Chapter-V

Strategic Imperatives of Geopolitics in South Asia and the Role of External Powers During 1971 Indo-Pakistan War

Introduction

Historical retrieval and analysis of the global dimension of the 1971 South Asia crisis is considered necessary to understand its effect on the evolution of the politico-military strategy during the Bangladesh Liberation War. Till the end of British rule and few years thereafter super powers did not show much interest in the Indian sub continent. Subsequently, cold war imbroglio and interest of super powers in South Asia and their influence in the region made them party to Bangladesh War of Liberation and Indo-Pakistan War of 1971. In addition, actions and influence of China, U.K, other countries of Europe, Africa, The Islamic countries, and the neighboring countries etc. during the conflict and their involvement either directly or through their voice in the United Nations will be discussed as it had implications on strategic decisions by the warring factions. Interestingly, United States, China and Islamic countries were more supportive to Pakistan's cry for stopping disintegration than the cry of millions of terror stricken East Pakistanis and closed their eyes on the gross violation of human rights by the Pakistani military and their supporters. Foreign policy of any country is driven by the principle of ‘the perceived interest of the country’. It is seen that with the change in leadership, many a times perception on national interest also undergo changes. Evidences suggest that to some extent, Breznev, Nixon and Kissinger fit into this category of leaders. But while keeping interest of the nation as a central theme, legal, ethical and moral aspects are also factored while formulating nation’s foreign policy. After perusing the historical records, one gets an impression that during 1971, on moral and ethical aspects, countries like U.S.A. in particular and China and some other countries did not come out clean. In this chapter, I shall briefly highlight salient aspects of foreign policies pursued by India and Pakistan since decolonization and role and influence of
United States, Soviet Russia, China, and other countries leading up to liberation of Bangladesh. 

Kashmir dispute and sense of insecurity influenced foreign policy of Pakistan. Unlike India, Pakistan since its inception to emergence of Bangladesh was mostly under military rule whose prime objective was to gain military parity against India. In pursuing this policy objective Pakistan was in search of allies and embraced United States and at a later stage China. India kept safe distance from external powers and did not believe in military alliance as it championed Non Align Movement. In recent years, declassification of classified documents by United States, United Kingdom, and memoirs written by quite a few policy makers, offered additional research inputs to already available materials. It has been my endeavor to discern the realpolitik while perusing the materials available through various primary and secondary sources.

Role of United States

Historical Background

During the first two decades after the partition of India, the United States’ policy was to maintain regional stability in South Asia by maintaining balance of power between the two rival nations India and Pakistan. The chief features of the policy were military and economic assistance to India and Pakistan and the use of that assistance to prevent war and encourage development and nation building in the aftermath of independence. As stated before, since partition, Pakistan was suffering from security crisis and presumed that India will try her best to undo the partition.

The policy of United States also aimed to entice the two governments i.e. India and Pakistan into the military alliance systems through which US sought to contain the communist superpowers. National Security Council of U.S.A. prepared a major policy paper, known as NSC 98, “The Position of the United States with Respect to Asia.” The paper stated:

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

Pakistan’s search for security status and identity coincided with the United States search for an ally in South Asia to buttress its global strategic objective. In 1954, Pakistan became a member of military pacts CENTO and SEATO sponsored by the United States. And Pakistan offered Peshwar air base, adjacent to Soviet Union territory for operation of the US military spy planes. Though, Pakistan joined the military alliance with US e.g. NATO and SEATO, to contain China and USSR but Washington refused to act as Pakistan’s guarantor against India’s aggression.  

In his memoir, the President of Pakistan Field Marshall Ayub Khan wrote:

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

Pakistan’s preference for United States has been explicitly spelt out in an article Ayub Khan wrote:

“The US was much keen to have alliance with India to contain India’s hostile neighbour; but India did not comply. India at this juncture was spearheading Non-Align Movement (NAM). That notwithstanding both President Kennedy and Johnson still maintained equitable relations with India and Pakistan. From the very beginning of its coming into being Pakistan thought of United States as its primary source of military and diplomatic supports against India.”

India’s foreign policy was shaped by the vision of Mr. Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. He structured the country’s foreign policy based on non-alignment independence, and non attachment to any military block. He made an emphatic kind of foreign policy vision statement and state:
“We propose as far as possible, to keep away from the power politics of group, aligned against one another, which have led in the past to World Wars and which may again lead to disaster on even vaster scale.”

India’s foreign policy thus had a different perception. Since beginning Pakistan enjoyed U.S support on Kashmir issue. U.S representative voiced this in the United nations debate supporting plebiscite. On this Nehru said, ”the distinguished representative tells us what to do about Kashmir not realizing that Kashmir is a flesh of our flesh and bone of our bones”.

During the cold war period, United States was bent on stopping spread of communism. While commenting on foreign policy of United States, Spanier John wrote:

“In the international system, during the cold war phase, the main thrust of the foreign policy of the United States was containment of communism. In the era of close relationship between the Soviet Union and China, the policy of containment of communism in South East Asia occupied an important place in the foreign policy objectives of the U.S.A.”

United States however remained fairly neutral during 1965 Indo-Pakistan War. But Pakistan’s membership in the US backed military alliance helped in receiving military hardware from the United States without much strings attached unlike India. Tashkent Treaty of 1966 between India and Pakistan and U.S.S.R. as a facilitator was a master piece diplomatic coup by the Soviet Russia which irked America. But John K. Galibrath, former ambassador of U.S.A. in India spoke to Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1966, “If we had not supplied arm, Pakistan would not have sought a military solution”.

It was indeed a forthright view. Couple of Years later, on supply of huge military aids, Mrs. Indira Gandhi stated in Lok Sabha that it, “had the effect of encouraging Pakistan in its intransigent and aggressive attitude towards India”.

Both Mrs. Indira Gandhi and General Yayha participated in the silver jubilee celebrations of United Nations in New York in October 1970. Yahya travelled to Washington to meet President Nixon who was his good friend from the Vice Presidency days. President Nixon assured Yahya that,” nobody has occupied the White House who is friendlier to Pakistan than me.” Soon thereafter in November 1970, Yahya visited Beijing where he
discussed with Mr. Zou En Lai about the ways of improving relations between Beijing and Washington.\textsuperscript{12}

