jun.	5.8	2.2	157.1
26 Jun.	6.3	0.5	35.7
10 Jul.	6.7	0.4	28.6
28 Aug.	8.3	1.6	32.7

<sup>315</sup> Blood, 303.

<sup>316</sup> The table is constructed using statistics provided by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 446.

In early May, over 100,000 people per day swept across the Indo-Pakistan border, but the rate of flow only peaked a month later at 150,000, the equivalent of over 6,000 people arriving every hour of the day and night.<sup>317</sup> Keating provided an analogy well suited to US minds; of the five million refugees in northern India in mid-June, some three million had descended upon Calcutta, a city the size of New York.<sup>318</sup> The problem was vast.

The mixture of Hindu and Muslim refugees proved particularly revealing. At the start of the crisis, the total population of East Pakistan was some seventy-five million,<sup>319</sup> of which 85 percent were Muslim and 15 percent Hindu.<sup>320</sup> Consequently, one would have expected three Hindu refugees to have fled for every seventeen Muslims. However, as the response to NSSM 133 of July noted, Hindus represented some 75 percent of the six-million refugee population;<sup>321</sup> not three, but fifty-one Hindus had arrived for every seventeen Muslims, a ratio seventeen times higher than would normally have been anticipated. Some 4.5 million of the 11.3 million Hindus in East Pakistan had fled, representing 40 percent of the total Hindu population. This compared with only 2 percent

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<sup>317</sup> It should be noted that the above statistics were provided by the Indian Government at the time of the crisis, and have not been independently verified. However, the New Delhi bureaucracy was and is the only available source. In a Paris press conference on 9 July 1971, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, explained the nature of this difficulty, "The figures present problems. It is the government [of India] who [sic] gives us the figures. It is impossible for us to verify them. This is also true of the figures given by the Pakistan Government regarding repatriation. The same is true of the proportions stated between the number of Moslems and Hindus: we were given the figures just as you were." At the same press conference, a reporter observed that, on visiting the camps, it becomes quite apparent that the problem was massive and the majority of people in the camps were clearly Hindu. Record of Press Conference with Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Paris, 9 July 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 643-649.

<sup>318</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Nixon, Kissinger, and Keating, 15 June 1971, document no. 137, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>319</sup> Akmal, 546.

<sup>320</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Nixon, Kissinger, and Keating, 15 June 1971, document no. 137, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>321</sup> Response to National Security Study Memorandum 133 (Secret), c. 10 July 1971, document no. 140, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

of East Pakistani Muslims. The initial flow of refugees had been in proportion to population mix,<sup>322</sup> yet by early June, 90 percent of those leaving were Hindu,<sup>323</sup> a ratio over fifty times higher than expected. While it is not suggested that the above figures are exact, they clearly lend weight to the evidence already discussed for *prima facie* cases of ethnic cleansing and genocide, perpetrated against the Hindu population of East Bengal, as noted in the “*Selective Genocide*” subsection of this thesis.

Blood highlighted the systematic persecution of Hindus in his atrocity reports before leaving Dacca. By mid-May, even Farland observed, “Punjab is colored by an emotional anti-Hindu bias.” Propaganda issued by the Government of Pakistan stressed a perceived Hindu role in creating the crisis in the East, and the army was clearly “singling out Hindus for especially harsh treatment.”<sup>324</sup> On 22 May, and again on 5 June, Farland confronted Yahya with evidence of “Hindu villages being attacked by the army.”<sup>325</sup> The Ambassador made it clear that, if true, such a policy “would make it difficult for the Nixon administration to continue to support Pakistan,” but Yahya denied any such actions.<sup>326</sup> The US Government duly swept this difficult issue under the carpet.

Unfortunately, even by mid-June, Nixon had not quite fully understood the scale of the refugee problem. Nor did he appear particularly sympathetic. A telephone conversation on refugee numbers between Nixon, Kissinger, and Keating amply demonstrated both the President’s ignorance, and his callous attitude:

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<sup>322</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Nixon, Kissinger, and Keating, 15 June 1971, document no. 137, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>323</sup> Memorandum of Conversation (Secret), Kissinger, Saunders, and Keating, Washington, 3 June 1971, document no. 64, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>324</sup> Telegram (Secret), Farland to Department of State, 14 May 1971, document no. 47, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>325</sup> Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*, 137. Telegram (Secret), Farland to Department of State, 5 June 1971, document no. 66, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*. Quotation: document no. 66.

<sup>326</sup> Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*, 137.

Nixon: “What is it, 300,000?”

Keating: “Five million. And that’s in a crowded part of India.”

Nixon: “Sorry. It was 300,000 we were feeding.

Keating: That’s right. That’s correct. About five million, and of that about three of them . . .

Nixon: *Why don’t they shoot them?*<sup>327</sup>

There would appear little left to add.

Nevertheless, the US did lend substantial support to the international relief effort that the United Nations organized, but which long remained subject to Indian and Pakistani insistence on exclusive control of key aspects of operations. At the end of April, when some 900,000 refugees had already arrived in India, Nixon approved the first US assistance – a \$2.4 million package comprising \$1.4 million of food and \$1.0 million of other aid.<sup>328</sup> This amounted to \$2.67 per refugee. However, it marked only the beginning of what became a substantial flow of American aid for humanitarian relief.

By 18 May, the US had assumed responsibility for feeding 300,000 people but, owing to the surge in the tide of exodus, this represented only three days of newcomers.<sup>329</sup> At the end of the month, Nixon offered Indira Gandhi a further \$15 million of assistance, along with four C-130 transport planes to airlift refugees from overburdened Tripura to Assam.<sup>330</sup> Calculating an annual food allowance per person of \$64.00, the US designated \$10 million of this new funding to meeting 50 percent of the food needs of 1.25 million people over the next three months, thus catering in part for approximately one-third of all East Pakistani refugees in India at that time. Although, by

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<sup>327</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Nixon, Kissinger, and Keating, 15 June 1971, document no. 137, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*. Emphasis added.

<sup>328</sup> Memorandum (Confidential), Haig to Nixon, 29 April 1971, document no. 38, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>329</sup> Memorandum (Confidential), Sisco to Rogers, 18 May 1971, document no. 51, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>330</sup> Minutes of Senior Review Group Meeting (Top Secret), Washington, 26 May 1971, document no. 60, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*. Letter, Nixon to Indira Gandhi, 28 May 1971, untitled, document no. 62, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

mid-June, the US Embassy in New Delhi had estimated that US relief aid should be not \$17.4 million but \$66 to \$71 million, it should be noted that the US had by this point donated more funds than any other nation, accounting for 35 percent of all contributions, the next largest donor being the Soviet Union with 28 percent.<sup>331</sup> Moreover, on 24 June, State announced an extra \$70 million of refugee-related assistance to India.<sup>332</sup> In his memoirs, Kissinger estimated that over the course of the crisis, the US provided \$240 million in relief aid, including some \$150 million to East Pakistan, on top of the \$87.4 million allocated to India.<sup>333</sup>

Van Hollen argues, “By expending large sums of money for the refugees in India, the White House hoped to reduce the amount of criticism it was receiving from the media and Congress.”<sup>334</sup> Though the refugees undoubtedly benefited from America’s generosity, Doctor Kissinger’s offer of large quantities of humanitarian relief in the absence of a more forceful line on human rights issues would appear to have treated the symptoms of East Pakistan’s malady, rather than its underlying cause. Nevertheless, the soothing balm of relief provided the President and his National Security Adviser with a potential cure for troubled American consciences at home.

### *War and Worry*

At the beginning of the crisis, Keating believed India wished to maintain a united Pakistan for three main reasons, as noted above: first, an independent East Bengal could have destabilized neighboring West Bengal, in India, which may even have sought to join

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<sup>331</sup> Memorandum (Confidential), Kissinger to Nixon, 7 June 1971, document no. 67, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>332</sup> Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*, 190.

<sup>333</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 855.

