

# PAKISTANIAAT

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## The 1971 Indo-Pakistan War

Guest Editor:

Dr. Cara Cilano, University of North Carolina, Wilmington

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# Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies

Volume 2, Number 3, December 2010

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*Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* Vol. 2, No. 3 (2010)

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*Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* Vol. 2, No. 3 (2010)

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## Table of Contents

### Editorial

Too Soon?: Pakistan and the 1971 War Cara Cilano .....	i
---	---

### Articles

The Break-Up of Pakistan Philip Oldenburg .....	1
The Birth of Bangladesh/Nefarious Plots and Cold War Sideshows Roger Vogler .....	24
Superpower Relations, Backchannels, and the Subcontinent Luke A. Nichter and Richard A. Moss .....	47
Pakistani-Chinese Relations: An Historical Analysis of the Role of China in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 Mavra Farooq .....	76

### Reviews

Shailah Abdullah's <i>Saffron Dreams</i> Deborah Hall .....	92
Ali Seth's <i>The Wish Maker</i> David Waterman .....	96
Afzal Ahmed Syed's <i>Rococo and Other Worlds</i> Taffy Martin .....	99
Translating a Poetic Discourse: <i>Modern Poetry of Pakistan</i> Qaisar Abbas .....	102

### Notes and Commentaries

The Conflict between Human Growth and Economic Growth Asad Zaman .....	106
<i>Pakistan – Terre de rencontre – L’art du Gandhara</i> David Waterman .....	109

### Poetry and Prose

Betrayal Rizwan Akhtar .....	114
A Scribe is Visited by a Jinn in a Sugarcane Field Shadab Zeest Hashmi.....	115
Notes for my Husband Shadab Zeest Hashmi.....	116

### Notable Pakistan-Related Texts

List of Recent Pakistan-Related Texts David Waterman .....	117
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### Announcements

Statements in Support of Fawzia Afzal-Khan’s <i>Lahore with Love</i> .....	122
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## Editorial

### Too Soon?: Pakistan and the 1971 War

By Cara Cilano

During the chitchat that often precedes the start of class, I recently heard my students talking about whether they planned to attend a “too soon” party. One young woman explained by way of an example: “A friend of mine went to a ‘too soon’ party in a dress made from black garbage bags. She covered her face in black shoe polish and stuck a fake bird, also covered in black, on her head. She was the BP oil spill.” While some may view the humor distasteful or inappropriate, the concept behind a “too soon” party does, nonetheless, ask us to reflect upon how much time needs to pass before we can achieve a productive critical distance from an event. By way of an opening salvo to this special issue of *Pakistaniaat* on the events of 1971, it’s precisely upon this question of temporal and critical distance that I want to focus. My intention here is to explore the timeliness of critical discussions of 1971 by encouraging an examination of the notion of the archive, especially in how it shapes what we think we know about this period, as well as how it may shape what we will know in the future.

Of course, the concept of “too soon” implies a question: too soon for whom? And, in the context of the events of 1971, the responses to that question vary significantly. From a Bangladeshi perspective, the answer would likely be “too late!” Indeed, in July 2002, then President Pervez Musharraf must have heard a resounding “too late!” when he traveled to Dhaka to express his “regrets” for the war itself. Much of Dhaka’s civic life came to an abrupt halt during Musharraf’s visit. Protestors were motivated to disrupt the business of everyday living in order to communicate the inadequacy of Musharraf’s framing of 1971 as an “unfortunate period” marked by “excesses” that are “regrettable” (“Dhaka Closes Down”).<sup>1</sup> The perceived insufficiency of Musharraf’s gestures, compounded by the fact that, from certain perspectives, they came thirty years too late, reflects the stark contrast between the amount of scholarly and literary commentary by Bangladeshis and Pakistanis on the war.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, from a Pakistani perspective, Musharraf’s visit to Dhaka may have been too soon. In fact, one could draw some connections between Musharraf’s 2002 trip and the release in late 2000 of *The Report of the Hamoodur Rehman*



*Commission of Inquiry into the 1971 War*, which had just been declassified by the Pakistani government. The *Report* was begun in 1972 at the behest of Z.A. Bhutto, who empanelled the Commission (three judges) to investigate why Pakistan lost the war. Since most of the Pakistani military personnel were held as POWs in India until 1974, the Commission was only able to complete its *Report* in that year by means of the *Supplement* to the main document. While the public was aware of the Commission's proceedings, the resulting documents themselves were not available to the public; every Pakistani government, up to and including, for a time, Musharraf's, kept the *Report* and its *Supplement* under lock and key. The events surrounding (and precipitating?) the *Report*'s declassification further point to the Pakistani government's unwillingness to reveal perhaps one of its most important official documents about the war. The declassification came about because an Indian weekly, *India Today*, leaked a portion of the *Supplement* in the summer of 2000. Before making most of the *Report* and *Supplement* available in December of that year, Musharraf went on record saying, "What happened in '71 was a disgrace to the nation. Should we remember such disgraces?... Why the hue and cry now when most of the people are not alive?" ("Musharraf"). My point here is not to speculate over Musharraf's motivations but rather to note his reluctance, which, metonymically, stands in for Pakistan's own sense that, in 2000, it may have been too soon to broach the topic of the 1971 war. In such a context, one cannot doubt Naveeda Khan's more recent assessment that there is "little sustained work on 1971 in Pakistan" (5).<sup>3</sup>

The fact of the *Supplement*'s leak by *India Today* brings up another way of addressing the "too soon?" question. By positioning the "too soon?" question against our knowledge of 1971, we can examine the sources from which we gain our understandings, as well as the methods by which we construct these understandings. No matter their disciplinary training, critics turn to the archive—be it historical or scholarly—in order to formulate and situate their work in relation to what precedes it. Jeffrey Wallen offers perhaps the most customary understanding of the archive when he describes it as "a repository, a place of storage" (261). For the researcher, the archive presents, according to Wallen, an "encounter" with the "systemic processes of ordering and transforming experience" (276), a transformation that, in part, goes to deeming the properly "historical" from the detritus of the past. Francis Blouin acknowledges this conceptualization of the archive and its functions, remarking that it relies upon a series of collective assumptions, including "a shared interest in the importance of institutions, a shared sense of prominent actors, a shared view of seminal events, and a shared sense of national boundaries and definitions" (296). When viewed critically, however, such a conceptualization of the formation of the archive, as well as its attendant functions, proves problem-

atic. That is, the archive directly shapes how we know the past: the archive selects, orders, and transforms the past, as Wallen has it. Further, as Blouin continues, the archive emerges out of the same “cultural dynamic[s]” that deem certain actors, events, documents, and so on, worthy of preserving in the first place (297). The archive itself, then, is a site of power in that it produces and delimits knowledge. Its delimiting capabilities are born out explicitly in cases, such as the one concerning *The Report of the Hamoodur Rehman Commission*, when leaks reveal the control—or lack thereof— governments wield over the archive’s contents.<sup>4</sup>

The possibility of a leak invites us to rethink the archive itself. Indeed, a leak is an invitation to acknowledge the temporal and epistemological orientations of the archive. In his formulation of the archive, Jacques Derrida de-emphasizes its conventional temporal orientation: “[T]he question of the archive is not ... a question of the past. This is not the question of a concept dealing with the past which might *already* be at our disposal or not at our disposal ...” (27). By NOT viewing the archive as the repository of the past, Derrida also calls into question the power to control the archive. Specifically, Derrida contends that participation in the construction and interpretation of the archive serves as an exercise in democracy (11). The possibility of a leak is instructive here in that a leak signals the scope of the archive even as it points to its permeability or, more properly, the permeability of its control.<sup>5</sup> By pointing to the archive’s unruliness, so to speak, a leak can indicate where and how the power structure that governs the archive is vulnerable.<sup>6</sup> And here is where democratizing participation can begin. More people can actively select, order, and transform the past through the collection of oral histories or “histories from below,” for example, and also through the consultation of non-factually verifiable discourses, such as the literary and the filmic. This possibility for expansion through participation reorients the archive epistemologically in that it calls into question what’s “worth” preserving and whose experiences matter. At the same time, expansion also reorients the archive toward the future in that increased participation and an expanded notion of what’s worth knowing functions inclusively, casting knowledge not as finite content but as infinite, collaborative production. Indeed, for Derrida, the archive is “the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow” (27). With this understanding of the archive, we can address the “too soon?” questions cynically or optimistically. For the cynics, the potential openness of the archive may prompt the view that “real” or “definitive” understanding will always be deferred. For the optimist, however, the point is not to reach definitive knowledge but to create the conditions for inclusive and critical public discourse.