When on 25 March 1971, Pakistan army commenced military operation against the unarmed civilians codenamed ‘Operation Searchlight’, its brutality, horror and cold blooded killing of thousands of Bengalis of East Pakistan shocked the world. US as well as international media condemned the action so did India, Soviet Russia and many other countries. Next day, i.e. on 26 March, Washington Special Action Group (WSAG) presided over by Kissinger, deliberated on the happenings in East Pakistan. Kissinger conveyed the group that President Nixon does not desire any active policy as he doesn’t want division of Pakistan. Accordingly the group decided, that the ‘United States should continue its policy of non involvement’\textsuperscript{13}. Hereafter official response of United States was cautious and described it as an internal matter of Pakistan which should be settled by the Pakistanis themselves. This view of the crisis in East Pakistan an exclusively internal matter of Government of Pakistan was maintained by Nixon and Kissinger all through the liberation war. American government never criticized Yayha or his government. US governments official statements and actions hereinafter till the emergence of Bangladesh, was in consonance with the philosophy of ‘not to meddle with the internal affairs of a friendly ally’. Interestingly, “White House and State Department had different perceptions. Many officials of the State Department were shocked by the ferocity of the army’s action in East Pakistan. Public and media opinion too influenced them. An interdepartmental group recommended that India merited greater US attention in terms of US interests. During the meeting of Senior Review Group on 19 April, efforts were made by the members to convince Nixon and Kissinger to reshape policy accordingly. But the duo was emphatic about not forcing their views on a friendly government on management of its internal affairs. And Nixon stated that he believed that external powers like India, Soviet Russia, China, US etc has no role and United States best strategy would be to maintain balance of power in South Asia.\textsuperscript{14} Actually this concept of balance of power was aimed at keeping Soviet Russia at bay. It was purely a global view of the cold war politics.
US Government’s inaction embarrassed and enraged Archer Blood, US Consul General at Dacca and his staff and they sent a five page telegram which is widely known as Blood Telegram. Salient excerpts are given below:

“With the conviction that U.S policy related to recent developments in East Pakistan serves neither our moral interests broadly defined, nor our national interests, narrowly defined ….numerous officers consider it their duty to register strong dissent with fundamental aspects of this policy. Our government has failed to demonstrate the suppression of democracy. Our government has failed to denounce atrocities …..Our government has evinced what many will consider the arrest of a leader of a democratically elected majority party, incidentally pro-west, and calling for an end to repressive measures and bloodshed(emphasis added).”

Archer Blood was recalled. He was replaced by Mr. Spivack. In a memorandum dated April 19, Henry Kissinger informed Nixon that The Pakistani Government conceded the need to provide greater autonomy to East Pakistan but he feared that the way India arming and training the Bengali rebels it will be rather impossible for Pakistan to implement autonomy. He further stressed that India wants this crisis to prolong at the expense of United States and Pakistan.

By end of April, Kissinger sent a note to Nixon offering three policy options for United States in context to Pakistan. They were:

(a) Option 1. Unstinted support to Pakistan
(b) Option 2. Adoption of neutral position
(c) Option 3. Help Yahya to end conflict followed by autonomy for East Pakistan

Nixon approved the third option with emphasis to all hands “not to squeeze Yayha now”.

**US Tilts Towards Pakistan**

US tilt commenced. Despite the prevailing situation, United States allowed Pakistan to buy military equipment like 300 armoured personnel carriers, B-57s and six F 104s, four maritime *reconnaissance* aircrafts and some non lethal
equipments of approximate value $ 90 million- under one time exception as the contract was concluded in October 1970. It evoked reactions from press, opposition, public and some officials in the department of state. President Nixon was unfazed. He, in a memorandum dated 25 June, conveyed his decision to continue present policy but to be reviewed in due course.\textsuperscript{18}

Sisson and Rose argue that:

“Washington’s public position from 25 March and throughout 1971 was that the conflict in East Pakistan was an internal affair in which direct intervention of foreign powers should be avoided. The stated objectives of the United States were (1) to prevent another Indo-Pakistani war; (2) to provide the humanitarian relief required in East Pakistan; and (3) to encourage a political settlement of the Pakistani civil war-preferably one that would maintain at least the façade of a unified Pakistan. If that were impossible, then the United States wanted to help arrange a peaceful separation of the country into two sovereign states”\textsuperscript{19}

The authors appeared to have gone little soft on Nixon –Kissinger duo which in no way in consonance with the unofficial views and the views of world media. Congress opposed it, so did State Department bureaucracy. In his memoirs on the split between White House and the State Department, Kissinger wrote,

“On no issue except perhaps Cambodia, split between the White House and the department was so profound as on the Indo-Pakistan crisis in summer of 1971…..White House and the State Department dealt with each other as competing sovereign entities, not as members of the same team and the President sought to have his way by an indirection that compounded the internal stresses of our government”\textsuperscript{20}

Cargill Committee, a fact finding mission appointed by the World Banks Pakistan Aid Consortium recommended terminating aid to Pakistan because of the atrocities of Pakistan’s military regime. Following this recommendation, Britain, Sweden, Dutch and West Germany; suspended aid program in July 1971. But United States, despite public opposition continued to pursue their previously declared aid program valued at $188 up to fiscal year 1972.\textsuperscript{21}
In July, Kissinger visited India. During his visit, he invited Indira Gandhi to visit United States, and also cautioned India against any possible war because other super powers may get involved. Basically he meant China possibly to scare India, but on the same breath assured India that United States though will take it very seriously if it turns that way. It was indeed a veil from Kissinger. About India, Nixon and Kissinger had a fixed idea which gets reflected in his book when he mentions that he left New Delhi with the conviction that India was bent on a showdown with Pakistan and was waiting for the right time.\(^{22}\)

**Kissinger Secretly Visits Pakistan.**

Kissinger makes a visit to India and Pakistan in early July. From Pakistan Kissinger secretly visited Beijing and met Chou En Lai. After a long period of containment, US took the first step on rapprochement with China. During Nixon’s presidency there was a shift in policy. Nixon and Kissinger believed that previous government’s policy of regional stability in South Asia and the balance of power can be best maintained by leaning towards Pakistan. This change had global implications and relevance to the evolving pattern of the cold war. Nixon wanted to make rapprochement with China which he believed would better serve the interest of Washington. And Pakistan played the role of a conduit.\(^{23}\) Kissinger of course wrote that,” While trying to balance public opinion and governments action, Nixon- Kissinger urged Yayha to replace military government with a civilian government in East Pakistan. They asked him to grant amnesty to political prisoners other than those accused of treason. Also requested to allow multilateral relief operations as India wanted.”\(^ {24}\) But Nixon ignored the bigger picture. Mujibur Rahman and most of the prominent Awami League leaders were charged with treason and a civil government without them is impossible. Nixon also ignored the appeal of Bangladesh Government in Exile to use his influence to get Mujibur Rahman released.\(^ {25}\) Nixon held a news conference on August 4 and there he defended his policy on Pakistan and opposed suggestion to stop aids to Pakistan as he felt that will reduce the chances of political settlement and aggravate refugee problem. He also announced that the bulk of refugee aids will go to East Pakistan and not to India.\(^ {26}\) Though ironically millions of refugees were based in India.
Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty signed in New Delhi on August 9, 1971 irked United States and Pakistan and China.