<sup>334</sup> Van Hollen, 346.

it; second, secession could have exposed the new state to radical influence; and, third, East Pakistan acted as a restraining influence on the hawks in the West.<sup>335</sup> Nevertheless, New Delhi viewed Pakistan not only as a military enemy, but also as a psychological menace, for a strong and successful Pakistan could have attracted the loyalties of Muslims to the south, so destabilizing India. Hence, in 1971, Hindu India held a vested interest in maintaining a weakened Muslim neighbor.<sup>336</sup> In addition, as the crisis progressed, the flood of refugees into India created problems for New Delhi on several levels. First, it had to organize and fund a massive relief effort. Second, the refugees entered some of the most overcrowded and politically sensitive areas of India, aggravating social tension. Third, the systematic persecution of Hindus in East Pakistan risked sparking inter-communal conflict throughout the subcontinent.<sup>337</sup> These new issues added to Indian concerns over the intentions of the hawks in Islamabad and the destabilization of West Bengal, throwing fuel onto the bonfire of resentment already smoldering in the region.

India clearly wished for an end to the crisis and the speedy return of the refugees, but how could this best be achieved? Both Washington and New Delhi were convinced that the disintegration of Pakistan was inevitable. Should India therefore seek to establish an independent Bangladesh through evolution or revolution? It is not the purpose of this thesis to discuss the highly debatable nature of India's policy throughout the crisis. However, one point must be made clear. Although India had compelling and obvious reasons to ensure the return of refugees, at the same time it promoted guerilla resistance

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<sup>335</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Nixon, Kissinger, and Keating, 15 June 1971, document no. 137, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>336</sup> H. W. Brands, *India and the United States: The Cold Peace* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 128.

<sup>337</sup> Letter, Indira Gandhi to Nixon, 13 May 1971, untitled, document no. 46, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

in East Pakistan, so discouraging a return to stability. The US and the United Nations believed New Delhi, despite its denials, trained and supplied the resistance fighters from within India, before sending them back over the border.<sup>338</sup> In addition, throughout the key response period, India refused international organizations permission to operate beyond New Delhi, reserving distribution beyond the capital for its own “terribly over-worked” relief teams.<sup>339</sup> Linking these the two policies, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees suggested that the “Indian refusal appeared [to] result from [the] GOI [Government of India] desire [to] protect cross border infiltration from international view.”<sup>340</sup> It appears India did not do all in its powers to rapidly conclude the crisis. Nevertheless, Islamabad, not New Delhi, continued to perpetrate the atrocities, while the Indian Government found itself perched atop an increasingly volatile powder keg.

Kissinger was skeptical of Indira Gandhi’s intentions throughout the crisis. As he noted in 1979, “I remain convinced to this day that Mrs. Gandhi was not motivated by conditions in East Pakistan . . . [but] to settle accounts with Pakistan once and for all and assert India’s preeminence on the subcontinent.”<sup>341</sup> It was not until the end of May, however, that Washington began to recognize the very real possibility that war, fuelled in part by the developing refugee crisis, might break out in South Asia. On 23 May, in discussing the massing of Indian troops on the East Pakistan border with Nixon, Kissinger observed, “The last thing we can afford now is to have the Pakistan

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<sup>338</sup> Brands, 128. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 855, 858, 863, 866. Telegram (Secret), Galen Stone, Chargé d’Affaires in New Delhi, to Department of State, 4 April 1971, document no. 39, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>339</sup> Record of Press Conference with Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Paris, 9 July 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 643-649. When Pakistan finally granted United Nations access to the East on 24 July, India refused once again to permit the extension of operations beyond New Delhi. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 701.

<sup>340</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Rogers to New Delhi Embassy, 26 June 1971, document no. 79, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>341</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 914.

government overthrown, given the other things we are doing.”<sup>342</sup> This oblique reference to the China initiative provides clues not only to the importance of Yahya to the White House, but also the anxiety developing in Washington over Indo-Pakistani military confrontation. Three days later, in a WSAG meeting to consider the growing tensions, NSC staffers presented a paper entitled, “Contingency Study for Indo-Pakistani Hostilities,” with the intention of focusing “high-level bureaucratic interest” on the possibility of a “blow-up in South Asia.” After exchanges of small-arms fire and mortar barrages along the East Pakistan border over several weeks, Indira Gandhi had “reportedly” ordered her forces to prepare a plan for an “Israeli-style lightening thrust” beyond the eastern front.<sup>343</sup>

On 28 May, Nixon applied pressure in the hope of encouraging calm. In a strong letter to the Indian Prime Minister, he declared:

I am also 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.<sup>344</sup>

That same day, he wrote to Yahya:

I would be less than candid if I did not express my deep concern over the possibility that the situation there might escalate to . . . danger point.<sup>345</sup>

Two months into the crisis, refugees flowed into India in their millions, and Nixon believed the possibility of war on the subcontinent to be increasingly real.<sup>346</sup> Yet, the

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<sup>342</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Nixon and Kissinger, 23 May 1971, document no. 55, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>343</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Samuel Hoskinson and Richard T. Kennedy, NSC staff, to Kissinger, 25 May 1971, document no. 57, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>344</sup> Letter, Nixon to Indira Gandhi, 28 May 1971, untitled, document no. 62, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>345</sup> Letter, Nixon to Yahya, 28 May 1971, untitled, document no. 63, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>346</sup> Washington’s fear of conflict continued throughout the remainder of the *key response period* and beyond. See, for example, Response to National Security Study Memorandum 133 (Secret), c. 10 July



President still refused to take a strong line with Yahya, who by then was an increasingly important link in the vital chain bridge to Peking.

### *Eggs in One Basket*

The China initiative presented Nixon and Kissinger with three problems in terms of how they handled Pakistan. First, Islamabad and Peking were closely allied, so offending the former risked upsetting the latter. This matter was of particular concern as, in early April, Chou wrote an open letter to Yahya expressing strong support for the latter's actions:

The Chinese Government holds that what is happening in Pakistan at present is *purely an internal affair of Pakistan, . . . which brooks no foreign interference whatsoever*. Your Excellency may rest assured that should the Indian expansionists dare to launch aggression against Pakistan, the Chinese Government and people will, as always, firmly support the Pakistan Government and people in their struggle to safeguard state sovereignty and national independence.<sup>347</sup>

The Chinese offered clear public support to Yahya, cautioned against foreign meddling, and issued an open warning to India. The only question such a strong statement appeared to leave was would China venture a conflict with India on behalf of Islamabad. Clearly, if the US adopted a contrary stance on the East Pakistan issue, this would not be taken lightly in Peking. Second, China was particularly sensitive to secessionist issues, given its strongly held belief in its own claims to Taiwan and Tibet, the former already one of the most significant bones of contention between Peking and Washington, while the latter was the scene of China's own campaign of 'internal' repression. Third, Nixon and Kissinger perceived Islamabad as Chou's chosen conduit for the next step towards

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1971, document no. 140, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*, which insists that "the danger of war remains real."

<sup>347</sup> Letter, Chou to Yahya, c. 13 April 1971, untitled, document no. 71.A.5, Aijazuddin. Emphasis added.

rapprochement. It remained unclear if an alternative channel would suffice, especially if, because of the first two points, breaking ties with Yahya would risk the China initiative in any case.

Nixon and Kissinger rapidly discounted the possibility of establishing another conduit, recalling the undelivered letter to Sainteny on 27 April, the very day Hilaly conveyed Chou's message. Over the coming weeks, the White House steadily became more dependent on Yahya, as he supervised and facilitated arrangements for Kissinger's secret trip to Peking. On 7 May, in response to a summons from Kissinger, Farland secretly met the National Security Adviser while the latter was still on vacation in Palm Springs. Kissinger briefed the Ambassador on the China initiative and Yahya's role, before making him responsible for liaison with the President of Pakistan in arranging a proposed trip. This would comprise a covert return flight from Islamabad to Peking while Kissinger visited Pakistan as part of a declared world tour.<sup>348</sup> Some two weeks later, Farland informed the National Security Adviser that Yahya was "fully prepared to lay on [a] complete clandestine operation providing transport to [the] destination."<sup>349</sup> According to Kissinger, "Yahya became enthralled by the cops-and-robbers atmosphere of the enterprise."<sup>350</sup> He even lent his trusted personal pilot for the secret flight, and created a cover story to explain Kissinger's temporary disappearance from public view.<sup>351</sup> As the problems on the subcontinent grew worse, Nixon's hands became ever more tightly bound.

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<sup>348</sup> Memorandum (Top Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 15 May 1971, "Meeting with Ambassador Farland, May 7, 1971," document no. 22, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

<sup>349</sup> Telegram (Top Secret), Farland to Kissinger, 22 May 1971, document no. 25, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

<sup>350</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 739.