What scholarly commentary there is on Pakistan and 1971 begins to enact a new kind of relationship with the archive and, thus, encourages participation in the

construction and interpretation of it. In her examination of the historical treatments of Pakistan, post-1971, Naveeda Khan observes that critical discourse does not “actually attend to the events of 1971” (5). Instead, as Khan argues, it “recursively extend[s] to the origins of Pakistan” (5-6) in order to lengthen an analytic trajectory that frames Pakistan’s national ills as endemic from its inception (3). As Khan suggests, scholarly treatments of 1971 subsume the events of that year into a larger narrative that precedes the country’s dissolution, thereby rendering the secession of East Pakistan as yet another moment in a story already written rather than as an episode that may require an entirely different analytic paradigm. If Khan’s assessment stands up, then post-1971 critical discourse approaches the scholarly archive as that closed repository of the past, the site one visits to gather the information and narratives one needs to perpetuate the governing structures of the archive. Khan’s own work calls such usage of the archive into question. Where she sees the perpetuation of “crisis narratives” in Pakistani history, including narratives of “the failed state, failed nationalism, and failed sovereignty” (3), Khan would substitute or augment the story by way of the argument that “belongingness [for Pakistanis] is premised upon acknowledging and mulling over the problems of Pakistan” (8). Khan’s critical impulse, then, suggests that an interrogation of Pakistan and 1971 cannot come soon enough.

By the very nature of her project, Yasmin Saikia’s work also expands the archive so as to render it more inclusive and participatory. Saikia’s critical corpus includes oral histories gathered from Bangladeshis and Biharis who survived the war in what was East Pakistan, from Indians involved in the crisis, and from Pakistani men who fought in the West Pakistani Army. Although the self-framed “victors” of the war, the Bangladeshis, in Saikia’s estimation, were by no means completely open about the conflict. As Saikia contends, “[Her] initial investigation of this [triumphalist Bangladeshi] narrative in newspapers made it evident that government officials, scholars, and political and religious leaders all restricted women’s speech” (“Beyond” 277). Thus, Saikia’s work undertakes the expansion of the archive—or, in Saikia’s terms, gives voice to the “silence” of the archive—through the collection of women’s stories about the war (“Beyond” 277).<sup>7</sup> In her efforts to contribute the stories she collected from these women and from former West Pakistani soldiers to a reframed archive, Saikia makes explicit how she has engaged with the constraints of the archive as it is traditionally conceptualized. With respect to the gendered dynamics of the archive, for example, Saikia declares, “Scholarly obsession with impersonal and rigorous demands for substantiating individual experience with corroborating evidence bring[s] the danger of muzzling, rather than empowering, the voices of women in Bangladesh” (“Beyond” 280). In a similar vein, Saikia’s approach to framing the former soldiers’ narratives entails an “investigat[ion] of

the myriad ways in which an event may be narrated, incorporating personal and collective experiences to, thus, enable an inflection of the official narrative of the history of 1971 from the Pakistani perspective” (“Listening” 179). Here, we see Saikia’s work turning to non-standard—though carefully corroborated—discourse for an enhanced understanding of 1971.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, Saikia makes clear that her own efforts to expand the historical archive relied upon an established scholarly one pioneered in South Asia by historians, feminists, and activists who gathered oral histories about the violence women experienced in the 1947 partition.<sup>9</sup> Saikia’s reliance on the methodologies of oral historians whose work precedes her own illustrates how interventions into (rather than replications of) the very structures of the archive can open the future: Saikia acknowledges that the women she interviewed hoped their stories would enable others “to revisit a historical chapter and to democratize it in order to produce a new community” (“Beyond” 280). And, as with the impulse behind Khan’s work, the histories Saikia helps narrate can’t be told soon enough.

Finally, in my own work with archival materials from the 1971 war, I have hoped to shift the archive’s attendant power structures by pointing out their vulnerabilities. My own training as a literary scholar informs my textual analyses of *The Report of the Hamoodur Rehman Commission* and its *Supplement*. Thus, just as Saikia turns to non-standard discourses in her efforts to expand the archive, I adopt a non-standard methodology in my approach to archival materials in that I rely on the techniques of literary analysis to examine the narration of historical “fact.” At several crucial junctures in the *Report*, for instance, the empanelled judges engage in what I have a speculative discursive mode.<sup>10</sup> As the judges approach their account of the first two weeks of December 1971, they editorialize, placing emphasis on

the difference, between our world-renowned army going down in history as they will now do, as the army which was defeated in the field of battle and dishonorably surrendered, ...and an army which continued fighting gallantly under the heaviest imaginable odds until the United Nations, recognising by an unprecedented vote the justice of their cause, stepped in to impose a ceasefire. (*Report* 155)

In reality, as we know, the UN Security Council was far from passing unanimously any resolution of this kind.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, the judges’ presentation of their hopes for a UN-sanctioned resolution to the armed conflict draws attention to a narrative vulnerability in that it voices what they wished had happened. Gerald Prince refers to the act of narrating a “wished for” scenario as an act of “disnarrating.” Disnar-

ration warrants attention for it signals narrative alternatives; that is, the received narrative constitutes only one of several ways of telling the story (Prince 5). In the above cited passage, the judges' indulgence in an "if only..." narrative form inadvertently also calls into question the story as it has been recorded and received. In other words, narrative moments such as this one regarding the army's surrender call attention to the deliberateness—the selectivity, the biases, the silences—which comprise the *Report's* and, hence, the Pakistani government's "official" version of 1971. In revealing its ambivalence over the story it relays, the *Report* undercuts its own authority. Here, too, we see a repositioning of the archive that encourages a more broadly based participation through acts of interpretation. And, again, the opportunity couldn't arrive soon enough.

### **The Essays in this Special Issue**

The essays included in this special issue of *Pakistaniaat* on the 1971 war carry on the conversation about the events of that year through a collective interest in international relations, especially the relations that bound Pakistan, China, and the US together in this period. Given this shared disciplinary preoccupation, all five of these essays, taken together, construct a lively debate over inter/national motivations and our ability to know fully why primary actors took the decisions they did. At the same time, I am compelled to touch briefly upon each essay's use of and status as archival materials in an effort to encourage another discussion about how we know what we do about Pakistan and 1971.

Philip Oldenburg's work on South Asia is certainly a cornerstone in the scholarly archive, and, thus, I am very pleased to reprint his "The Breakup of Pakistan" as the lead essay in this issue.<sup>12</sup> Oldenburg's essay is a model for the construction and interpretation of the archive on 1971. Regarding the construction of the archive, Oldenburg draws from his own compilation of primary source materials, collected in *Bangladesh: The Birth of a Nation; A Handbook of Background Information and Documentary Sources*, in order to line up such evidence against interviews he conducted with private citizens and government employees. The end result of such an alignment illustrates, first, how non-documentary sources expand the archive, and, second, how their inclusion allows for a re-interpretation of documents or positions otherwise thought to be authoritative. In this vein, Oldenburg's essay reveals, for instance, why the White House's internal communications likely never referred to the situation in East Pakistan as a "genocide." Moreover, Oldenburg's essay also highlights the crucial role leaks to the media played in destabilizing the public statements of the White House, especially where the provision of arms to Pakistan was concerned.