Meanwhile, press and public opinion was building up against the US government in a big way. Senators from Congress like Kennedy was a big supporter for the cause of Bangladesh, Indian Embassy in Washington headed by a very successful diplomat Mr. L.K. Jha could garner immense support from many groups. On this Kissinger on August 25 told Indian diplomat L.K.Jha:

- You must realize that no matter how much you succeed in influencing important senators, you have to deal with this administration and that means the President.
- As for bringing about any change in U.S. attitude, the President is angry with the Indian Embassy’s efforts with the Congress…..the Congressional leaders who support do so because they want to use any excuse for attacking the President and not because they have any deep sympathies.²⁷

Mr. J.N. Dixit, in his book succinctly narrates:

“an interesting episode of political theatrics took place when the US Ambassador to New Delhi, Kenneth Keating, told Mrs. Gandhi at a meeting in her South Block office that the US wished to avoid taking the embarrassing decision to stop economic assistance and cooperation with India and hoped that India would reconsider its policies on East Pakistan issue. Mrs. Gandhi’s response was prompt and decisive. She told Keating that there was no need for US to be embarrassed, and suggested the immediate closure of the US Aid Mission in New Delhi. She stuck to her decision. The office was closed down…….. and converted in to a hotel (Qutub Hotel) by the Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC)”²⁸.

Post Indira Gandhi’s Soviet visit in October, Nixon during a meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Andre Gromyko, requested the Soviet Government to discourage India and allow more time to Yahya to settle the crisis. And, Kissinger on October 9 asked Soviet help to discourage India from allowing infiltrations of Bangladeshi Guerrillas from Eastern India.²⁹
**Indira Visits United States**

Indira’s visit to United States was planned in early November. Nixon wrote a letter to Yahya which Farland, US Ambassador in Pakistan, delivered to Yahya on November 2. Through this letter, Nixon suggested Yahya to accommodate maximum elected members to form a civil government to restore the situation there. He also felt it will stop flow of refugee in India. Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi visited United States on November 4-5. Nixon told Mrs. Gandhi that,

“Yahya is ready to appoint a civil government in East Pakistan….war is unnecessary and his administration will view any aggressive act deserving the most severe censure and redress. Chinese, Soviet and America’s interests were at stake in South Asia. It would be impossible to calculate precisely, the steps which other great powers might take if India were to initiate hostilities”.

It was a clear warning to India. But Indira was not to be cowed down. She made it clear that the problem has been created by Yahya’s government, both terror stricken Bengalis from East Pakistan and India because of unmanageable influx of refugees are victims. She insisted on release of Mujib, withdrawal of Pakistani forces from East Pakistan and installation of government by Awami league, the majority party mandated by the people. On 22 November, Indian Army while retaliating Pakistani artillery fire in the Indian Territory carried out hot chase by entering the East Pakistan border and stayed on. Kissinger called it outbreak of war. Next day while chairing the WSAG meeting, Kissinger rejected state department proposal to put more pressure on Yahya government. Instead he asked the state department, to refer the matter of violation of border to the United Nations. Further, Kissinger informed the group that President Nixon has taken decision to cut off economic aid to India because of this incident. US Government also sent cables to India, Pakistan, and Soviet Russia cautioning against the war. On 23 November, Indira Gandhi informed the Indian Parliament that Indian Army has crossed the East Pakistan Border in self defence and the future decision to cross the border would be left to the military commanders on the scene.

On November 29, during the WSAG meeting, Kissinger stated that Indira Gandhi had decided on war prior to the talks and had made the trip to Washington just as a cover to for her preparation.
On December 1 & 2, the State Department announced cancellation of all outstanding export licenses for shipment of ammunition and other military equipments to India in view of the situation in South Asia and engagements between Indian and Pakistani Armies. The State Department further stated that the move is political rather military. An attempt with the belief that India should take steps to diffuse the war-like situation with Pakistan. Mrs. Gandhi replied that, “Only the elected representative of the people of Bangladesh could decide the future of that country, and in her view they would settle for nothing less than the liberation.”

And on December 3, Pakistani Air Force carried out pre-emptive air strikes on Indian Air bases in north-western India, in Jammu, Punjab and in Rajasthan. Also Pakistan army launched ground attack, a move that may not have been the most appropriate.

Once the war broke away, Kissinger told Nixon that,

“What we are seeing here is the Soviet-India power play to humiliate the Chinese and to also somewhat us. The dismembering of of Pakistan would …..mean that the friends of China and the United States have been clobbered by India and the Soviet Union.”

In the mean while United States made frantic efforts to impress upon Soviet Russia not to oppose their move in the United nations and also to pressurize India for cease fire. Simultaneously, United States urged Iran, and other Islamic countries like Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia to supply weapons to Pakistan which will make up in due course by the United States. Washington also thought of drawing the Chinese into this imbroglio to scare Indians. On 6th of December, Nixon told Kissinger that “ I think we have got to tell the Chinese that some movement on their part we think towards Indian border could be very significant………………Indians will be petrified”.

United States based on initial input from CIA and the fixated mindset that the leadership had, thought that India after routing the Pakistan Army in the East Pakistan will switch its forces to West Pakistan for an all out war to annihilate Pakistani armed forces and also to reclaim Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Baluchistan too will be separated along with it, which means total dismemberment of Pakistan. An ally of China and United States meeting this fate was absolutely unacceptable and had to be prevented at any cost. However the CIA assessed that being winter and because of their present army deployment, China do not have military capability for any major showdown with India.
though they are in a position to launch limited small scale diversionary attack. CIA furnished another input that presumably Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had stated during a cabinet meeting that if China rattled swords, Soviets have promised to counter balance any such action.  

But Nixon believed that China could exercise restraining influence on India. He said that “even a movement of some Chinese toward that border could scare those goddamn Indians to death.” Accordingly to convey Nixon’s message on 10 December, Kissinger met Huang Hua, Chinese representative in United Nations suggested Chinese military help. Huang Hua’s response was full of diplomatic niceties without any commitment. He ended the meeting by saying that President Nixon’s message will be conveyed to Mr. Zhou Enlai.

To restrain India, United States also put tremendous pressure on Soviet Russia at this juncture through various means including ploy to raise their stakes. Kissinger and Nixon both were more worried about maintaining US credibility in the eyes of China, and her ally. Kissinger was emphatic when he said, “a Soviet stooge, supported with Soviet arms, is overrunning a country that is an American ally”. Both Nixon and Kissinger perceived that US credibility was at stake. On 10 December, Kissinger informed Soviet representative, Vorontsov that the USA has allied commitments with respect to defending Pakistan through a secret protocol. US Military has been ordered to prepare military help to Pakistan and final decision will be taken by 12 December, and Nixon told the visiting Soviet Agriculture minister Vladimir Matskevich that like Soviet has a treaty with India, we too have a similar treaty with Pakistan. Factually and technically the treaty which both Nixon and Kissinger mentioned was not there. It was just an assurance to Ayub Khan through an aid memoir. And Baghdad pact guaranteed military help only if attacked by a communist country: in the instant case, India was not a communist country. Srinath Raghavan mentions that Kissinger’s ploy had the desired effect on Vorontsov who sent telegram to Kremlin “military aid involves moving U.S. aircraft carriers, and naval forces in general, closer to the sub continent”. Vorontsov was not wrong. Nixon ordered Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, to move Task Force 74, which included USS Enterprise to move from South Vietnam to Malacca Straits, and onward to Bay of Bengal. Nixon commenced his gun boat diplomacy to scare India, though US official
stand was to rescue stranded American citizens who were already evacuated. After all, move of the biggest aircraft carrier with nuclear arsenal could not be without a strategic purpose. In fact in this context, probably Kissinger’s writing would also serve to understand the purpose:

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

Senator Kennedy denounced Pakistan’s military brutality calling it a ‘Genocide’. He and many prominent congressmen visited East Pakistan and India to ascertain ground situation and were extremely vocal all through about the Nixon Government policy during the Bangladesh Liberation war. On 11 December, Kennedy made a scathing attack on Government of United States inaction and silence on the situation in East Pakistan and relegating priority for India in their rush to place a new priority on China.\textsuperscript{43}

**Role of USSR**

Historical Background: In the immediate post world war period, Soviets saw the world as being divided into two camps i.e. capitalists and socialists with there being no possibility of any middle road particularly for those countries that did not join any military blocks. Countries like India therefore did not matter to Soviet. After Stalin’s death, a more responsive attitude towards these states was adopted by Khrushchev. Sission and Leo commented:

“Initially Soviet Union became involved in South Asia in the mid-1950s to forestall and counteract U.S, “intervention” in that region through Pakistan’s membership in U.S. sponsored military alliance system and through massive American economic aid programs to India. India was the critical state in the subcontinent in Soviet calculations. It had become a basic objective of Soviet policy to prevent any serious disjunction in its relationship with India.”\textsuperscript{44}

In 1965, Khruschev and Bulganin returned Nehru’s visit to the Soviet Union. On conclusion of 1965 Indo-Pakistan war, USSR facilitated Tashkent Agreement between Mr. Lal Bahadur Shashtri, Prime Minister of India and Field Marshal Ayub Khan,
President of Pakistan. Acceptance of Soviet Russia an arbitrator by both Pakistan and India gave U.S.S.R. a prominence in South Asia vis-à-vis United States. K.P.S. Menon mentioned that, “In a way Tashkent is an epitome of Indo-Soviet friendship- a friendship whose purpose is not to threaten or encircle any nation, but to prevent the cause of peace in the world, more particularly in South Asian region.”

However there had been much criticism in India about India returning the strategically important locations captured during the war, like Hajipir Pass. Some section felt that Pakistan was favored by the Soviet Russia. Even foreign writers of repute like Sission and Leo Rose observed that:

“At the Tashkent Conference, however, Soviet Union began to modify its “support India” policy in South Asia in favour of a somewhat more nonpartisan position, officially neutral but in practice however, Moscow was slightly biased towards Pakistan during arbitration in Taskhent. Moscow made a concerted effort to expand its economic, political, and security relations with Pakistan while at the same time maintaining a close relation with India. Moscow made an agreement to construct its first modern steel mill in Pakistan and also in July 1968 signed an agreement to supply, $30 million (given the discount rates, this was equivalent of $ 50- $ 60 in U.S military sales) military equipments, including medium tanks, rocket launchers, artillery guns, helicopters etc.”

Immediately after becoming Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi declared on 26 January, 1966 that, “The fundamental principles laid down by my father to which he and and Shastriji dedicated, continue to guide us. It will be my sincere endeavor to work for the strengthening of peace and international equality, free from domination and fear.”

However, during the next couple of years Soviet Russia became less comfortable with Indira as they felt she is more pro America. This was allayed by a speech of Mr. Morarji Desai, Deputy Prime Minister of India on the occasion of the completion of two decades of India-Soviet diplomatic relations on 13 April 1967. He said:

The friendship between our two governments and between our two peoples has gone on growing without any interruption and with hardly misunderstanding. I hope and trust that we shall continuously behave in such a manner that this
friendship is not only impaired but that it grows stronger and stronger, so strong that nothing can come in the way at any time in future.\textsuperscript{48}

In the meanwhile, Soviet Russia made an agreement with Pakistan by which Pakistan will receive Soviet tanks, guns and other military hardware. In India, this news created adverse public opinion and criticism. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi raised her concern over the Soviet arms deal with Pakistan. Kosygin assured that nothing will undermine friendship between the two countries. He declared,” every country in the world could envy Indo-Soviet relations. This fact is accounted for by the trust and confidence which exists between our nations as well as development of political and economic cooperation“\textsuperscript{49}

\textbf{Breznev’s Proposal for Asian Collective Security System}

During his visit to New Delhi, Islamabad, and Kabul, Kosygin urged for settlement of differences between Kabul and Islamabad and between and between Islamabad and New Delhi. He urged increased regional economic co-operation constructively among the three countries on a tripartite basis, The Soviet Premier promised that his country ‘would do all it can on its part’\textsuperscript{50}

Kosygin’s above statement was prelude to the Soviet President Mr. Leonid Brezhnev’s suggestion on the creation of a collective security system in Asia. During the International Conference of Communists and Worker Parties, in early June 1969, Brezhnev stated, “We are of the opinion that the course of events is also putting on the system of collective security in Asia” \textsuperscript{50}. The Brezhnev plan never has been clearly defined : possibly it was kept delightfully vague to ascertain interest of the proposed members. Essentially it was aimed at checking China. India did not welcome the Asian collective security system because it did not want to deviate from its stated policy of Non Alignment. The pact would have ultimately turned into another military alliance despite its overt garb of economic co-operation. Pakistan too was not in favor as that would have compromised their friendship with China and United States. In the light of Pakistani perspective, Mr. G.W. Choudhry writes:

Following a Moscow Conference of Soviet envoys, the Ambassador to Pakistan called on Yahya as well as on the Pakistan Foreign Secretary to try to sell the Brezhnev scheme. He described the proposed plan in lofty terms, stressing such
features as "non-interference in internal affairs of signatory countries" and "economic, cultural and scientific cooperation." The Ambassador pointed out to the Foreign Secretary "the inadequacy of economic collaboration" under SEATO and CENTO in contrast to the more worthwhile collaboration under the Soviet plan. But upon being questioned about security aspects of the plan, the Soviet Ambassador had to reveal its main purpose, which had to do, not with economic cooperation, but with China. The specifics of the proposed security agreement also made this plain. For example, the signatories would not enter into any alliance, formal or informal, with a third country that might be hostile to any member countries, nor should they "make any commitment inconsistent with the proposed Asian Security Plan"; in addition, the signatory countries "will consult each other in case of an aggression by a third party." The anti-China slant was also indicated by the fact that Brezhnev announced the plan only three months after the most serious armed conflict to date on Sino-Soviet borders; ........Moreover, if the proposed security plan could be used against a nation that Pakistan considered a friend, it apparently could not be used against Pakistan's true enemy. Yahya wanted to know what help, if any, the Brezhnev plan would offer "in case of an aggression committed by one member country against another"—such as would be the case in a repetition of the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war. The answer was as evasive as it was rhetorical: "The Asian Security Plan will put an end to such regional conflicts which the Imperialist countries like USA and expansionist ones like China encourage." 