<sup>351</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 739.

On 10 May, the White House replied via Hilaly to Chou's message. Nixon accepted the Chinese invitation for him to visit Peking, but suggested secret, preliminary, high-level talks between Kissinger and Chou, on Chinese soil, preferably at a location conveniently accessible from Pakistan. The President confirmed he would make all arrangements through Yahya. Importantly, he insisted:

For secrecy, it is essential that no other channel be used. It is also understood that this first meeting between Dr. Kissinger and high officials of the People's Republic of China be strictly secret.<sup>352</sup>

In his message of 27 April, Chou had offered a public meeting. Yet, despite some confusion later over this issue,<sup>353</sup> a veil of secrecy was drawn at the insistence of the President and his National Security Adviser, not the Chinese. In his response, received 2 June, Chou accepted Nixon's proposals, agreeing to the preliminary talks. Although, he suggested, "As it will be difficult to keep Dr. Kissinger's trip strictly secret, he may well consider coming to the meeting in an open capacity."<sup>354</sup> However, despite Chinese reticence, Nixon and Kissinger would continue to insist on the utmost confidentiality until the dramatic public announcement on 15 July.

Hersh and Isaacson suggested between them four reasons why Nixon and Kissinger were adamant with regard to secrecy. First, they wished to protect themselves from conservative attacks by the American Right, for whom Taiwan remained an emotional issue. Second, they wanted to avoid being paralyzed by public and

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<sup>352</sup> Memorandum of Record, 10 May 1971, untitled, document no. 23, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*. Underline original.

<sup>353</sup> On 19 July 1971, after Kissinger's trip had been announced, the President and his National Security Adviser briefed White House staff, explaining the original need for secrecy, and emphasizing the need for this to continue. Nixon: "Without secrecy, there would have been no invitation or acceptance to visit China." Memorandum of Record (Secret), 19 July 1971, "Briefing of the White House Staff. . ." document no. 41, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

<sup>354</sup> Memorandum of Record, c. 2 June 1971, "Message from Premier Chou En-lai to President Nixon, May 29, 1971," document no. 26, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

Congressional debate. Third, they sought to avoid dealing with what they perceived as the entrenched attitudes and inertia of State. Fourth, and on this Hersh and Isaacson concurred, they wished to “preserve the drama of the announcement.”<sup>355</sup> Kissinger put it far more simply upon his return:

We kept it secret so we would not have to negotiate with the *New York Times*. The speculation we got afterwards we would have gotten beforehand, and we would have been judged by whether we brought back what the *New York Times* demanded.<sup>356</sup>

Indeed, the President and his National Security Adviser played their cards so close to their chests that even the Secretary of State was only informed of the trip the day before Kissinger left Pakistan for China.<sup>357</sup>

Nixon and Kissinger’s sense for the dramatic was captured in their reaction to Chou’s acceptance on 2 June. They codenamed the trip ‘Polo’, so associating the journey with the great achievement, high adventures, and everlasting fame of a celebrated Western explorer of China.<sup>358</sup> Kissinger declared of Chou’s reply, “This is the most important communication that has come to an American President since the end of World War II,”<sup>359</sup> and that evening, Nixon toasted the success, “Let us drink to generations to

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<sup>355</sup> Hersh, 371. Isaacson, 342. Quotation: Isaacson, 342. In addition, see Kissinger, *White House Years*, 725; and Nixon, *Memoirs*, 742. John Robert Greene observes that, after the announcement of Kissinger’s trip, Nixon did in fact lose the support of many conservatives whose sympathies lay with Taiwan. Greene, 112.

<sup>356</sup> Memorandum of Record (Secret), 19 July 1971, “Briefing of the White House Staff . . .” document no. 41, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*. Italics added.

<sup>357</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 739. It should be noted that the need for such close secrecy, even amongst high-level officials, is perhaps also a reflection of the fact that the Nixon Administration was prone to leaks. On 13 June 1971, just one month before Kissinger’s visit, the *New York Times* began publishing extracts from the Pentagon Papers, classified documents on American involvement in Southeast Asia, leaked by Daniel Ellsberg. Neil Sheehan, *New York Times*, 13 June 1971, p. 1. In addition, during December, Jack Anderson, a *New York Times* reporter, began publication of the Anderson Papers, classified documents related primarily to the later stages of the East Pakistan crisis, leaked by Charles Radford of the NSC staff. Ambrose, 486.

<sup>358</sup> Nixon, *Memoirs*, 553.

<sup>359</sup> Nixon, *Memoirs*, 552.

come who may have a better chance to live in peace because of what we have done.”<sup>360</sup>

By mid-June, Kissinger and Chou had agreed the exact dates of the ‘historic voyage’ as 9-11 July 1971.<sup>361</sup>

In the meantime, however, Ceaușescu made a state visit to China, arriving on 1 June. Ambassador Bogdan took the trouble to visit the White House while the tour was underway, wondering if Kissinger had anything to relay to the Chinese. The National Security Adviser sent Haig, his deputy, to the meeting, with instructions merely to ask the Romanians to reiterate the message of January, and thank them for their help. The Romanian channel, while still potentially active, had become a potential source of confusion in finalizing arrangements with Peking.<sup>362</sup>

On 1 July, Kissinger and a select group of assistants finally set out on the world tour or, as the National Security Adviser later described, “The most momentous journey of . . . [their] lives.”<sup>363</sup> Portrayed as a strategic initiative in pursuit of world peace, the clandestine mission also presented the White House with a more pragmatic opportunity. By October 1970, Nixon’s popularity had fallen, and by the summer of 1971, with elections on the horizon the following year, the President’s standing had dropped below 50 percent in the polls.<sup>364</sup> The dramatic announcement of Kissinger’s trip and a future visit by the President himself to Peking offered a much-prized opportunity to revitalize

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<sup>360</sup> Nixon, *Memoirs*, 552.

<sup>361</sup> Memorandum of Record, 4 June 1971, “Message for the Government of the People’s Republic of China,” document no. 28, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*. Letter, Hilaly to Kissinger, 19 June 1971, untitled, document no. 29, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

<sup>362</sup> Memorandum (Top Secret), Lord to Kissinger, 4 June 1971, document no. 71.A.21, Aijazuddin.

<sup>363</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 732. While others accompanied them on the world tour, Kissinger’s companions for the covert mission to China comprised: John Holdridge (NSC China specialist), Winston Lord (NSC staff and Kissinger’s “special assistant on the most sensitive matters”), and Dick Smyser (Vietnam specialist). Kissinger, *White House Years*, 730.

<sup>364</sup> Hersh, 365, 372.

Nixon's public appeal.<sup>365</sup> The China initiative remained as important as ever, and grew enticingly more achievable at the very time White House dependence on Yahya's role was increasing. Consequently, Nixon and Kissinger perceived a vast humanitarian crisis in South Asia and the risk of an Indo-Pakistan war as being insufficient grounds for venturing relations with Yahya and Sino-American rapprochement.

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<sup>365</sup> Nixon won a landslide victory in the 1972 elections. Although the success of the China initiative undoubtedly assisted his cause, it would be highly speculative to suggest that this was a decisive factor in his reelection to office.

## 8. Phase Two – Let's Pamper Pakistan!

### *Life on the Ground*

As Nixon and Kissinger obsessed about the China initiative, the atrocities in East Pakistan continued, and distraught refugees sustained the exodus to India.<sup>366</sup> From mid-May onwards, Blood identified three trends: the beginning of ever-growing guerilla resistance; the systematic persecution of Hindus; and the continuing deterioration of law and order.<sup>367</sup> In early June, the World Bank sent a mission to East Pakistan under the leadership of Peter Cargill, chairman of the Pakistan Aid Consortium. The *New York Times* obtained a leaked copy of the subsequent report, which recommended the suspension of economic assistance.<sup>368</sup> On 14 July, the day before the announcement of Kissinger's visit, it described the document as "damning," and again called for an end to US economic assistance to Islamabad.<sup>369</sup> The report drew attention to the general destruction of property in the towns and villages of East Pakistan, severe damage to the transport and communications networks, substantial loss of vehicles and vessels, the continuation of punitive measures by the army, and ongoing insurgent activity. "People fear to venture forth and, as a result, commerce has virtually ceased and economic activity is at a very low ebb."<sup>370</sup> Despite Islamabad's propaganda to the contrary, East Pakistan lay a devastated and dangerous land.