Roger Vogler's essay, "The Birth of Bangladesh," breaks the frame, so to speak, of scholarly discourse by examining archival materials, particularly Kissinger's contributions, from a view inflected by the affective. Vogler's argument—that the US failed to aid the East Pakistanis and the Indians adequately enough—derives from his firsthand experiences as an American on-the-ground in India during the early 1970s. Thus, Vogler positions himself as a witness fully aware of the blatant inadequacies of the US's public statements about the build-up of tensions in South Asia at the time. This position, along with the benefits of retrospection, allow Vogler to highlight how the White House's own fears of media leaks may have prompted closed door sessions and the shutting down of State Department dissent. In effect, Vogler's approach to the archival presentation of Pakistan and 1971, particularly where the US is concerned, reflects Saikia's in that both testify to the need for non-standard discourse's humanizing effects.

Richard A. Moss and Luke A. Nichter's essay, "Superpower Relations, Backchannels, and the Subcontinent," follows Oldenburg's in the new lights it casts on Richard Nixon's and Henry's Kissinger's control over US-Pakistan relations during this period. As does Oldenburg, Moss and Nichter benefit from leaked materials, including especially *The Anderson Papers*, a compilation of Jack Anderson's journalistic exposés of the Nixon White House's approach to the war. Moss and Nichter's unique contribution to the developing scholarly conversation about 1971 and, simultaneously, to the archive itself is the transcription and interpretation of the Nixon tapes, as well as the investigation of newly declassified documents recording the "backchannel" correspondence between Washington and Moscow.<sup>13</sup> According to Moss and Nichter, these newly accessed archival materials change the existing conversation significantly. Indeed, Moss and Nichter use these materials to argue a middle way, neither vilifying the Nixon White House outright nor lauding it, as Nixon's and Kissinger's own memoirs do. Crucially, in spite of how their own work opens up the archive on US-Pakistan relations during the early 1970s, Moss and Nichter, nonetheless, caution readers against deeming that archive complete; rather, they explicitly state that a fuller understanding is only to be had once similarly classified documents from Pakistan, Russia, India, and China become available.

Finally, as if in answer to Moss and Nichter's proviso, Mavra Farooq's essay, "Pakistani-Chinese Relations," sheds light on the relations between Pakistan and China that preceded the 1971 war and arguably informed, according to Oldenburg's and Moss and Nichter's essays, the US's stance throughout the conflict. Indeed, Farooq's essay does offer a compelling elaboration of China's role in this "superpower showdown," in that, in Farooq's account, this country initially did not view good relations with the US as a motivating factor in its own interests



*Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* Vol. 2, No. 3 (2010)

in the subcontinent's latest tensions. Farooq draws upon primary source materials from Pakistan and China, including newspaper coverage and legislative records, to specify the ways that China eventually came closer, thanks to Pakistan's position as an intermediary, to the US's approach to the war in East Pakistan and the one that later developed with India.

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Notes:

1. From a Bangladeshi perspective, several significant aspects of the war remained unresolved, including the repatriation to Pakistan of the stateless Biharis still resident in camps in Bangladesh; the unconditional acknowledgement of the mass murder—perhaps even genocide—and rape of hundreds of thousands of Bengalis; and the economic restitution Bangladesh sees as its due for the decades it suffered under West Pakistan’s internal colonization of East Pakistan.
2. My own totally unscientific experiment reveals that a quick search of the Academic Search Premier database, administered by EBSCOHost and featuring scholarly indices for the social sciences, humanities, arts, engineering, and medical fields, locates over one hundred scholarly articles and books about Bangladesh’s movement toward independence. Again unscientifically, my search in the same database for scholarly work on Pakistan and the war yielded fewer than twenty scholarly articles or books. As for literary output on the war, Niaz Zaman and Asif Farrukhi comment in their recent anthology of creative writing on the war that “[f]amous and not so-famous writers [in Bangladesh], senior and fledgling writers, all have contributed their share to create a vast body of work that has been inspired by 1971 in all genres” (xx). In Pakistan, the situation is notably different. Eleven years after the war, Muhammad Umar Memon lamented the paucity of literary output in Urdu, calling what did exist “sparse and casual” (107). By no means exhaustive, my own recent book on English- and Urdu-language literary responses to the war, *National Identities in Pakistan: The 1971 War in Contemporary Pakistani Fiction*, does testify to the increasing numbers of Pakistani writers who are now grappling with 1971 and its aftermath, but this sum is still modest in comparison to the output of Bangladeshi writers.
3. Khan’s assessment does speak very specifically to the production of scholarly analysis about the war in Pakistan itself and by Pakistanis. Even when one opens the field to include commentary by non-Pakistanis, the scholarly output remains modest—though increasing!—as I mention in the previous footnote.
4. The subversion of this control is one of the reasons why the recent uproar surrounding Wikileaks and its founder, Julian Assange, is so fascinating.
5. The act of declassification also signals the archive’s scope, though it still preserves—or appears to preserve—the government’s control of the archive. Even



classification can work against itself. Here, I think of Valerie Plame Wilson's memoir, *Fair Game: How a Top CIA Agent was Betrayed by Her Own Government*, which contains details the CIA refused to declassify. Thus, whole pages of Wilson's book are blacked out, a visual representation of the indeterminacy of Wilson's story.

6. Leaks emerge under an array of circumstances, and not all of them reveal vulnerabilities. According to Taegy Son, "[L]eaking of specific information is also an important means for the government to control the media" (156).

7. According to her article, Saikia interviewed both Bihari and Bengali women. While these women's identity markers may work to distinguish them from one another, their experience of sexual violence and brutality during the war sadly finds them on common ground ("Beyond the Archive of Silence" 278).

8. In "Beyond the Archive of Silence," Saikia emphasizes that she consulted "supplementary materials," including "government documents, hospital records, social service and rehabilitation reports, photographs, and visual media," all of which substantiated her interviewees' claims (280).

9. In both essays, Saikia cites the work of Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, as well as the work of Urvashi Butalia ("Beyond" 281; "Listening" 203). Saikia also acknowledges her debt to other historians, including Alistair Thomson, Mahmood Mamdani, Jean Hertzfeld, and Shimon Redlich, whose work on oral histories she has found instructive ("Listening" 204).

10. Please see *National Identities in Pakistan*, especially pages 14-26, for the full development of my analysis of the *Report* and its *Supplement*.

11. See FS Aijazuddin's *The White House and Pakistan: Select Declassified Documents, 1969-1974*, especially pages 423-87, for a run through of the happenings at the UN from a US perspective.

12. Many thanks to Philip for agreeing to the reprint and to Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, as well as to Concept Publishing, for permission to do so.

13. In addition to the website Moss and Nichter have constructed to make the Nixon tapes accessible to a wider audience, please also see this site from the Nixon Library: <http://nixonlibrary.gov/aboutus/laws/releases.php>, which provides a sense of just how recently new materials have been made available. The archive grows.

## The Breakup of Pakistan

By Philip Oldenburg

### Introduction

#### *Chronology*

The crisis of the breakup of Pakistan can be divided, in terms of U.S. participation, into roughly four major phases. The first began with the Pakistan army crackdown in the East Wing of Pakistan on the night of March 25/26, 1971.<sup>1</sup> This followed a three-week period of civil disobedience and the exercise of *de facto* governmental power by the Awami League led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The Awami League had won an overwhelming victory in the December 1970 election for the Constituent Assembly, the climax of a movement towards greater autonomy for East Pakistan which began in 1954 or perhaps even earlier. The drive for autonomy was fueled by the economic, political and bureaucratic discrimination against East Bengal by the West Pakistan-dominated central government, exacerbated by the West Pakistani belief (held particularly by the Punjabi-dominated military) that Bengalis were culturally and racially inferior.