Moscow had to reorient its approach more towards economic co-operations with the Asian countries, though periodically Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders pressed for Collective Security Systems for Asia .India however felt that a concept like Asian Security System may be considered provided China was excluded; whereas Pakistan straight away rejected and maintained pro China policy. 

**USSR Response on the Massacre in East Pakistan in 1971**

Soviet Government was the first of the major external powers that responded publically to the 25 March crack down in East Pakistan. On 2 April, 1971, President Podgorny sent a letter to President of Pakistan, General Yahya Khan appealing for the adoption of the
most urgent measures to stop the blood shade and repression against the population of East Pakistan and for turning to methods of a peaceful political settlement. He also requested not to misinterpret Soviet motives, as they are guided by the principles of Universal Declaration of Human Rights and by concern for the welfare of the friendly people of Pakistan.\textsuperscript{53} This infuriated Yahya. In reply of 6 April, he wrote, "no country, including the U.S.S.R could allow anti national and unpatriotic elements to proceed to destroy it or to countenance subversion." He further reminded that any interference by outside power would constitute a violation of the United Nations charter. Kosygin assuaged Yahya by writing a milder letter and Moscow on many occasions publically announced that East Pakistan issue was an internal matter of Pakistan. Soviets also some time later expressed its willingness to mediate between two wings of Pakistan, but moment the rapprochement between United States and China became public in the end of July, Soviet did not want to miss the opportunity to restart dialogue with India based on new geo-political situation in South East Asia.\textsuperscript{54}

**Indo-Soviet Treaty**

A broad agreement on the proposed Indo-Soviet treaty was reached during negotiations conducted by the Indian Ambassador to Moscow Mr. D.P.Dhar, in mid-1969, and it is probable that the treaty would have been signed in the first half of 1970 if the political situation in India had permitted. But while quietly negotiations were on with India, Soviet Union from 1969 to mid-1971 continued to maintain its balanced policy in South Asia. In fact it shipped armaments to Pakistan till early 1971.

At this juncture, India was finding it difficult in managing the refugee problem. Return of refugees was possible only if there was an amicable political solution acceptable to Awami League, which was not in the offing by Yahya government. Also with the official response of United States, China, and the Islamic countries etc. maintaining their stand as ‘East Pakistan imbroglio was an internal matter of Pakistan’ and the recent United States and China rapprochement facilitated by Pakistan; made it a mutual necessity to go for a treaty with the Soviet Union. In late July, Indira Gandhi dispatched her trusted emissary, Mr. D.P. Dhar to Moscow to propose conclusion of the treaty at the earliest. However, Moscow was apprehensive of India’s demand to join war should China intervene if there
was another round of Pakistan-India war. But Dhar allayed the fear of physical intervention by Soviet Russia, instead got the "consultation clause" included in the treaty. After clearing each other’s stand, Soviet dispatched its Prime Minister, Kosygin to Delhi who formally signed the treaty on August 9. Text of the Treaty is given in Appendix 5. It was a real diplomatic coup on the part of Indira Gandhi which made good strategic sense both to India as well as to Soviet Union. Despite the treaty, for some time Soviets believed that ‘the political crisis and refugee problems are two different issues which should not be linked.’

Soviets did not want another Indo-Pak war. As expected the treaty drew flaks from the United States, and Pakistan, however significantly China kept quiet. Soviet Ambassador to United States assured Kissinger that, Moscow is doing its best to restrain India; Soviets want peace and stability in the Indian sub continent. On invitation from the Soviets, Pakistan’ foreign secretary visited Moscow in late August to fully understand the implications of the treaty. Pakistan was also informed through their ambassador that the main purpose of the treaty is not to encourage India for another war but rather to restrain her. But during Pakistan’s foreign secretary Sultan Khan’s meeting with Mr. Grmyko on 6 September, it was conveyed that East Pakistan’s problem can only be resolved by political means but despite Soviets’ earlier advice Yahya government resorted to bloodshed and persecution. Gromyko further stated that Soviet Union values its relation with Pakistan and emphasized again that the Pakistan government should follow the path of constraints.55

Since some months India commenced its diplomatic offensive by sending its emissaries to many countries and also by writing to almost 72 countries sensitizing East Pakistan’s predicament, India’s position and seeking an immediate solution to Bangladesh problem. Indira Gandhi accompanied by Mr. D.P. Dhar visited Moscow on 27 September and on the next day had a marathon six hours meeting with Brezhnev, Podgorny, and Kosygin. Mrs. Gandhi urged them to help in finding a political solution to Bangladesh crisis starting with release of Mujibur Rahman. Simultaneously she requested for military equipments, arms and ammunitions to enable India to prepare for a contingency should diplomatic means fail. Soviet leaders reply was in affirmative along
with a caution for ‘restraint’.” The Soviet Government reportedly agreed to one billion dollars in military and economic aid, but with no specific programs designated”.

The Soviet-Indian joint statement issued from Moscow on 29 September 1971 is reproduced:

Taking note of the developments in East Bengal since March 25, 1971, both sides consider that the interests of the preservation of peace demand that urgent measures should be taken to reach a political solution to the problems which have arisen there, paying regard to the wishes, the inalienable rights and lawful interests of the people of East Bengal as well as the speediest and safe return of the refugees to their homeland in conditions safeguarding their honour and dignity.

It was amply clear that Moscow did not want a show down between India and Pakistan even at that stage and therefore advised both India and Pakistan leadership accordingly. But Moscow too understood that a permanent solution can only be achieved by political means. However, post Indira Gandhi’s visit to Moscow, Soviet Union became more sympathetic to India’s compulsions. Also, there was gradual shift in Moscow’s position on Bangladesh.

On 14 October while attending a function at Persepolis in Iran organized by the Shah of Iran to celebrate 2500 years of Persian Empire, Yahya had a private meeting with Podgorny in the sideline. Yahya stated in an interview that Podgorny has assured him that the Indo-Soviet treaty was not directed against Pakistan. During this meeting, Podgorny wanted to know Yahya’s plans for transferring power to the civilian elected leaders of East Pakistan. He also suggested to Yahya to begin the process by releasing Mujibur Rahman and having a dialogue with him as Mujib’s acceptance of the plan is necessary. Yahya retorted by saying that, he will never talk to ‘that traitor’ (Mujib). Yahya said he is hopeful that in a few months, his plans to transfer power will fructify. Podgorny cautioned Yahya that the time is running out. Following this meeting,” Radio Pakistan announced Soviet Union’s keen interest in the unity and integrity of Pakistan. The Soviet Premier during his visit to Canada in October indicated that the Soviet President in his discussion with President Yahya in Iran asked for the restoration of democracy in East Pakistan, the freeing of the Sheikh and arrangements for the return of refugees from India.”
Soviet Air Marshal P.S.Koutakhov arrived in New Delhi on October 30, to coordinate arms and military equipments supply to Indian Defence Forces and arrange for their immediate transfer. Interestingly Soviet Aircraft loaded with military weapons meant for India had a refueling halt at Lahore airport and the Pakistan Government was aware of the purpose the aircraft was going to India.62