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<sup>366</sup> See subsections "*Selective Genocide*" and *Refugees and Relief*.

<sup>367</sup> Blood, 292.

<sup>368</sup> Blood, 296-298.

<sup>369</sup> Editorial, *New York Times*, 14 July 1971, p. 34.

<sup>370</sup> Report of the Pakistan Aid Consortium Mission to East Pakistan, extracted in Blood, 297-298. Quotation: 298.

### *Quiet Diplomacy or Appeasement?*

Throughout *phase two*, the China initiative was the primary concern of the White House in determining its response to the crisis in East Pakistan. As Nixon obliquely put it on 15 June during a telephone conversation with Kissinger and an uninitiated Keating, “Maybe there is going to be a Pakistan collapse, depends on what happens in the next 6 months. It may never be in our interest. But it certainly is not now for reasons we can’t go into.”<sup>371</sup> The White House, however, had to balance this strategic objective with its desire to defuse tensions in South Asia. Between 25 March and 15 July, Nixon and his National Security Adviser limited US policy to three major strands: providing refugee relief funding,<sup>372</sup> pressuring India and Pakistan for calm,<sup>373</sup> and encouraging Yahya to seek political accommodation in the East.<sup>374</sup> The first two of these are discussed above. This subsection therefore considers US attempts to encourage a negotiated settlement.

The White House recognized that East Pakistan would eventually become independent, but wished it to achieve autonomy through “evolution, not traumatic shock.”<sup>375</sup> The problem was “how to bell the cat,”<sup>376</sup> and Nixon chose to do this by a campaign of “quiet diplomacy.”<sup>377</sup> As the President explained in his letter to Yahya of 28 May, “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.”<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Record of telephone conversation, Nixon, Kissinger, and Keating, 15 June 1971, document no. 137, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>372</sup> See *Refugees and Relief* subsection.

<sup>373</sup> See *War and Worry* subsection.

<sup>374</sup> Response to National Security Study Memorandum 133 (Secret), c. 10 July 1971, document no. 140, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>375</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 858, 914.

<sup>376</sup> Memorandum of Conversation (Secret), Kissinger, Saunders, and Keating, Washington, 3 June 1971, document no. 64, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>377</sup> Letter, Nixon to Indira Gandhi, 28 May 1971, untitled, document no. 62, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>378</sup> Letter, Nixon to Yahya, 28 May 1971, untitled, document no. 63, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.



Even while visiting Pakistan on the eve of his departure for Peking, Kissinger insists he had several conversations with Yahya and Foreign Secretary Sultan Khan imploring them to “put forward a comprehensive proposal to encourage refugees to return home,” and admit United Nations relief workers into the East.<sup>379</sup>

On 28 June, Yahya announced plans for a conditional return to civilian government within four months. These, however, banned the Awami League, and excluded from office all of its members accused of secessionist activities. On his memorandum informing Rogers, Sisco scribbled, “Banning Awami League makes political accommodation almost impossible.”<sup>380</sup> Nearly one month later, on 23 July, Hilaly informed the White House that Pakistan would finally allow United Nations supervision of the resettlement of refugees in the East.<sup>381</sup> It is difficult to gauge from US records the extent of White House influence in the determination of these decisions, the first of which may hardly be considered a giant stride towards a solution to the crisis. Perhaps most telling of the success of US policy were the comments in Kissinger’s memoirs. During his visit to Islamabad in July, he concluded that most West Pakistani leaders were unable to conceive of dismemberment, and those that did so saw no way of surviving the political consequences.<sup>382</sup> “Quiet diplomacy,” seeking the inevitable independence of East Pakistani by means only of evolution, clearly was not working, yet Nixon and Kissinger continued to adopt a soft policy toward Islamabad. It is difficult, therefore, to distinguish between their policy of “quiet diplomacy” and one of outright appeasement.

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<sup>379</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 861.

<sup>380</sup> Memorandum (Confidential), Sisco to Rogers, 30 June 1971, document no. 84, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>381</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 863.

<sup>382</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 861.

### *Self-Assessment*

One need not exclusively rely, however, upon Kissinger's conclusions with regard to the success of the US response. On 10 July, NSC staffers issued a forty-page report discussing US policy on the subcontinent, in response to NSSM 133. In summarizing the document for the National Security Adviser, Richard T. Kennedy and Harold Saunders of the NSC called it "by far the best paper so far produced on the situation in South Asia."<sup>383</sup> Yet, it exposed the severe present and future limitations of the three-strand US policy.

In terms of humanitarian relief, the refugee problem was likely to worsen due to famine in the East, placing yet more pressure on India, which still had not allowed a United Nations presence in the camps. With regard to defusing regional tension, India continued to provide cross-border support for guerillas and, although army action against East Bengali Hindus was believed to be declining, it had not stopped, and inter-communal tension remained high. Moreover, political accommodation in Pakistan appeared "only a remote possibility." It concluded, "The three major strands of our policy have met our immediate requirements but they have not provided the basis for a viable long-term solution to the crisis."<sup>384</sup> Issued while Kissinger was actually in Peking, this was a somewhat disappointing 'end-of-term' assessment.

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<sup>383</sup> Summary of response to National Security Study Memorandum 133 (Secret), 12 July 1971, document no. 101, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>384</sup> Response to National Security Study Memorandum 133 (Secret), c. 10 July 1971, document no. 140, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

## 9. White House Options

### *Public Stance*

The opportunity to publicly condemn Yahya lay open to the US Government from the start of the East Pakistan crisis. Especially when combined with a strong private letter to the Pakistani President, this option would have increased international pressure on Islamabad to desist, and facilitated the adoption of a more morally upright US position. Yet, throughout the *key response period*, and even during *phase one* when the China initiative had not taken center stage, the US refrained from any public criticism of the Yahya's actions. Instead, the White House limited US public statements to expressions of concern over the loss of life and calls for a peaceful resolution of a domestic issue.<sup>385</sup>

This remained US policy, despite considerable public pressure. On 1 April, Senator Edward Kennedy demanded that the US Government condemn the "indiscriminate killing,"<sup>386</sup> and the *New York Times* criticized the Administration for "failing to speak out against the bloodbath" as even the Soviet Union had already done.<sup>387</sup> Yet encouragement to take a strong public position was not unanimous, the Washington *Evening Star* of 17 April urging the US Government to use quiet diplomacy to end the bloodshed, and take no overt action.<sup>388</sup>

In his memoirs, Blood explained that all he wanted was "some indication of disapproval . . . a little morality injected into the *realpolitik* of Nixon and Kissinger."<sup>389</sup>

Van Hollen concurred, believing "a more upright policy" was called for, as opposed to

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<sup>385</sup> Paper for the NSC Senior Review Group (Secret), c. 16 April 1971, document no. 132, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>386</sup> Statement by Senator Edward Kennedy in the Senate, 1 April 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 520-521.

<sup>387</sup> Editorial, *New York Times*, 7 April 1971, p. 42.

<sup>388</sup> Kamal Uddin Ahmed, "Freedom Struggle of Bangladesh and the US Press," *Indian Political Science Review* 17 (1983): 94-95.

<sup>389</sup> Blood, 259.

mere offers of humanitarian relief. Moreover, Van Hollen argued that a “statement of U.S. disapprobation” would probably not have caused Yahya to back out as intermediary, for he needed American goodwill, and was honored to have been chosen for the role.<sup>390</sup>

Warner went even further, contending:

It would be extremely hard, for example, to sustain the argument that if the United States had not backed Yahya and his regime, the ‘opening’ with China would have failed. China’s policy was no more focused on South Asia than America’s. What China wanted more than anything was reinsurance against the Soviet Union . . . .<sup>391</sup>

While Warner would appear to have made an important point, it is not the purpose of this analysis to speculate on such hypotheses. Instead, it is to draw attention to the fact that, despite Nixon and Kissinger’s insistence, a public stance or indeed perhaps even stronger action against Yahya would not necessarily have led to the collapse of the China initiative.