The crackdown, in which Sheikh Mujib was captured and thousands of Bengalis were killed—students, Hindus, and members of the police and army, particularly—precipitated a full-scale civil war, a declaration of independence by the Awami League leaders who had fled to India, and, in the view of most observers within the State Department and without the inevitable breakup of Pakistan. As Tajuddin Ahmad, Prime Minister of the Awami League government-in-exile, put it in April, “Pakistan is now dead and buried under a mountain of corpses.”<sup>2</sup>

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\*Originally published in Rudolph, Lloyd, and Susanne Rudolph, eds. *Making U.S. Foreign Policy toward South Asia: Regional Imperatives and the Imperial Presidency*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2008. and *Rpt. of The Regional Imperative: The Administration of US Foreign Policy Towards South Asia Under Presidents Johnson and Nixon*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 1980.

The second phase of the crisis began with the announcement of Henry Kissinger's visit to Peking (July 15) and the signing of the Indo-Soviet friendship treaty (August 9). This phase featured the build-up of guerrilla forces (the Mukti Bahini) inside East Bengal, and the increase of direct and indirect Indian support, against the backdrop of a refugee population in India of nearly ten million by November. It ended with the outbreak of full-scale war between India and Pakistan on December 3rd.

The third phase was the war, in which India, with the help of the Mukti Bahini, quickly defeated the Pakistan army in the East, and while fighting a holding action on the ground on the Western front, used air and naval power to damage Pakistan's military capability. The final phase began with the transfer of power to Sheikh Mujib on January 12, 1972, and ended with U.S. recognition of Bangladesh, on April 4, 1972.

### *Decision-Making and Rationales*

Virtually all the decisions made by the U.S. in this crisis originated in the White House. By and large, explicit rationales for those decisions were *not* communicated to State Department officials, still less to the Congress and the public. Since the end of the crisis, some rationales have been presented, most notably by President Nixon in his "State of the World" message to Congress of February 9, 1972, but what interviewees\* agreed were the *real* reasons for U.S. policy have never been publicly stated. I will discuss some of those decisions in detail below, mentioning others only briefly because of lack of information and space. Having presented what I believe the rationales of each of these decisions were, I will move to a detailed discussion divided into two parts: the facts of the case, and the implications. The study will conclude with a brief sketch of the implications of these decision cases taken together.

Those decisions I will discuss in detail are:

- (1) the decision *not* to comment on the initial "blood-bath" in East Bengal, and, later, the decision not to criticize Pakistan as the killing continued;

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(\*) Much of the material in this study is drawn from interviews with government officials and private individuals, conducted in the summer of 1974. The line of argument presented is entirely my own, however, and when it is necessary to identify the source of a statement as an interview, an asterisk in parentheses is placed in the text, thus: (\*).

- (2) the decision to cut off most arms aid to Pakistan, while continuing to supply some;
- (3) the decision to provide humanitarian relief to refugees in India and to the people who stayed in East Bengal;
- (4) the decision to pursue a political solution of the crisis with the Pakistanis, the Indians, and the exiled Bengali leadership;
- (5) the decision first to attempt to prevent the outbreak of war between India and Pakistan and then to end it once it had begun.

The rationale for the first decision was that the civil war was an internal affair of Pakistan; but the reason for not letting concern for violations of human rights override that principle was the “historical coincidence” that Pakistan was the intermediary in the arrangement of the opening to China. These delicate negotiations, which were initiated in 1969<sup>3</sup> and had reached the stage of the exchange of notes via Pakistan by early 1971, became very serious on March 15th, and a specific invitation (in a sealed envelope) for either Kissinger or Rogers to visit China was conveyed by the Pakistan Ambassador some time before April 6th.<sup>4</sup> Presumably the secrecy of the negotiations, and thus the opening itself,<sup>5</sup> would have been jeopardized by an “unfriendly” gesture to Pakistan at the very moment a breakthrough was achieved.

The reason for not criticizing Pakistan over the violent repression in East Bengal is tied to the generally favorable position vis-a-vis Pakistan that the U.S. adopted. As stated publicly, the pro-Pakistan “tilt” was meant to retain “leverage” with President Yahya Khan. It is likely that the desire to remain the friend to China’s friend contributed to the decision, as did the factor of President Nixon’s personal rapport with President Yahya, and his positive feeling towards Pakistan. (This factor has been emphasized by too many to be discounted, despite Kissinger’s remark that “I do not think we do ourselves any justice if we ascribe policies to the personal pique of individuals.”)<sup>6</sup>

The rationale for cutting off arms aid was simple: the Pakistan army was making use of them in a situation contrary to the agreement under which the U.S. supplied them. The reason for continuing a comparatively small flow of spare parts, etc. was symbolic and was tied to the general pro-Pakistan U.S. stance. The decision to provide humanitarian relief needed no justification, but the proportions of aid given to India compared to aid earmarked for East Bengal underlined the White House position that humanitarian aid was to be the “centerpiece” of the U.S. political-diplomatic effort.

The “political solution” was juxtaposed to a military solution: if the U.S. and others did not succeed in getting a political settlement of the civil war, India

in one way or the other would see that Pakistan was broken up. The rationale was that the U.S. did not wish to see the breakup of Pakistan occur, especially with outside intervention, because that would “destabilize” the region. The need to preserve Pakistan’s “integrity” was even greater in view of her alliance to the U.S. and friendship with China.

The decision to exercise U.S. influence first to prevent the outbreak of war between India and Pakistan and then to end it was of course justified on the ground that war is not a way to solve international disputes (a rationale which, it should be noted, the U.S. General Assembly agreed with by a vote of 104 to 11, with 10 abstentions). A deeper rationale for the U.S. was that since India would win decisively, the “destabilization” of the subcontinent would occur. Also, the defeat of a U.S. ally would place the U.S. in a weak position vis-a-vis the USSR in upcoming summit talks. This latter reason bulks very large during the war. And underlying the “tilt” which was made explicit during the war—i.e. the war should stop because Pakistan was losing it—is the personal factor of President Nixon’s attitude. In Kissinger’s words at the Washington Special Action Group (hereafter WSAG; the minutes constitute the bulk of the “Anderson Papers”) meeting, “. . . the President is not inclined to let the Paks be defeated.”<sup>7</sup>

Let me discuss briefly decisions on economic aid to Pakistan and on the recognition of Bangladesh. The focal points for Congressional action during the crisis were the Gallagher and Church/Saxbe amendments to the Foreign Aid Bill which would have cut off economic aid to Pakistan until the civil war ended. The administration not only opposed those amendments, it also dissented from the Aid-Pakistan consortium recommendation to suspend aid to Pakistan (made in the wake of the leaked World Bank report which noted that the repression in East Bengal was so severe that economic aid could not be utilized there). Again, the rationale for this policy was to preserve leverage with the Pakistanis.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, there was a decision to delay the recognition of Bangladesh—the U.S. recognized Bangladesh on April 4, 1972, fully two months after most of the nations of Europe had extended recognition and nearly a month after Indian troops had left Bangladesh. No plausible rationale was ever given to the State Department (\*), still less the Congress,<sup>9</sup> but it was clearly tied to the China opening—President Nixon postponed considering it until after his trip to China (in late February 1972). Certainly, too, there was a desire to defer to Pakistan, even as the Muslim nations of the Middle East and Africa were doing.