As there was no change in situation, India asked Soviets for ‘consultation’ as per Article IX of the Indo-Soviet Treaty. Nikolai Firyubin, Deputy Foreign Minister came to India in early November and had an extended stay and had dialogues In New Delhi as well as in Calcutta with the Bangladesh Government in Exile. Around the same time, Vladimir Kudryavtsav, A soviet expert on Asian matters visited India and described the Bangladesh war a War of National Liberation, first office bearer of the Soviet Union to make such statement in public.63

Gradual shift in Soviet policy became visible from the beginning of November. The Soviet press started covering Bangladesh related news and articles extensively. The commentators began to criticise the performance of the government of Pakistan in Bangladesh.64

When the U.S.Government dispatched a naval taskforce into the Bay of Bengal, the Soviet Ambassador Nikolai Pekov, assured Indian Government that The Soviet Union “will not allow the Seventh Fleet to intervene” on the Bangladesh War.65

Role of China

Historical background

Since the time of India’s independence Chinese policy towards India reflected its ambivalence stand. In 1949, China made an uncharitable comment on India’s Nehru Government a “lackey of the Westen imperialists”. However relations between the two neighbours improved in due course and in 1954 treaty on Tibet that included Panchsheel (Five Principles) was signed. Sisson & Rose observes that:

China used India, with Nehru’s enthusiastic concurrence, as a channel of communication to the …..noncommunist states in Asia and Africa….Hindia – Chini, bhai bhai (Chinese and Indians are brothers) was the slogan used by both New Delhi and Beijing to describe their relationship. “Hindi –Chini, bhai bhai” became “Hindi –Chini bye bye” with the outbreak of a bitter dispute over the
Sino-Indian border in 1959….culminated in the brief, but, intense, Sino-Indian War of October-December 1962. From that point on China’s policy objectives in South Asia fundamentally changed……to one in which New Delhi became the primary target of Chinese policy in the region…….The simultaneous crises in China’s relations with India and the Soviet Union in the early 1960s induced Beijing to undertake a concerted campaign to improve and expand its relations with Pakistan.66

China continued its 1962 Indo-China War hostility towards India till 1965 by articulation through various means like Chinese press, official statements and notes, and the choice of words by their leaders at various international events. Since 1963, China became closer to Pakistan by reorienting her policy after 1962 Ind-China War. By 1963, Bhutto could declare that an attack on Pakistan would involve the “largest state in Asia” China’s hostility towards India was on three accounts, they were, border dispute; India’s cordial relations with the Super Powers; and China’s new friendship with Pakistan.67

Mr. K. Subramanyam, a well know Indian civilian strategist observed:

In 1965, the attitude of China was of acute hostility, anti-Indian both in a declared and an implied manner. On the Rann of Kutch issue, China accused India ‘big nation chauvinism and expansionism’. It claimed that border has never been delineated and that Pakistan was experiencing what China had in 1962. It sympathized with Pakistan, ‘just stand’ in opposing the ‘Indian policy of military expansion’………..on the Indo-Pakistani hostilities of September 1965,…China squarely condemned India for being the aggressor. There was no equivocation, nor any attempt to see or present the Indian point of view…. On the issue of Kashmir….it maintained that India has ruthlessly exploited the Kashmiri people……..China therefore, supported the right of the Kashmiri people to self –determination.68

Post Tashkent conference, China understood that actual military intervention against India in support of Pakistan would incur high price and thus rejected Pakistani request of “specific security commitments that would obligate the Chinese to intervene another Indo-Pakistani conflict”69
Chinese Reaction to Bangladesh Developments

First time on 3 April 1971, New China News Agency (NCNA), in a broadcast over Radio Peking, reported the developments in Bangladesh where General Yahya’s statements over Radio Pakistan made on 26 March in which he blamed the secessionist elements of the Eastern Wing. It also highlighted that Pakistan had lodged a number of strong protests against India’s blatant interference in the internal matters of Pakistan. It also covered Indian External Minister’s statement of 26 March that the Indian Government ‘cannot but be gravely concerned at events taking place close to our borders’. In addition it referred the resolution of the Indian Parliament stating that it ‘cannot remain indifferent’. An article in the party organ, People’s Daily, denounced India, U.S. and Soviet Russia for interfering in the internal affairs of Pakistan. Chou-En-lai sent a letter to General Yahya Khan, President of Pakistan stating that what was “happening in Pakistan at present was purely the internal affair of Pakistan which can only be settled by Pakistani people themselves and which brooks no foreign interference”. It also said that ‘we have noted that Indian Government has been carrying out gross interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan by exploiting the internal problems of Pakistan.” 70. The letter is placed at Appendix 6.

Sisson& Rose succinctly comments that “this letter was a masterpiece of evasion and subterfuge......it ended with a statement with a pledge of Chinese support to Pakistani people -but not specifically to the Yahya Government.” 71

Chinese Consul in Karachi, on 25 May said that the Chinese Government and people will always firmly support Pakistan in its just struggle to safeguard national independence and territorial integrity. 72

During the next couple of months, the Chinese Government, except for periodic denunciations of Indian interference in Pakistan; did not make any serious move relating to Bangladesh crisis. By October, no satisfactory political solution was brought in to resolve the crisis in East Pakistan. Indo- Pak War became imminent. On November 1, Radio Pakistan quoted Yahya as having told an interviewer that China would intervene if India launched a war. 73 To master Chinese support in context to Bangladesh crisis, Pakistan sent a delegation consisting of Bhutto , General Gul Hasan and Air Marshall Rahim Khan. The delegation was in China from 5-8 November. China’s Acting Foreign
Minister of China, Mr. Chi Peng -Fei in his banquet speech on 7 November repeated the essence of Chou En lai‘s letter to Yahaya written on 11 April. Once again the issue was termed an internal matter of Pakistan to be ‘handled by its own people; and India was accused of meddling into Pakistani affair. He further suggested that ‘ disputes between states should be settled by the two sides concerned through consultations and by resorting to force.’ The speech ended with Chinese rhetoric of expression support to Pakistan in their just struggle to defend their sovereignty and national independence. 

In a meeting with Chou Enlai, Air Marshall Rahim requested the Chinese to provide thirty fighter planes along with other military supplies. Bhutto asked the Premier whether China would consider joining Pakistan in the event of Indo-Pakistan War. Zhou’s reply was very specific. He said that the war was unlikely. If that at all happens then Chinese military forces would not intervene directly in support of Pakistan, but political and material support would be provided.

But on return to Pakistan, Bhutto made a grand announcement, that China has assured support to Pakistan if war between India and Pakistan occurs. On the outbreak of war, Chou Enlai in an interview to Neville Maxwell of Sunday Times said, “if India should brazenly provoke war, she would taste in the end the bitter fruit.” On December 9 in a diplomatic reception in Peking, Chou-en Lai wished Pakistan’s victory in the war.