### *Armed Intervention*

Although the US enjoyed the elite status of being a military superpower, when Nixon took office in 1969 over 30,000 American personnel had died in Vietnam, and 536,000 US troops remained stationed in Southeast Asia.<sup>392</sup> In early 1971, although the number of US personnel there had significantly reduced, Vietnam remained Nixon’s most intractable and important problem, and a key political issue. Gallup polls showed 66 percent of Americans favored the return of all US troops by the end of the year.<sup>393</sup> As morale deteriorated both in the military and on the home front, Nixon sought to withdraw

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<sup>390</sup> Van Hollen, 343, 360.

<sup>391</sup> Warner, 1118.

<sup>392</sup> Small, 32.

<sup>393</sup> Greene, 812. In addition, see Ambrose, 811.

US troops as quickly as reasonably possible, while attempting to secure a negotiated settlement for the South Vietnamese.<sup>394</sup>

National discontent over US military commitments in Asia manifested itself on May Day 1971, when some 200,000 anti-war demonstrators descended upon Washington, and attempted to shut down the government. The mass arrest of 12,000 people over four days led to further protests against violations of civil liberties.<sup>395</sup> Between 1 April and 1 July 1971, during the *key response period*, there were seventeen Congressional votes to restrict presidential authority over, or demand withdrawal from, Vietnam.<sup>396</sup> The Nixon Administration was desperately seeking an ‘honorable’ military retreat from Asia, and the American public was fatigued. The US was not psychologically ready to commit to another armed intervention, especially when no important national interests lay at stake.

### *Military Supply*

Between 1950 and 1970, defense expenditure accounted for 60 to 70 percent of Pakistan’s annual total budget<sup>397</sup> and, as NSC staff noted, military purchases from the US were of “paramount psychological importance and practical significance to the martial law regime.”<sup>398</sup> In the mid-1960s, some 80 percent of Pakistan’s modern weapons were US-made.<sup>399</sup> However, Washington had suspended all military supply during the 1965

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<sup>394</sup> Ambrose, 811.

<sup>395</sup> Ambrose, 437. Greene, 98. Nixon, *Memoirs*, 497.

<sup>396</sup> Ambrose, 819. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1012-1013.

<sup>397</sup> Jain, 17.

<sup>398</sup> Response to National Security Study Memorandum 133 (Secret), c. 10 July 1971, document no. 140, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*. In addition, see Memorandum (Secret), Harold H. Saunders and Samuel Hoskinson, NSC staff, to Kissinger, 1 September 1971, document no. 138, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*, in which Yahya is quoted as having described the matter of military supply as being of “vital importance.”

<sup>399</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, 52.

Indo-Pakistan War and, since then, modified the embargo only to the extent of allowing the sale of non-lethal end items (e.g. communications, medical, and transportation equipment), ammunition and spares for pre-1965-supplied weaponry, and the one-time exception package of three hundred armored personnel carriers and at least<sup>400</sup> seventeen aircraft.<sup>401</sup>

It should be emphasized that, because the one-time exception package was held in abeyance (see below), the US supplied no lethal end items to Pakistan during the *key response period*. Nevertheless, the issue of other military supplies remained of prime importance to Islamabad not only for psychological reasons, but also because so much of Pakistan's pre-1965 lethal equipment needed US-supplied spares to keep it operational. Many of these parts could be purchased on the international market, but direct sourcing from the US presented Yahya with the simplest and most attractive option. The importance of spares had already been demonstrated in 1965, when the US embargo had helped foreshorten the Indo-Pakistan War.<sup>402</sup> Nevertheless, Nixon and Kissinger chose not to suspend the shipment of such items.

Pakistan was able to purchase munitions list items from the US by two methods: from Defense Department stocks or those of its subcontractors through the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program, and commercially. In either case, it required licenses issued by the Office of Munitions Control (OMC), which lay under the purview of the Department of State. In "early April," State took the unilateral action of suspending the release of all items from FMS stocks and the issuance and renewal of new and old

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<sup>400</sup> Pakistan had an option to purchase an additional fourteen aircraft upon returning others then held. Jain, 31.

<sup>401</sup> Jain, 31. NSC paper, 13 July 1971, Rahmin, 149-152.

<sup>402</sup> Prasad, 727-728.

licenses, respectively, by its own OMC.<sup>403</sup> Unfortunately, owing to what Van Hollen would later describe as a “textbook example of a bureaucratic snafu,”<sup>404</sup> these steps did not block supplies of commercial items under licenses supplied before early April, which remained valid for one year. Nor did they stop the shipment of FMS stocks already released into the pipeline, but not yet shipped from the US. Items supplied in these ways remained beyond the Administration’s control. Nixon effectively ratified State’s actions in the “Squeeze” memorandum of 2 May, when he advised the continuation of military supplies but, “in order not to provoke the Congress from cutting off all [military] aid,” the withholding of shipments of “more controversial items.”<sup>405</sup> In the absence of any specific direction to the contrary, State continued its hold on issuing and renewing licenses throughout the *key response period*. Furthermore, this ambiguous order was understood to forbid the supply of end items under the one-time exception, none of which had been dispatched, and all of which were duly held in abeyance.<sup>406</sup>

On 17 May, NSC staffers identified \$44 million of military supplies on order from Pakistan, excluding the one-time exception.<sup>407</sup> Two months later, however, the value had reduced to only \$29 million. It remains unclear whether the reduction of \$15 million was due to an error in the first estimate, the expiry of unused licenses, the cancellation of orders by Pakistan, the shipment of items in the intervening period, or a combination of the above. Of the \$29 million remaining in the pipeline on 13 July, \$5 million was still

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<sup>403</sup> NSC paper, 13 July 1971, Rahmin, 149-152.

<sup>404</sup> Van Hollen, 334.

<sup>405</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 28 April 1971, document no. 9, Gandhi. In addition, see Kissinger, *White House Years*, 856.

<sup>406</sup> The first part of the one-time exception package, the armored personnel carriers, was in any case only due for shipment in May 1972. Minutes of Senior Review Group Meeting (Secret), Washington, 19 April 1971, document no. 32, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>407</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Saunders and Hoskinson to Kissinger, 17 May 1971, document no. 50, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

held in FMS stocks because of the ban on such releases. In addition, \$9 million related to sonar equipment no longer due for construction. Consequently, \$15 million remained eligible for shipment owing to State's "bureaucratic snafu."<sup>408</sup>

The *New York Times* exposed the loophole on 22 June, when it reported on its front page that two vessels were due to sail for Pakistan with military equipment on board. The article noted that State was unable to explain why, despite having painted the picture of a full embargo, it was still allowing military supplies through.<sup>409</sup> The news sparked an array of complaints in the US press and Congress, and India made a formal protest to State.<sup>410</sup> In response, Rogers recommended the immediate suspension of all shipments of military equipment, but Kissinger disagreed, arguing that the US should "continue present policy rather than . . . authorize even a temporary suspension of items beyond US [official] control."<sup>411</sup> This reflected his reluctance to withhold supplies already expressed in an SRG meeting in April.<sup>412</sup> The National Security Adviser justified his position on the grounds that, despite receiving Congressional and Indian criticism, the US would "avoid [sending] the unfavorable political signal to Pakistan."<sup>413</sup> Nixon trusted the view of his favored adviser, and US policy remained unchanged.

From the start of the crisis, representatives of the press and Congress had called for a complete embargo on military supplies.<sup>414</sup> As early as 15 April, Walter Mondale and

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<sup>408</sup> NSC paper, 13 July 1971, Rahmin, 149-152.

<sup>409</sup> Tad Szulc, *New York Times*, 22 June 1971, p. 1.

<sup>410</sup> *Washington Daily News*, 30 June 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 407-408. Ahmed, 95. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 859. Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*, 194.

<sup>411</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Haig to Nixon, 25 June 1971, document no. 78, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*. Memorandum (Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 30 July 1971, Rahmin, 155-158.

<sup>412</sup> Minutes of Senior Review Group Meeting (Secret), Washington, 19 April 1971, document no. 32, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>413</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Haig to Nixon, 25 June 1971, document no. 78, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>414</sup> Editorial, *New York Times*, 31 March 1971, p. 44. Statement by Senator Fred R. Harris in the Senate, 1 April 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 521-522.