## Violent Repression; and the Register of Dissent

### *The Facts*

After the crackdown on March 25/26, a decision was made to downplay the seriousness of the action and to avoid admitting to the facts of the “blood-bath.” In the initial phase of the civil war, there was, as Senator Kennedy said on the Senate floor on April 1, 1971, “indiscriminate killing, the execution of political leaders and students, and thousands of civilians suffering and dying every hour of the day.”<sup>10</sup> It soon became clear from press reports that Hindus were being singled out for killing,<sup>11</sup> and by June the London *Sunday Times* could use the title “Genocide” for its introduction to one of the best accounts of Pakistan army activities.<sup>12</sup> Senator Kennedy, in a news conference in New Delhi in August, called the Pakistan military action “genocide,”<sup>13</sup> but that word was absent from debate by public figures both before and after August.<sup>14</sup>

The administration was even less willing to come to terms with the possibility that “genocide” was occurring in the later phase of the civil war than they had been willing to condemn the initial violence of March. The first indication of this stance was Washington’s resistance to the Dacca Consul-General’s decision to have Americans evacuated from Dacca in the first week of April (\*), at a time when Pakistan was claiming that the situation had already returned to normal. According to Senator Kennedy, “instead of calling it an ‘evacuation’ . . . the State Department reached into its bag of euphemisms and termed the exodus of Americans a normal ‘thinning out’.”<sup>15</sup>

The U.S. issued a statement deploring the violence at the end of the first week of April, but one view is that that actually reported a decision *not* to pressure Pakistan because it was made so late, nearly two weeks after the crackdown. U.S. officials were reluctant to make public mention of the wide-spread killing or of the facts on actions which could be labeled “genocide.” Archer Blood, Consul-General in Dacca until early June, testified before Senator Kennedy’s subcommittee on refugees on June 26th. Part of his testimony is worth quoting at length:

SENATOR FONG: When the insurgents were put down, were there actions taken by the East Pakistan Army which forced the people to leave?

MR. BLOOD: I don’t see any direct relationship between the level of insurgency and the flow of refugees.

SENATOR FONG: Then why would the refugees leave?

MR. BLOOD: . . . And, subsequently, many Hindus have left because of the way they were treated.

SENATOR FONG: Did many of them leave because they say conditions were imposed on the Hindus that they thought they couldn't live with?

MR. BLOOD: I assume so, yes.

SENATOR FONG: What would those conditions be, sir?

MR. BLOOD: I wouldn't want to go into every detail, because we have reported this in the classified messages. . . . I would prefer not to answer in open session. . . .<sup>16</sup>

The official position was that the refugee outflow was due to continued fighting and the poor economic situation. U.S. efforts were thus aimed at stopping the "fighting" (between the Pakistan army and the Mukti Bahini guerrillas) not at stopping the killing of Hindus and the destruction of their property. Official policy plus the constraints of "cliency" make it most unlikely that "genocide" ever figured in any private communication with the Pakistan government.<sup>17</sup>

While the Dacca consulate was urging condemnation of the violence, seconded by the New Delhi embassy, the Islamabad embassy discounted the reports from Dacca on the grounds that the consulate officials, being limited in their movements, could only be getting "partial" reports (\*). The fact that the Islamabad embassy seemed to give greater credence to its Pakistan government sources than to its own officers in the field, despite close personal ties between the Deputy Chief of Mission and the Consul-General, must have hurt the morale of officers in Dacca. On the other hand, the Islamabad embassy protested on July 15 to the State Department that field reports on predictions of possible famine in East Bengal were being denied in public statements in Washington.<sup>18</sup>

All interviewees agreed that the "tilt" policy position of the U.S. did not affect the reporting of facts to Washington. Even after it had surfaced, during the war, Consul-General Spivack cabled details<sup>19</sup> of his and U.N. Assistant Secretary General Paul Marc Henry's inspection of damage and bomb-rack fragments which indicated Pakistani responsibility for the bombing of the Dacca orphanage (which was blamed on India with much publicity). The Islamabad embassy sent in a report to Washington in which the Defense Representative to Pakistan and the Defense Attache questioned Spivack's conclusion.<sup>20</sup>

The discounting of reports because of their tone and the presumed "cliency" bias of the drafters extended to the reporting of facts as well as to the presentation of estimates and advice on policy. (Ironically, the presumed cliency of Dacca begat



cliency in Islamabad.) But the professionalism of the Foreign Service dictated that the reporting of facts known to be unpalatable not stop.

*Implications*

The maintenance of contact with the Pakistanis, both in the context of the opening to China and with a view towards exerting “leverage” in the future (once the situation in the East had become clear), was clearly a matter of great importance. One non-U.S. source, who discussed the findings of the leaked World Bank report of July with Yahya Khan, says the Pakistan President could not credit its finding that official violence had and was occurring in East Pakistan. The result of a U.S. decision to raise the question of “genocide” might thus have resulted in cutting off communication with the Pakistanis (and especially with Yahya Khan) rather than in changing Pakistan’s policies.

Most sources agreed that almost everyone at the State Department recognized what was going on in East Bengal and would have liked to see if not a U.S. condemnation at least a dissociation of the U.S. from the Pakistan regime. The facts reached the policy-makers in the White House, although there is some difference of opinion on how forceful and articulate the presentation of State Department views were; according to one official, lower levels of State felt it could have been much better, but according to Marvin and Bernard Kalb, Assistant Secretary of State Sisco “battled” with Kissinger in WSAG meetings in December.<sup>21</sup>

Those within the system were apparently satisfied with the channels of dissent open to them. “Official informal” letters were seen by my sources as having considerable importance in making an impact on policy decisions in most cases (in part because they are considered leak-proof, and the leaks of dissent positions seemed to distress the dissenters as much as anyone), but it was implied, not in this crisis, because policy was being made beyond the reach of the “official informal.”

No one who dissented from the U.S. policy in this crisis resigned. It would not be necessary or desirable for an FSO to threaten to resign whenever he objected strongly to a decision. But if the forceful presentation of policy alternatives is considered desirable, it might be worthwhile to make it easier for the FSO to leave the Service, by training him during his career so that he could enter a different career (e.g. university teaching, international business), or by bringing in people from outside the Service into middle-level slots.

Finally, the existence of career sub-cultures, FSOs with academic interests, for example, can provide sub-communities of knowledgeable professionals who can informally sustain the dissenter in responsible dissent. There is some evidence



that the South Asia specialists—encompassing both India and Pakistan “wallahs”—constituted such a sub-community in 1971.

### **The Arms Aid Cut-Off Decision; and the Use of Public Statements**

#### *The Facts*

A decision was made to cut-off the supply of arms to Pakistan. In a letter to Senator Kennedy, dated April 20, 1971, David Abshire, Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, wrote, “we have been informed by the Department of Defense that [no non-lethal military end items (of) spare parts and ammunition have] been provided to the Pakistan Government or its agents since the outbreak of fighting in East Pakistan on March 25-26, and nothing is presently scheduled for such delivery.”<sup>22</sup> But “delivery” here meant that items contracted for and licensed for export before March 25 were considered “delivered” even though they had not left U.S. shores. This continued movement of arms to Pakistan was revealed in a *New York Times* article—presumably as the result of a leak—while the Indian Foreign Minister was returning from Washington to Delhi with what he thought were assurances that Pakistan was not receiving U.S. arms. These events contributed to Indian distrust of the U.S. (which became crucial in U.S. attempts to prevent a war; see below).

A General Accounting Office report, released on February 4, 1972,<sup>23</sup> revealed that not only had \$3.8 million worth of Munitions List articles been exported under valid licenses, but also “Department of Defense agencies, despite departmental directives issued in April, continued to release from their stocks spare parts for lethal end-items” and “the U.S. Air Force delivered to Pakistan about \$563,000 worth of spare parts between March 25 and mid-July 1971 on a priority basis using the Military Airlift Command. Some of these spare parts were needed to place inoperable aircraft, such as F-104’s, into operable condition.”<sup>24</sup> It was discovered in late August that until the practice was stopped by informal order on July 2nd and formally on August 12th, “military departments” entered into foreign military sales contracts of about \$10.6 million with Pakistan. . . ,”<sup>25</sup> though no licenses were issued for these contracted items. On November 8th, the State Department revoked all outstanding licenses (for goods worth about \$3.6 million) and the flow of arms to Pakistan ended.