**Response from the Islamic Countries**

At the end of June 1971, twenty two Islamic countries attended a conclave in Jedda where Pakistan raised the concern of external interference (India) which may result in disintegration of Pakistan and sought support of the Muslim brotherhood. Unanimously, Islamic countries expressed their support for Pakistan’s unity and territorial integrity. India did not expect much support from the Islamic countries of Africa, West Asia and Southeast Asia, but gave importance to their views. Since middle of 1971, India sent her emissaries to all the major Islamic countries to explain that, it was not a conflict between Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan, but between two hostile Muslim communities of East and West Pakistan. India was partially successful in her aim to diminish their support to Pakistan. Leaders like Anwar Sadat (Egypt) and other Islamic countries did not want to
see break up of Pakistan. Almost all the Islamic states gave moral support to Pakistan and a few gave financial and material support during the war.  

Response from Other European Countries

In the last week of October, 1971, Mrs. Indira Gandhi undertook tour to Western Europe and the USA to appraise ground situations and to draw attention of some of the world leaders. Belgium agreed with the Indian viewpoint on the political solution of the Bangladesh problem with a guarantee for safe return of the refugees. An article titled ‘Genocide‘ published on 13 June 1971, in UK’s Sunday Times by Anthony Mascarenhans, a Pakistani reporter shook the United Kingdom while they read the gory details of Pakistan army’s brutality in East Pakistan. A team of British parliamentarian visited East Pakistan to find that Pakistan’s propaganda blaming India for the crisis in East Pakistan baseless. During end October, Indira Gandhi met Prime Minister Edward Heath to explain the present situation in East Pakistan and the problems India facing with such huge number of refugees. British views were generally in consonance with Indian views that a peaceful political solutions to be found to restore democratic rights which will facilitate return of the refugees and the refugees. On November 9, Heath wrote to Yahya requesting him to release Mujib and commence dialogue with the Awami League leaders. But Yahya was obstinate as before and refused to have any dialogue with Mujib. By end of November, Heath realized that it would be prudent for U.K. to align with India than Pakistan.

The French President, M. Georges Pompidou, too favoured for a political solution in East Pakistan as he felt crisis occurred because of political reasons. He also cautioned that if political solution is not found then the Indian sub continent will be swept off in a storm with consequences hard to predict. During her three day visit to West Germany, Indira Gandhi met Chancellor Willy Brandt of West German thrice. Brandt too followed similar line and stated that for the sake of maintaining peace and stability in that region, a political solution to the problem of East Pakistan must be found that will eliminate the existing situation of strife and ultimately enable the refugees to return and the Federal Government is ready to support measures that will help in finding a political solution. But
Brandt also realized importance of having a dialogue with Mujibur Rahman and assured Mrs. Gandhi that he will write to President of Pakistan. 83

Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia after attending the Shah of Iran’s Persepolis celebration visited India and on the Bangladesh crisis he said that the problem can be solved by a political solution acceptable to the elected representatives of East Pakistan. Tito believed that a political solution is possible even at that stage possibly by granting autonomy to East Pakistan. 84

Interestingly all these leaders knew very well that Yahya has not been so far able to offer a political solution that will satisfy both East and West wings of Pakistan. Yahya and his Government was adamant on releasing Mujib and dealing with him and the top Awami leaders now part of Bangladesh Government in Exile, functioning from Calcutta. This was the indispensable first step for a political solution. The time was indeed running out, so was patience of the people of East Pakistan, and Government of India.

**Role of Neighbouring Countries during 1971 Crisis**

Amongst the neighboring countries, Nepal by far took neutral stand though because of not so cordial relation with India during 1970-71, initially Nepal supported Pakistan’s stand. As flying of Pakistan’s aircrafts over the Indian air space was not permitted, Sri Lanka allowed refueling and transit facility to Pakistan aircrafts during 1971. This irked India because just a few months back, India assisted Sri Lankan government in quelling communist insurrections by rushing Indian Armed Forces. Pakistan too sent its armed forces during this crisis of Sri Lanka. It was a precarious situation for Indian Air Force manning the Air Traffic Control in Srilanka had to direct Pakistani Air Force for their military operation happening in East Pakistan. Indian Air Force raised objection. In August, External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh rushed to Sri Lanka to request Mrs. Srimavo Bandaranaike Government to stop this transit and refueling facility to Pakistan. Bandaranaike also offered a commonwealth solution between India and Pakistan. But since beginning, Indira Gandhi made it very clear that problem in East Pakistan was a problem between the two wings of Pakistan and as such to resolved between them. Myanmar under rule of General Ne Win was not vociferous during the liberation struggle, though many Rohingya refugees fled to Maynamer during the brutal operation.
of Pakistani army. Apparently he did not want to draw much international attention. Bhutan was supportive of India and Bangladesh during this period.

**International Response: Unofficial**

Interestingly international media and many luminaries took pro Bangladeshi stand and could forecast separation from Pakistan at the beginning of the civil war. A few examples are cited below.

On the brutality of Pakistan Army in East Pakistan, Time magazine of United States wrote as early as 5 April 1971, “Even if President Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan is prepared to accept casualties of a geometrically greater magnitude, the outcome is likely to be the final breakup of East and West Pakistan and the painful birth of a new nation named Bangladesh.” New Statesman, London commented on 16 April, 1971 that, “If blood is the price of a people’s right to independence, Bangladesh has overpaid”. News Week, 2 August wrote, “Pakistan died in March…..says a Karachi editor….There can never be one nation in the future, only two enemies.” Prof. Louis Dumont, a Director of Institute of Higher studies, Paris wrote in *Le Monde* on 6 August, 1971 “the Pakistan of yesterday is dead”.

In The Sunday Times of 11 July 1971, a former British Minister and a British member of Parliamentary delegation that visited East and West Pakistan wrote:

“This downward spiral can only be reversed by political solution acceptable to the people of East Pakistan. In practice this must mean a political solution acceptable to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League………Yahya Khan must either accept this or continue with his policy of suppression- a policy which is bound to fail sooner or later……That the United States should line up with China in supplying armed forces of Pakistan at the moment is something that defies any rationale explanation……There should be the most explicit condemnation from the governments and parliaments and influential commentators from all kind……it must be made clear that the world identify themselves with the aspirations of the people of Bangladesh, and that are united in demanding shift in policy by the government of West Pakistan”.
Prof. J.K. Galbraith said that, “A peaceful political solution recognizing the right of the people of East Bengal to govern themselves was the only way out of the crisis……..The people of Bangladesh had to be in charge of their destiny, of their own lives, their politics and polity. A solution could not be one that involved rule by and from West Pakistan.”

Mr. Mitchell Sharp, the Canadian Foreign Minister, “It would be irresponsible to recommend the division of Pakistan………..It may be that this will turn out to be the only solution.”