Clifford Case introduced a resolution to the Senate calling for the suspension of all military sales.<sup>415</sup> By the end of July, John E. Moss and Charles Mathias, Jr. (Rep - MD) had introduced identical resolutions in the House and Senate, respectively, calling for a one-year suspension of all military supplies, including items under licenses issued before early April but not yet shipped.<sup>416</sup> Yet, despite such public pressures and the knowledge that even limited military supply was of great psychological and practical importance to General Yahya, Nixon and Kissinger sought to continue the shipment of as many non-lethal items and spares as possible, taking full advantage of the loophole conveniently provided by State.<sup>417</sup> In early November, State revoked all the remaining licenses representing \$4 million of military equipment, suggesting \$11 million was either cancelled or dispatched since 13 July, when \$15 million had remained eligible for shipment.<sup>418</sup> A General Accounting Office report of 4 February 1972 estimated that \$4 million of munitions list items had been exported during the crisis under valid licenses.<sup>419</sup> However, this figure appears inconsistent with the unexplained reductions in orders of \$15 million between mid-May and mid-July, and a further \$11 million between mid-July and early November. While it is possible that the Government of Pakistan cancelled orders, or allowed licenses simply to expire, such actions would appear incompatible with its demand for the continuation of military supply. The anomaly would therefore appear worthy of future investigation.

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<sup>415</sup> Chowdhury, 62.

<sup>416</sup> NSC paper, "Cutting Off Military and Economic Assistance," 30 July 1971, document no. 19, Gandhi.

<sup>417</sup> Nixon and Kissinger were aided by the fact that "a relatively low point in scheduled military equipment shipments to Pakistan . . . [had], by coincidence, meant that military assistance to Pakistan has not been a pressing issue." Memorandum (Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 30 July 1971, Rahmin, 155-158.

<sup>418</sup> Bokhari, 8. Morris, 222.

<sup>419</sup> Chowdhury, 67. China continued military aid to Pakistan after 25 March 1971. However, though it honored previous arms commitments, it was reluctant to approve new arms contracts until the following year, when the crisis was over. Sisson, 251.

## *Economic Aid*

Between 1958 and 1968, the US committed \$2.8 billion of economic aid to Pakistan. Annual contributions approached some \$400 million in the early 1960s, representing 55 percent of Pakistan's total foreign assistance.<sup>420</sup> Following the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965, however, annual aid levels fell on average to \$150 million.<sup>421</sup> Nevertheless, this still amounted to some 25 percent of all external economic assistance normally reaching Islamabad. In addition, at the start of the crisis, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves were at an unusually low level, and due to be exhausted in a matter of months. These factors provided the US with the opportunity, if it so desired, to use substantial economic leverage to influence the actions of the authorities in Islamabad.<sup>422</sup> Indeed, Kissinger noted, cutting economic aid would "infuriate the West Pakistanis."<sup>423</sup>

As the clampdown began, US commitments in the pipeline from previously agreed loans stood at \$120 million, a new \$70 million program loan was due for consideration, and a substantial portion of some \$87 million of PL-480 relief<sup>424</sup> had yet to be shipped.<sup>425</sup> Not surprisingly, the potential impact of the suspension of non-relief economic aid did not go unnoticed by the US press and Congress. The *New York Times* led the way in an editorial of 31 March that called for the continuation of financial

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<sup>420</sup> Jain, 15.

<sup>421</sup> Chowdhury, 67.

<sup>422</sup> Paper for the NSC Senior Review Group (Secret), c. 16 April 1971, document no. 132, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*. In addition, see Telegram (Confidential), Farland to Department of State, 28 February 1971, document no. 121, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

<sup>423</sup> Record of conversation, Nixon, Kissinger, and Haldeman, Washington, 12 April 1971, quoted in Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*, 65-66.

<sup>424</sup> 'PL-480' refers to primarily food grains supplied under the Agricultural Trade and Development Assistance Act of 1954. Much of this was due for shipment to the East as part of the US response to the cyclone disaster.

<sup>425</sup> Paper for the NSC Senior Review Group (Secret), c. 16 April 1971, document no. 132, Smith, *Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972*.

assistance only if a substantial proportion were allocated to relief in the East.<sup>426</sup> Fred R. Harris went one step further the next day, demanding on the floor of the Senate an end to all economic aid to Islamabad<sup>427</sup> and, on 4 May, Walter Mondale and nine other Senators wrote to Rogers calling for the US to vote against further foreign exchange assistance for Pakistan at World Bank consortium talks.<sup>428</sup>

Despite such public pressures, in his “Squeeze” memorandum of 27 April Nixon chose to continue economic aid, and back the World Bank finance initiative.<sup>429</sup> Specifically, the President instructed that adjustments to US programs should be made only for developmental reasons, and “not as a façade for application of political pressure.”<sup>430</sup> Nevertheless, the White House deferred throughout the *key response period* the politically sensitive decision on the new \$70 million program loan, originally scheduled to be made by mid-June.<sup>431</sup> Meanwhile, however, the \$120 million in the pipeline continued to flow.

Upon commencement of the crisis, Pakistan negotiated a six-month moratorium with its major aid donors on repayment of foreign loans.<sup>432</sup> Nevertheless, the foreign exchange reserves in Islamabad remained at uncomfortably low levels. At his meeting

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<sup>426</sup> Editorial, *New York Times*, 31 March 1971, p. 44. In addition, see *Washington Daily News*, 15 June 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 477-478; Editorial, *New York Times*, 17 June 1971, p. 40; and Editorial, *New York Times*, 14 July 1971, p. 34.

<sup>427</sup> Statement by Senator Fred R. Harris in the Senate, 1 April 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 521-522.

<sup>428</sup> Letter, Senator Walter Mondale et al. to Rogers, 4 May 1971, untitled, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 536. In addition, see Statement by Congressman Cornelius E. Gallagher in the House of Representatives, 1 July 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 559-561; and Statement by Senator Frank Church in the Senate, 7 July 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 562-564.

<sup>429</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 28 April 1971, document no. 9, Gandhi. In addition, see Kissinger, *White House Years*, 856.

<sup>430</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Haig to Irwin, 7 May 1971, document no. 40, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>431</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 3 August 1971, document no. 113, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*. In addition, see Minutes of Senior Review Group Meeting (Secret), Washington, 19 April 1971, document no. 32, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>432</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 3 August 1971, document no. 113, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

with Kissinger on 7 May, Farland explained that the World Bank had concluded that Pakistan required \$250 million of “breathing room” over the next six months.<sup>433</sup> By June, the *Washington Daily News* estimated the figure urgently required was closer to \$450 million;<sup>434</sup> China stepped in with a \$100 million interest-free loan to help relieve the stress.<sup>435</sup> Meanwhile, as Kissinger had promised Farland at their meeting, the US continued to support Pakistan’s case for assistance at the World Bank talks.<sup>436</sup> Despite US pressure, however, an informal gathering of consortium members in Paris, on 21 June, refused to extend aid, and failed to announce a date to reconvene.<sup>437</sup> The US was the only one of eleven parties at the meeting that failed to recommend the suspension of aid.<sup>438</sup>

The substantial amount of economic assistance the US provided Pakistan presented the White House with perhaps the most significant opportunity to adopt a more forceful line during the crisis. Under severe financial pressure, Yahya would undoubtedly have taken very seriously any threat to his economic lifeline from Washington. Yet, Nixon and Kissinger not only chose to continue crucial ongoing loan commitments, but also placed the US in the embarrassing position of being the only sizeable Western economic power to row against the tide of First-World dissatisfaction.

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<sup>433</sup> Memorandum of Conversation (Top Secret), Kissinger and Farland, Palm Springs, CA, 7 May 1971, document no. 42, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*. Memorandum (Top Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 15 May 1971, “Meeting with Ambassador Farland, May 7, 1971,” document no. 22, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

<sup>434</sup> *Washington Daily News*, 15 June 1971, reproduced in *Bangla Desh Documents*, 477-478.

<sup>435</sup> Bhuiyan, 78.

<sup>436</sup> Memorandum of Conversation (Top Secret), Kissinger and Farland, Palm Springs, CA, 7 May 1971, document no. 42, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*. Memorandum (Top Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 15 May 1971, “Meeting with Ambassador Farland, May 7, 1971,” document no. 22, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*. Memorandum of Conversation (Secret), Nixon, M. M. Ahmad (Economic Adviser to the President of Pakistan), Hilaly, and Harold Saunders (NSC staff), Washington, 10 May 1971, document no. 44, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>437</sup> Letter, Yahya to Nixon, 18 June 1971, untitled, document no. 76, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>438</sup> Editorial, *New York Times*, 14 July 1971, p. 34.