There were several factors at work here. On one level, there was something of a bureaucratic “snafu” (\*) in the instances of continued spare parts supply. This might of course be interpreted as deliberate effort on the part of Defense agencies to continue supplying a country they considered to be a good ally. The “business as usual” signing of new contracts was justified as proper because U.S. military

supply policy was “under review.” If the continued supply under valid licenses had been a “snafu” in which State Department and Defense Department signals had gotten crossed, then presumably shipments would have ceased when it was revealed in late June. But the licenses were not revoked until November—and Kissinger wondered aloud in the WSAG meetings whether that step had been wise—making it clear that the supply of a limited amount of arms to Pakistan had been U.S. policy. Christopher van Hollen, Deputy Assistant Secretary for NEA, in testimony before Senator Kennedy’s sub-committee on October 4, made U.S. policy explicit:

SENATOR FONG: The administration did not feel it should revoke the licenses that had been issued?

MR. VAN HOLLEN: That is correct. The judgment was made that this would be a political sanction, and that it would not be in keeping with our efforts to maintain a political relationship with the Government of Pakistan, looking towards the achievement of certain foreign policy objectives of the United States.<sup>26</sup>

That is, these arms shipments were continued as part of U.S. attempts to maintain “leverage” on Pakistan.

During the December war, Jordan and possibly other countries offered to transfer U.S. supplied weapons to Pakistan. The question was discussed in two of the WSAG meetings whose minutes were leaked. State Department and Defense Department officials pointed out that it would be illegal for the U.S. to permit third country transfers, since the U.S. itself was barred from supplying arms to Pakistan. Kissinger, however, asked that King Hussein be kept in a “holding pattern,” noting that the President “may want to honor” requests from Pakistan for military aid of this kind.<sup>27</sup> It was later reported that “military sources” disclosed that Libya and Jordan had indeed provided aircraft to Pakistan.<sup>28</sup>

## **Humanitarian Assistance; and the Role of Congress**

### *The Facts*

One interviewee told me that in August the President described the relief effort—which would be carried on, no matter what, for humanitarian reasons—as the centerpiece of the U.S. political effort vis-a-vis Pakistan. This view of U.S. policy was however not conveyed downward even to middle-level State Department officers. The decision was to provide aid both to the refugees in India and to those in the East (especially in the cyclone-affected areas) who did not leave. The threat of famine

would be met and India's burden would be shared. Congress, on the other hand, wanted to give more aid for refugee relief than the administration requested, and less to the people in East Pakistan, on the grounds that with a crippled transport system and the acknowledged diversion of some relief supplies and transport vehicles to the Pakistan army, there was no guarantee that such aid would reach those for whom it was intended.<sup>29</sup>

The amount of U.S. assistance was consistently overstated by U.S. spokesmen, including the President, even after the crisis was over. A GAO report of June 29, 1972, listed authorized contributions for victims in India as \$94.5 million, and pointed out that of the \$276.7 million authorized for victims in Pakistan (and this included "old" money intended specifically for pre-March cyclone damage relief and normal bilateral food aid), \$201.2 million (73 per cent) was not implemented. The repeated U.S. assertion that the U.S. was contributing "more than the rest of the world combined"—a formulation the Delhi embassy finally gave up protesting (\*)—appears to have been a self-serving public relations effort. The World Bank's estimate of the cost of refugee relief to India was \$700 million by March 1972 (India claimed in the U.N. debate in December that she was spending "3 million a day"); the U.S. thus would contribute about 15 per cent of the total and the "rest of the world" about the same or more,<sup>30</sup> leaving India with nearly 70 per cent of the cost of refugee relief.

There was, moreover, a coordination of public utterance in this instance. Another GAO report (of April 20, 1972, but requested in July 1971 by Senator Kennedy) stated in the introduction:

Our review efforts were impeded by Department of State and AID officials. They withheld and summarized records prior to our access and thereby limited information needed for a complete and thorough report. In connection with the GAO review, U.S. Embassy officials in Islamabad were instructed not to make available messages reporting on sensitive discussions with the GoP [Government of Pakistan], Government of India, or U.N. agencies, or certain sensitive documents relating to development of U.S. policy.

### *Implications*

The U.S. relief effort provided a major focus for Congressional attention to the 1971 crisis. While the GAO, an arm of the Congress, was having difficulty in conducting its investigation, Senator Kennedy was able to get copies of confidential cables from Pakistan. Congressional sources I spoke with seemed satisfied with the institutional arrangements in the foreign policy field, arguing that the lack of Con-

gressional activity during the crisis (the Foreign Relations Committee never held a public hearing, for example) reflected not the lack of power or expertise but the lack of Congressional interest in foreign policy and especially vis-a-vis South Asia.

The Congressional concern with humanitarian issues reflected the U.S. public perception of the problem—a record amount of money was contributed to refugee relief from private sources— but Congress had little impact in the face of a U.S. policy which sought first to downplay the refugee issue, then to shift the focus of concern from refugees and from “genocide” to East Pakistanis suffering because of civil strife (cause unspecified), and finally, to overstate the amount of U.S. assistance.

### **The Political Solution; and the “Checklist” Danger**

#### *The Facts*

President Nixon in his “State of the World” message of February 9, 1972, called “the problem of political settlement between East and West Pakistan,” “the basic issue of the crisis.”<sup>31</sup> In May, in letters to President Yahya and Prime Minister Gandhi, President Nixon referred to the necessity of a “political accommodation,”<sup>32</sup> by summer, this was communicated to “all parties” as being a political solution “on the basis of some form of autonomy for East Pakistan.”<sup>33</sup>

During August, September and October, eight contacts with the “Bangladesh people” in Calcutta were made, according to Kissinger.<sup>34</sup> And, according to President Nixon, by early November, President Yahya told us he was prepared to begin negotiations with any representatives of this group not charged with high crimes in Pakistan, or with Awami League leaders still in East Pakistan.<sup>35</sup> One interviewee felt that the contacts were a “sterile exercise” and another felt that they were not serious, since follow-up cross-checks were discouraged by Washington. The difficulty here was perhaps differing perceptions of what the contacts meant.

These contacts were to lead to negotiations between Pakistan “and Bangladesh representatives approved by Mujibr,” according to Kissinger.<sup>36</sup> The negotiations never began, nor was the U.S. ever involved “on substance.”<sup>37</sup> The next step was to establish contact with Mujib to get his approval of Awami League negotiations, and Kissinger claimed that the U.S. “had the approval of the Government of Pakistan to establish contact with Mujib through his defense lawyer,” and that India had been so informed.<sup>38</sup> Prime Minister Gandhi, however, wrote to President Nixon on December 15th that “there was not even a whisper that anyone from the outside world had tried to have contact with Mujibur Rahman.”<sup>39</sup> And Ambassador Keating, reacting to the news of Kissinger’s backgrounder, pointed out that a move

to contact Mujib had been rebuffed on December 2nd, and the initiative had been suggested on November 29th<sup>40</sup> (*one week after the war had begun, by President Nixon's account*).<sup>41</sup>

The negotiations, President Nixon admits, were to be with those not charged with “high crimes,”—i.e., the entire top leadership of the Awami League. Given the gap between “contacts” (the latest in October) and the attempted contact with Mujib (end of November), one can understand the belief that it was all a “sterile exercise.”

There is also some doubt in another area, the proposal for a timetable for East Pakistan's autonomy. The U.S. claim was that “in mid-November, we informed India that we were preparing to promote discussion of an explicit timetable for Each Pakistani autonomy.”<sup>42</sup> Kissinger told the press, “we told the Indian Ambassador . . . that we were prepared to discuss with them . . . a precise timetable for the establishment of political autonomy in East Bengal.”<sup>43</sup> Ambassador Keating, relying on the news report, pointed out that he had not been informed of this “critical fact” that “Washington and Islamabad were prepared” to discuss the timetable (emphasis added).<sup>44</sup> But it seems clear from another remark by Kissinger that the U.S. was seeking a timetable from India;<sup>45</sup> he also said “[India] knew that we believed that political autonomy was the logical outcome of a negotiation. . . .”<sup>46</sup> Prime Minister Gandhi indeed wrote that “the United States recognized that . . . unquestionably in the long run Pakistan must acquiesce in the direction of greater autonomy for East Pakistan. . . .”<sup>47</sup> There is no indication, however, that *any* timetable for political autonomy (which went beyond the scheduled restoration of civilian government in East Pakistan) was presented to Pakistan, or that the U.S. had publicly favored autonomy in a form acceptable to the Awami League.