Conclusion
From the very beginning of its coming into being Pakistan thought of United States as its primary source of military and diplomatic supports against India. When the civil war broke out in East Pakistan, India was getting closer to Soviet Russia and Nixon tilted more towards military ruled Pakistan as Nixon perceived that India, a client state of communist Soviet Russia is all set to destroy their ally Pakistan. To protect Pakistan during the liberation war, United States gave economic aid towards relief of refugees. It urged India not to use military option and also advised Pakistan to settle disputes with East Pakistan. Yahya on request of Nixon facilitated rapprochement. US tilted towards Pakistan and when the war ultimately occurred; Nixon administration resorted to ‘gun boat diplomacy’ by deploying Naval Task Force USS Enterprise in the Bay of Bengal. Nixon wrongly presumed that liberation war was a resultant fall out of cold war. It failed to visualize it was a fundamental development in the sub-continental affairs and its resolution was to be found from within rather than through the influence of external powers.

How does one explain Nixon’s Gun Boat diplomacy? Was it not an attempt to save a client state by threatening India? What about Nixon-Kissinger coaxing Chinese to open third front to scare India? Indo-USSR Friendship Treaty signed on 9 August 1971 was a game changer which clearly made two super powers getting closer to two regional states of South Asia to maintain balance of power. This treaty was of great use during the liberation war, by checking physical participation of China and bringing a semblance of power equation between the super powers in South Asia and in the Indian Ocean zone. Most importantly, U.S.S.R. view point during the debate and use of veto power during
voting in UN Security Council allowed India and the Mitro Bahini some time to conclude
the swift military operation in East Pakistan giving birth of a new nation on 16 December
1971.

From the analysis of the official response of international bodies it can be deduced that
there were divergent views to 1971-South Asia crisis. By far there was a general
consensus that influx of millions of East Pakistani refugees was an unbearable burden for
India not only from economic point of view but also the danger it created to imbalance
the social harmony. But there was no uniform view on creating requisite conditions for
refugees to return home. On the merit of question of self-determination of the people of
Bangladesh, two trends were discernible: (a) It was an internal matter of Pakistan and
there was no warrant for the international community even to discuss it; (b) It was not a
matter solely within the domestic jurisdiction of Pakistan, and the situation called for a
political solution.

From the analyses of international unofficial views, the picture of support for the
democratic rights for the Bangladeshis, condemnation of Pakistan’s action, US inaction,
and Yahya’s obstinacy in not talking to Mujibur Rahman and India’s legitimate
involvement to get over the refugee problem get wide coverage.

In fact after Indira Gandhi’s exhaustive final phase of foreign tours in quest of peace
preceded by the tours of many leaders like Mr. Jay Prakash Narayan, Mr. Atal Bihari
Bajpayee, Mr. Siddhartha Sankar Ray, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, Mr. Swaran Singh etc., to
many countries across the globe drew conclusion that India has to fight it alone though
can bank on USSR support in the United Nations.

Srinath Raghavan makes a very relevant observation when he says, ‘war makes strange
bedfellows’. Very interestingly there were a few unexpected developments during the
preparatory period of 1971 Indo–Pakistan War. Anwar Sadat of Egypt, whom India
supported during Arab–Israel War of 1967, and condemned Israel for attacking,
supported Pakistan on the basis of Muslim brotherhood. Following this episode, Israel
with whom India did not have any diplomatic relations, on the advice of Mr. D. N.
Chatterjee, a Joint Secretary posted as Indian Ambassador in Paris was contacted secretly
through an influential person of Israel named Zabludowicz for emergency help with
ammunitions and weapons. Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir obliged by secretly
airlifting arms which originally was produced for Iran and ammunition meant for Israel Army to India along with instructors in the speediest manner. Details of this aspect are available in Haskar papers archived at Jawahar Lal Nehru Library, New Delhi which were less known till publications of couple of recent books.\textsuperscript{89}

Now after exhausting all the diplomatic options for an amicable political solutions to the problem of East Bengal which could have paved the path of return of the ten million refugees; India opted to exercise ‘the military option’ as instrument of achieving her national objective. After consulting with the Chiefs of the armed forces, it was felt absolute necessary to carry out a swift operation before ceasefire is forced upon India by the United Nations Security Council. Her primary objective was capture of maximum territory in East Pakistan so that Bangladesh Government in Exile can be relocated at the earliest in their soil. In the meanwhile Indira Gandhi through various inputs, assessed that China is unlikely to physically participate in the proposed war because of snow covered passes and also because majority of its troops deployed opposite Manchuria against the Russians. Information on failure of Bhutto led team that visited Peking in the first week of November to obtain China’s assurance of physical participation in the possible Indo- Pak war, was also passed by Mr. Brajesh Mishra then stationed in Peking. Indira put the armed forces in the final gear in ‘ready to go position’. Indira Gandhi and General Manekshaw, Joint Chief of Staff, took a calculative risk based on the capability of the armed forces. Now India was waiting for the most appropriate strategic timing. Indian army commenced selective preliminary operations (nibbling actions) from 22 November in East Pakistan. Some documents mentions the date as 21 December. Evidences suggest that India decided to commence war from 4\textsuperscript{th} December. But ,as the situation unfolded , Pakistan commenced the two front all out war against India with the preemptive air strike on 3\textsuperscript{rd} December 1971 . India was thus saved by Pakistan to be seen as aggressor and this action of Pakistan officially made her the party who started the war.
Photographs of the clippings of selected Indian and Pakistani News Papers dated 4th December 1971

(Source: Race to Dacca, a coffee table book published by HQ Eastern Command, Kolkata)
End Notes: Chapter -V


18. Richard Sisson and Leo Rose, *War and Secession, Pakistan, India and the Creation of Bangladesh*, University of California Press, 1990, pp.256-57. Regarding the widely talked ‘U.S. tilt towards Pakistan’, Kissinger in his book, *White House Years*, has written a chapter on ‘Tilt’. Here he mentions that actually if there was any tilt, then it was for India as the State Department officials mostly favoured India’s position.


44. Sisson and Rose, *War And Secession, Pakistan, India , And the Creation of Bangladesh*, p.237-38.

45. K.P.S.Menon, *Steady Growth of Relationship*, cited in V.V.Balabush-evich and Bimla Prasad(Eds.),n,9,p.34.

46. Sisson and Rose,p.238.

47. *India, Ministry of External Affairs, Foreign Affairs Record (New Delhi), Vol XII, No.1,January,1966,pp.3-4(here after cited as FAR).*


49. *The Hindustan Times, 1 June, 1969.*


52. Sisson & Rose, pp.239-40.

53. Ibid.240-41.

54. Ibid.241-42.


61. Muhith, Bangladesh Emergence of a Nation, p.348.


63. Times of India (New Delhi), 16 November, 1971.

64. Muhith, pp. 248-49.


69. Sisson & Rose, p.249.


71. Sisson & Rose, p.250.


74. Statement as reported by Peking Review of November 12, 1971, quoted in Muhith, *Bangladesh: Emergence of a Nation*, p.354.

75. Sisson & Rose, p.251.


78. Sisson & Rose, pp.204-5.


84. Regarding Tito’s visit and interaction with the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, please see P.N. Haskar Papers, File No.172,NMML and Bangladesh Documents :165 and 169. Also read, Srinivas Raghavan, p.180.