## 10. Aftermath

Kissinger set off on his round-the world tour on 1 July, visiting – officially – South Vietnam, Thailand, India, Pakistan, and France, before returning to the US twelve days later. During his stopover in Islamabad, he undertook his covert mission to Peking between 9 and 11 July.<sup>439</sup> In a report Nixon later described as “a brilliant summing up,”<sup>440</sup> Kissinger could barely contain his perception of having created a gift to posterity:

We have laid the groundwork for you [Nixon] and Mao to turn a page of history. . . . The process we have now started will send enormous shock waves around the world. . . . Our dealings, with both the Chinese and others, will require reliability, precision, finesse. If we can master this process, we will have made a revolution.<sup>441</sup>

No doubt equally dizzy with excitement, Nixon dramatically announced the successful trip to an unsuspecting world at 22:30 EDT, on 15 July 1971. He revealed, “I have requested this television time tonight to announce a major development in our efforts to build a lasting peace in the world.”<sup>442</sup> The reality of talks had not dulled in any way the enthusiasm of the President and his National Security Adviser for their strategic initiative. Yet, it had perhaps blunted the moral sensitivity of the latter, who, as the human tragedy of East Pakistan continued, joked with White House staff, “Yahya hasn’t had such fun since the last Hindu massacre!”<sup>443</sup>

While meeting in Peking, Kissinger and Chou had agreed that Paris would provide a more convenient channel than Islamabad for future communications. Walters and the Chinese Ambassador, Huang Chen, would act as point men for direct contact

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<sup>439</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 732, 738, 756.

<sup>440</sup> Nixon, *Memoirs*, 554.

<sup>441</sup> Memorandum (Top Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 14 July 1971, document no. 40, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

<sup>442</sup> Nixon, *Memoirs*, 544.

<sup>443</sup> Memorandum of Record (Secret), 19 July 1971, “Briefing of the White House Staff . . .” document no. 41, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

between the two powers. Nevertheless, Kissinger and Chou agreed to pass “non-substantive” information via the Islamabad conduit for, as the latter noted, “Yahya has been a good friend.”<sup>444</sup> A message was successfully relayed via the new route on 19 July. Thus, within only four days of the announcement of Kissinger’s visit, Paris had simply and effectively replaced Islamabad as the vital communications hub between Washington and Peking.<sup>445</sup>

This rapid and trouble-free change of conduits suggests that Yahya was a convenient, but not a necessary facilitator of contacts between the two powers. However, Nixon and Kissinger remained aware of the close alliance between China and Pakistan, which, along with their gratitude and loyalty to the Islamabad versus their suspicion and dislike of New Delhi, continued to influence their formulation of a US policy tilted in favor of Pakistan until the crisis was resolved in December. On 16 July 1971, over three months after the clampdown, the full NSC convened its first meeting to discuss the problems on the subcontinent. Nixon declared, if it could possibly be avoided, he would not allow a war in South Asia until he had visited China. The President admitted he had “a bias” on the subject, but believed the Indians to be a “slippery and treacherous people,” who would like nothing better than to use the tragedy to destroy Pakistan.<sup>446</sup> Kissinger, whom Chou had left in no doubt of Peking’s strong support for Islamabad,<sup>447</sup> backed Nixon; in the event of an Indo-Pakistan war, the National Security Adviser believed China would intervene militarily and that, if this happened, “everything we have

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<sup>444</sup> Memorandum (Top Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 14 July 1971, document no. 40, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

<sup>445</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 765-766.

<sup>446</sup> Memorandum of Record (Top Secret), 16 July 1971, NSC Meeting on the Middle East and South Asia, document no. 103, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

<sup>447</sup> Memorandum (Top Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 14 July 1971, document no. 40, Burr, *NSA Electronic Briefing Book No. 66*.

done [with China] will go down the drain.” Kissinger insisted that Yahya would not succeed in holding Pakistan together in the long term, disintegration was inevitable and, therefore, the US objective should be to create an evolutionary change. Unfortunately, he did not believe this would be possible before an Indian attack. Therefore, Washington should have Yahya propose a comprehensive refugee repatriation package, allowing the US to play for time.<sup>448</sup> While revelation of the China initiative had helped many in Washington better understand in hindsight Nixon and Kissinger’s policy towards Pakistan throughout the *key response period*, now they had to adjust to the President and his National Security Adviser’s insistence that India was intent upon starting a regional war that would probably escalate to involve the Chinese.

As the US continued to support Islamabad, Moscow and New Delhi signed the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty on 9 August. The major powers took sides, China and the US supporting Pakistan, and the Soviets aligning with India; the potential for more serious escalation became real. By October, the number of refugees in India had swollen to some ten million, guerilla resistance continued in the East, and Indian and Pakistani troops faced each other across the borders in the East and West of the subcontinent. When Pakistan launched an air strike against India on 3 December, war erupted, and Nixon and Kissinger, who had given up on securing the East, acted to preserve West Pakistan. The President ordered a ‘tilt’ towards Islamabad and away from New Delhi in all US decisions. The next day, despite the Pakistani air strike, the US accused India of aggression, and proposed a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of Indian troops. The Soviets played their veto, and laid

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<sup>448</sup> Memorandum of Record (Top Secret), 16 July 1971, NSC Meeting on the Middle East and South Asia, document no. 103, Smith, *South Asia Crisis, 1971*.

blame for the conflict firmly at the door of General Yahya Khan. As war raged, the US suspended all economic aid to India, and dispatched a task force headed by the carrier, USS *Enterprise*, to the Bay of Bengal, where it was shadowed by a Soviet battle group. On 16 December, after less than two weeks of fighting, West Pakistani troops surrendered in the East. India did not try to press for further success in the West, and the forces of the major powers stood down. East Pakistan subsequently became independent as Bangladesh. China did not intervene militarily given the speed of the campaign, winter snows in the Himalayas, the risks of escalation, and the internal problems that resulted from a suspected coup attempt by Lin Piao, Mao's designated successor, who had died in a mysterious plane crash in September, probably attempting to flee to the safety of Moscow.<sup>449</sup> Kissinger made a second trip to Peking in October 1971,<sup>450</sup> before Nixon finally made his much-longed-for state visit to China in February 1972. At the end of his trip, the President proposed a toast, "We have been here a week. This was the week that changed the world."<sup>451</sup>

Nixon never forgot Yahya's role in helping bring about rapprochement with the Chinese. As he put it, somewhat ironically, in a handwritten letter thanking the man who had ordered the brutal clampdown in the East, "Those who want a more peaceful world in generations to come will forever be in your debt."<sup>452</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> Bhuiyan, 75-77. Chowdhury, 80. Hussain, 24. Prasad, 737-742. Chowdhury argues that the Chinese military administration was still paralyzed because of the repercussions following Lin Piao's attempted coup. Chowdhury, 80.

<sup>450</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 784.

<sup>451</sup> Nixon, *Memoirs*, 580.

<sup>452</sup> Letter, Nixon to Yahya, 7 August 1971, untitled, document no. 71.B.11, Aijazuddin.



## 11. Conclusion

The US response to the East Pakistan crisis must be considered in three layers of context – domestic, regional, and global. The Government of Pakistan's brutal clampdown in East Bengal violated human rights on a massive scale at a domestic level. In addition, the systematic persecution of Hindus and massive flood of refugees into India fuelled ongoing tensions between Islamabad and New Delhi to such an extent as to create the real possibility of a regional war on the subcontinent. Importantly, all of these actions played out against a global backdrop of Cold War alignments and Nixon and Kissinger's prized initiative in search of Sino-American rapprochement.

The watershed event during the crisis occurred on 27 April, when Chou En-lai replied to Nixon's message of the previous December, thus bringing the China initiative back to life, and establishing Pakistan as the chosen conduit between Washington and Peking. From this point forward, securing the success of the China initiative was the dominant factor in determining the US policy in South Asia. Importantly, before this turning point, however, despite Kissinger's insistence in his memoirs, so often perpetuated in the limited secondary source material on this subject, the urge for rapprochement did not drive the US response.