Many officials, both in Delhi and Islamabad, believed by April that Pakistan would break up, and this assessment was supported by the intelligence community (\*). Those in Islamabad felt that direct Indian intervention would be inevitable while those in the Delhi embassy felt that the guerrillas would succeed on their own (\*). An interim solution of autonomy leading to independence was not ruled out as unacceptable to the Bengalis (and to India, who did not recognize an independent Bangladesh until December 6, despite considerable internal political pressure). Whether such a facade would have been acceptable to Pakistan is questionable. The Pakistan government's qualified amnesty, its willingness to accept a limited U.N. role, and the return of East Pakistan to “civilian rule” under a man totally unacceptable to the Bengalis—all pointed to as significant steps by President Nixon— were dismissed by the Awami League. The proposal to station

U.N. observers on the border was called a “non-starter” by the Delhi embassy (\*). Ambassador Keating dismissed the amnesty proposal in only slightly less direct terms.<sup>48</sup>

### *Implications*

Ambassador Keating concluded his December 8th cable by implying that he realized he might not have been informed of some of the specific developments mentioned in the story of Kissinger’s backgrounder. Several interviewees agreed that no “political solution” was pressed on Pakistan until very late, and none could say what that solution was. If indeed it was formulated as a package by the White House, it was certainly not presented as such to the State Department. The proper presentation of alternative policy proposals was frustrated in this instance by the lack of policy guidance. State Department officials seemed to have had no idea that the White House felt it was pressing a coherent strategy towards getting a political solution, and was forced to react to proposals piecemeal.

There is a danger inherent in compiling a “policy checklist” and then ticking off items as they are accomplished (or partially accomplished), because one has the illusion that the policy, overall, is then “working.” The U.S. managed to get Yahya to agree to a series of steps—maybe the civilian government was not acceptable to the Awami League, but at least it was a *civilian* government; maybe Mujib would not get a public trial and would not be permitted to participate in negotiations, but at least he was *alive*; maybe the amnesty was less than complete, but at least Yahya had accepted the idea in principle; etc.—and the President and Mr. Kissinger apparently felt that progress was being made. And so they were angry (if not furious) with India for not giving Pakistan time to come to accept a political solution in such terms. But it was obvious to many officials at State that these steps came far, far too late to provide the basis for a solution; that satisfying a number of items on the checklist did not constitute a viable policy or strategy of action.

The review process in charting policy progress must be constant: whether an objective has been achieved “too late” is the kind of judgment that demands considerable reliance on the area experts (centered on the Country Director), who have a feel for the political parameters of a situation. High-level decision-makers, especially in the White House, have neither the time nor the expertise to develop such judgment adequately. In this instance, apparently, the White House relied on its own judgment, and wound up pressing for a solution which the Bengalis would have accepted before March 25th but which would not do in the fall of 1971. The White House belief that the U.S. could play the role of honest broker seemed to fly in the face of Indian distrust of U.S. motives and allegiance; area experts in the



State Department, who did keep the situation under review, were not so sanguine. To the extent that the White House belief that a political solution was aborted by Indian actions influenced U.S. policy during the December war and after, this instance points to the failure of a White House centered system.

### **Prevention of War; and Policy-Making Crisis by Crisis**

#### *The Facts*

The danger of India going to war against Pakistan was clear from the first phase of the crisis. On May 28, President Nixon wrote to both President Yahya and Prime Minister Gandhi urging “restraint” and warning of the danger of war.<sup>49</sup> In the second phase of the crisis (August-November), it seemed to be only a matter of time before war broke out. U.S. policy was to urge restraint on India and Pakistan, as part of a diplomatic effort which included humanitarian relief and the effort to broker a political solution. Specific suggestions focused on a disengagement of Indian and Pakistani troops from East Pakistan borders, and the U.S. supported a Pakistani proposal that U.N. observers be posted on the border. India rejected these moves on the grounds that the threat of war arose from the situation in East Bengal, not border confrontations.

When the war broke out on December 3rd, President Nixon apparently felt that India had not given the U.S. time to achieve a solution to the crisis, and that India was thus the “aggressor.” As the war developed, officials from the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. on down followed instructions to “tilt” in favor of Pakistan. The minutes of the WSAG meeting reveal that from the outset no one believed that India would halt until she had achieved an independent Bangladesh, resolutions in the U.N. calling for a ceasefire notwithstanding. The focus of attention in WSAG was the halting of the war against West Pakistan. President Nixon reported in February that “during the week of December 6, we received convincing evidence that India was seriously contemplating the seizure of Pakistan-held portions of Kashmir and the destruction of Pakistan’s military forces in the West. We could not ignore this evidence. Nor could we ignore the fact that when we repeatedly asked India and its supporters for clear assurances to the contrary we did not receive them.”<sup>50</sup> He continued, “if we had not taken a stand against the war, it would have been prolonged and the likelihood of an attack in the West greatly increased. . . . The war had to be brought to a halt.”<sup>51</sup>

The means to this end that President Nixon mentioned was the United Nations, but it is not implausible that the U.S. did threaten to cancel the upcoming U.S.-USSR summit unless the Russians put pressure on India to stop. The sending

of the *Enterprise* task force into the Bay of Bengal, after the war in the East was won, has been interpreted as a signal to the USSR and to Pakistan that the U.S. would not let an ally “go under.”<sup>52</sup>

An important aspect of this case is the seeming gap in communication between India and the U.S. The U.S. urged “restraint” on India; India would say “yes, but only when the Pakistan army in East Bengal shows ‘restraint’.” More directly, after Mrs. Gandhi’s trip to Washington in early November, during which she repeatedly said that India was nearing the end of her tether, she said that reports “that she and President Nixon found no common ground in their talks are entirely correct.”<sup>53</sup> The U.S. standing vis-a-vis India, and the influence it could hope to exercise was off course seriously undercut by the clear U.S. commitment to an undivided Pakistan and its unwillingness to condemn Pakistani excesses.

Another instance of communications breakdown: President Nixon claimed that no assurances denying the report of Indian intentions to seize Pakistan-held Kashmir had been received. The CIA report which I infer had touched this off held that Mrs. Gandhi intended to “straighten out the southern border off Azad [Pakistan held] Kashmir,” and to “eliminate Pakistan’s armor and air force capabilities.”<sup>54</sup> In the WSAG meeting of December 8, however, Assistant Secretary Sisco reported that India’s “Foreign Minister Singh told Ambassador Keating that India has no intention of taking any Pak territory.”<sup>55</sup> And in a public statement in New York on December 12th, Singh said India had no wish to “destroy Pakistan.”<sup>56</sup> But, as Sisco also pointed out, “Kashmir is really disputed territory.”<sup>57</sup> On balance, he doubted that India had any intention of breaking up West Pakistan.

President Nixon apparently wanted more ironclad assurances; the State Department spokesman reported on December 15th that “India has not replied to U.S. request for assurances it will not attack West Pakistan after defeating Pakistan in the East.”<sup>58</sup> (General Niazi, the commander of the Pakistan army in the East, had asked the U.S. to convey his request for a ceasefire on the morning of December 14th, Washington time). It is difficult to understand why Washington expected India *not* to attack while Pakistan continued to wage war in the West. Even before the outbreak of the war, on December 2nd, Mrs. Gandhi said: “If any country thinks that by calling us aggressors it can pressure us to forget our national interests, then that country is living in its own paradise and is welcome to it.”<sup>59</sup> In the event, President Yahya only agreed to the Indian ceasefire offer under pressure (\*). Yahya’s broadcast to the nation, delivered four hours before the ceasefire was announced, in which he spoke of a fight to victory, suggests that the ceasefire was indeed hard to accept. Here, as in much of the crisis, the U.S. misunderstood both the Indian position and, probably, the intensity of Pakistani feeling.