Upon receipt of Chou's missive, Kissinger at once cancelled his attempt to establish an alternative conduit through Paris. Moreover, already one month into the crisis, but immediately after the communication from Peking, Nixon issued the "Squeeze" memorandum, which for the first time clarified the US Government policy of "quiet diplomacy" with regard to East Pakistan. Because of this breakthrough in the China initiative, and encouraged by Kissinger, Nixon made it clear, "To all hands: Don't

squeeze Yahya at this time.”<sup>453</sup> Only from this point forward did the President and his National Security Adviser begin to refer to the secret China initiative in the published records of their private conversations discussing developments in South Asia.

In his memoirs, Kissinger attempted to clumsily and confusingly apply the convenient catchall explanation of the China initiative as a simple, acceptable justification for White House indifference with regard to East Pakistan during *phase one* of the US response, even directly contradicting himself in two separate sections of his work. Yet, the search for any evidence supporting his contention is fruitless. Indeed, new primary documentation and a close reading of that previously available contradict his claim. Before 27 April, any reference to China was conspicuously absent from the published records of Nixon and Kissinger’s private conversations on the East Pakistan crisis. The China initiative remained fragile, Peking not having replied to Nixon’s suggestion, made in December of the previous year, that the agenda for any talks include issues beyond just Taiwan. The White House had not heard from Peking through either the Romanian or the Pakistani conduit for months. Indeed, Kissinger was so anxious the Chinese were unhappy with these intermediaries that he was urgently trying to establish a new link via Paris on the very day that Chou’s message was received. There is no evidence to suggest that Islamabad’s role in the China initiative, far from being the driving influence, was anything other than perhaps just one of a multitude of different factors determining Washington’s *phase one* response. Consequently, one has little option but to contradict Kissinger’s account, itself adopted by secondary-source

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<sup>453</sup> Memorandum (Secret), Kissinger to Nixon, 28 April 1971, document no. 9, Gandhi. In addition, see Kissinger, *White House Years*, 856. Underline original.

interpretations such as those of Morris, Chowdhury, and Bokhari, and assume a revisionist posture.

Between 25 March and 27 April, inertia characterized White House policy for, despite detailed knowledge of the atrocities perpetrated in East Pakistan and public furor, Nixon and Kissinger chose to do nothing and wait. Blood sought to see through the fog of 'war', providing detailed reports of "Selective Genocide" and the systematic persecution of Hindus in Dacca, and so gave the White House the opportunity to take a firm moral line against Islamabad, despite the latter's creative propaganda. Yet, Nixon and Kissinger ignored his accounts. As a frustrated Blood dissented against the "morally bankruptcy" of US policy, sparking a minor rebellion in State, a blinkered and bureaucratic Farland dismissed the Consul General's reports as exaggerated, and Nixon ordered Blood's removal from office. Keating linked the need for a firm US stance on moral grounds to US interests in the region as a whole, but the White House considered him to have been taken in by the Indians. The press, intellectuals, and members of Congress called for condemnation of Yahya and the introduction of sanctions, and Bangladeshi associations sprang up across the United States. Yet, the White House refused to respond to public and private pressure.

The US Government employed several techniques to facilitate inaction. First, it hid in the fog of 'war', referring to conflicting reports from East Pakistan, in spite of the detailed evidence forwarded by its own man on the spot. Second, it drew down the veil of sovereignty, describing the clampdown as a domestic issue, so attempting to absolve itself of any duty to act. Third, Nixon and Kissinger focused on the domestic aspect of the crisis, rather than the regional context, thus avoiding the need to consider in detail a

comprehensive response. Consequently, during phase one, the US Government did little more than issue public statements of concern at the loss of life, call for a peaceful resolution, evacuate large numbers of its own citizens, block Indian attempts to bring the issue to the attention of the United Nations, and crush the rebellion in State.

The web of motives that precipitated the *phase one* response is both difficult to discern and complex. In general terms, Nixon and Kissinger, who had come to personalize and dominate the determination of US foreign policy, embraced a realist philosophy in which moral ideals came a distant second to the advancement and protection of important US interests, of which there were few in South Asia. This combined with moral apathy, exhibited in their reluctance to specifically discuss the atrocities and their general indifference to the human suffering, to provide little impetus to overcome the standard bureaucratic penchant for considered and cautious action. More specifically, however, Nixon's warm relationship with Yahya and sympathy with Pakistan versus his dislike of Indira Gandhi and indifference to, if not suspicion and distrust of India, played an important role in the formulation of the US response in these early stages.

During *phase two*, driven by the China initiative, the US adopted a three-strand policy in South Asia, comprising the funding of refugee relief, efforts to defuse regional tension, and "quiet diplomacy" in pursuit of political accommodation between Islamabad and the East. The US was the leading international contributor to refugee aid, going on to donate \$90 million to India and \$150 million to Pakistan by the end of the crisis. Conveniently, the balm of relief helped soothe American consciences, and assisted Nixon and Kissinger in dealing with criticism at home. Nixon wrote to both Yahya and Indira

Gandhi to discourage regional conflict. The US Government held the shipment of controversial items of military supply so that Congress would not demand a full embargo, and deferred a decision on a \$70 million developmental loan. However, under the policy-strand of “quiet diplomacy,” it refused to condemn the atrocities in the East, continued to provide \$120 million of economic aid already in the pipeline, and stood alone in imploring other members of the World Bank consortium not to suspend financial assistance to Islamabad. In addition, it maintained the limited supply of military spares, which were of great psychological importance and practical convenience to the martial law authorities in Pakistan. Nixon and Kissinger took this last step despite State’s continuing attempts to suspend military supplies in order to pressure Yahya into political accommodation in the East. Even as it became clear that such accommodation remained only a remote possibility, and evolutionary change toward what the White House considered the inevitable independence of East Pakistan was highly unlikely, the US maintained its conciliatory stance.

In *phase two*, the systematic persecution of Hindus in East Bengal created one of the greatest exoduses of refugees in modern history. By mid-July, some seven million displaced people had flooded into the sensitive areas of northern India and beyond in pursuit of safety. Despite Hindus representing only 15 percent of the population of East Pakistan, they formed the clear majority in the camps. Concerns over the specific targeting of Hindus fuelled communal tensions within India. Combined with ongoing Indo-Pakistani mutual resentment, these new pressures pushed the subcontinent towards the real possibility of regional war. Yet, despite these developments, US policy remained unchanged as the China initiative grew to offset such worries.

Nixon and Kissinger had invested some two years of effort in encouraging Sino-American rapprochement. This major geopolitical initiative sought to end Chinese isolation, and secure world peace by establishing a new equilibrium of major powers in what the President and his National Security Adviser considered a multi-polar world. As the White House gradually finalized agreement with Peking on Kissinger's initial visit, the possibility of rapprochement became more concrete. In addition, the White House placed more and more of its eggs into Yahya's welcoming basket, as the Pakistani President played an increasingly important role in arranging the trip. Not only did Islamabad become a vital conduit, but also China was a close ally of Pakistan, and remained sensitive to secessionist issues owing to its own concerns over Taiwan and Tibet. Although Van Hollen and Warner question their analysis, Nixon and Kissinger believed that offending Yahya would have jeopardized their strategic China initiative. Even if an alternative conduit could have been found, and especially if the step of replacement were combined with condemnation of or sanctions against Pakistan, the Chinese could have taken such an action as an affront. Consequently, throughout *phase two*, Nixon and Kissinger sought in large part to appease Islamabad.

Nixon and Kissinger's actions during the *key response period* call to mind the story of King Canute attempting to hold back the tide. The waves washed in on the subcontinent as the disintegration of Pakistan became inevitable, the refugees poured into India, and the possibility of war steadily increased. The waters surged at home as Congress introduced resolutions to restrict Executive action. The surf lapped ever more closely as the US military supply pipeline to Islamabad and Pakistani funding began to run out. Unlike Canute, however, who sat before the tide to demonstrate to his subjects

that he was not omnipotent, Nixon and Kissinger refused to yield to the inevitable. Instead, they fought in vain, and without due concern for his victims, to preserve a warm relationship with the man who brought to the subcontinent one of the bloodiest episodes in recent history.

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