*Implications*

Communication and contact between the countries involved were not impeded by cliency—the unwillingness to carry unpleasant messages to the government concerned, e.g., as it had been in the 1965 war, when Ambassador Bowles was said to have shown such reluctance—nor by any other organizational constraint. There may well have been failures in communication at even the most rudimentary level: misunderstanding Pakistani English usage, for example (\*). More important is the apparent belief that conveying a message means that the recipient has digested its meaning. This dichotomy is neatly illustrated by the words of an American official in Islamabad, speaking around November 20: “we’ve been in it up to our necks—making suggestions, talking privately with Yahya and others night and day—but this is a closed society. They don’t pay any attention—there’s no flexibility left. We no longer have any reason to expect the Pakistanis to behave.”<sup>60</sup> One suspects that India and Pakistan had similar difficulties in conveying *their* position to American officials.

There are two facets of the communication problem which relate to the U.S. effort to prevent a war. (1) The problem of ambiguity in statements and intentions, and the possibilities of “weathervaning” in analysis which this opens up, and (2) the variant definitions of the size and time dimensions of the “crisis” itself.

President Nixon and Henry Kissinger were apparently unsatisfied with Indian assurances because of the ambiguity inherent in any interpretation of a domestic political situation—they overestimated the importance of Indian “hawks” like Defense Minister Jagjivan Ram, in this instance—and in the less than sweeping nature of the assurances received (which were, to be sure, perfectly understandable from the Indian standpoint). Ambiguity can be used as a tool, however: Kissinger emphasized in the WSAG meeting of December 8th that “we cannot afford to ease India’s state of mind” presumably about U.S. intentions to come to Pakistan’s assistance.<sup>61</sup> Ambassador Keating had made it clear to Indian officials that third country transfers of weapons required U.S. approval and was told by Under Secretary of State John Irwin, on Kissinger’s orders, “in view of intelligence reports spelling out military objectives in West Pakistan, we do not want in any way to ease Government of India’s concerns regarding help Pakistan might received from outside sources.”<sup>62</sup> Again, there is no reason to believe that India or Pakistan would not pursue *their* foreign policy vis-a-vis the U.S. by using the same technique.

Although, as noted above, interviewees agreed that the reporting of facts to the highest levels was not restricted, I was told that there was “weathervaning” in analysis: the preferences of the top levels were fed back to them. The ambiguity which is inherent in the communications between nations—and to a degree within

one nation's foreign service—opens the way to anticipatory compliance in reporting and analysis that does not compromise professional responsibilities.

The second facet of the communication problem here has to do with the dimensions of the crisis and ideas of crisis management. The U.S. treated the threat of war and its outbreak as a separable crisis amenable to what one interviewee called the “standard crisis manual” which says “first, urge restraint; second, get the fighting stopped; third, get the parties talking.” India's position was that the crisis of a threat of Indo-Pakistan war could not be and should not be separated from the overall crisis which began on March 25th.

U.S. policy towards South Asia was very much a crisis by crisis affair. From the U.S. point of view, “the crisis” did not mean the totality of events in 1971 (as it did for India and Pakistan), but rather a series of interrelated crises, like the war. Officials were taking up new posts in the summer of 1971, as is usual, and though the overall crisis was relatively subdued—no headlines, just one constant stream of refugees—they did not go into the details of previous “crises.” Nor were the ex-incumbents sought out when new “crises” or decisions were encountered. Familiarity with the current file, coupled with overall expertise, was believed to be sufficient.

In 1971, decisions were made at the White House. During the “smaller” crises—the initial crackdown, the first realization of the magnitude of the refugee flow, the December war, etc.—raw intelligence reports and reports of facts direct from the field reached the highest policy-making level and probably were read. During the less active phases, analytic reports warning of the danger of continued armed violence against Hindus by Muslims reached that level (\*), but there is little reason to believe that it made an impact. By the time of the crisis of the war, Indian motives might well have been difficult to discern or appreciate. A problem in an area like South Asia, which is a low priority in U.S. national interest terms, has to be more serious than in other areas before it reaches a “crisis” level, and the failure to appreciate the dimension of the crisis from the point of view of the other parties is exacerbated by the tendency to shift not only decision making *but also analysis* to levels in which expertise is severely limited. It is hardly surprising that the U.S. failed to head off war on the Indian subcontinent in 1971.

## Conclusions

From the point of view of the White House, I suspect, U.S. policy in South Asia in 1971 was a qualified success. The key goal of the opening to China was not jeopardized by events on the South Asian subcontinent. The progress towards detente with the USSR was not harmed, and valuable lessons were learned on how effective ties with the Soviet Union could be. Relations with Pakistan remained firm, with

all that meant for U.S. flexibility in the Middle East (recall that Middle Eastern nations, by and large, gave Pakistan considerable support during 1971). Relations with India were none too good to begin with; a further deterioration could be borne with equanimity, with the added thought, perhaps, of letting the Russians enjoy that headache for a while. Bangladesh and Sheikh Mujib—with whom the U.S. had had close ties—might well want U.S. friendship and aid to counterbalance India and the USSR.

On the other hand, of course, Pakistan had been reduced in power, though India's military development since 1965 precluded a position of parity for Pakistan in any case. A nation state, in ally, had been dismembered by its neighbor, but Pakistan was, in the view of some observers, doomed from its birth, and in the view of others, better off without the drain East Pakistan was becoming. Vigorous U.S. opposition to the war had been concurred in by almost all the nations of the world, and especially Third World nations. The U.S. was vilified in moral terms both at home and abroad, but in the context of the war in Vietnam (which was to be ended, after all, with the help of new relations with China and U.S.—USSR detente), that was hardly unusual. Moral outrage evaporates while national interests remain; even India would come around eventually.

But couldn't U.S. policy have been better? (In both senses of the word: couldn't the opening to China have been achieved *without* the costs incurred in South Asia, and *with* the U.S. supporting a democracy instead of yet another military regime, condemning officially sanctioned violence against the civilian population and making every effort to get it stopped?) And would a different organizational structure have made any difference?

There were, on the whole, no problems in the flow of information upward, nor in the carrying out of instructions from the White House. There is no indication that President Nixon or Kissinger felt any lack in the information they received or in the responsiveness of officials in Washington or in the field (with the exception of Kissinger's famous remark in the WSAG meeting that he was "getting Hell from the President every half hour" because State Department officials were not "tilting" sufficiently towards Pakistan).<sup>63</sup>

There were, however, severe restrictions in the flow of information downward. Rationales for policy never reached lower levels of State. Similarly, the upward flow of analysis and advice was impeded because it had to be considered irrelevant. Until July 15, when the China opening was announced, the State Department was working in the dark—receiving no guidance on what the reasons for U.S. policy were and sending up analysis and policy advice which had to be ignored, since it could not confront the real rationale. Even after July 15, rationales for U.S.

policy which took account of the China opening were not spelled out, and so meaningful alternatives could not be presented.

The secrecy of the rationale for U.S. policy meant that there was no one other than President Nixon and Kissinger who could make decisions, even on minor matters. They were the only ones able to monitor effectively the implementation of the decision, and they alone could assess its impact in terms of the goals they had set. But they also did not have the time (or the expertise) to perform those tasks well—the delay in the recognition of Bangladesh is a case in point.

Alternatives to policy were not presented effectively to decision-makers in the White House, as might be expected under the circumstances. Those sending up proposals were unaware of the “global strategy” which determined U.S. decisions. Moreover, their proposals would inevitably be framed in terms of U.S. policy towards the region or to one country or the other, and would be discounted accordingly. Ultimately, the serious consideration of bilateral and regional dimensions of policy while global objectives are pursued—sorely needed as the U.S. dealt with South Asia in 1971—depends most on having a President or Secretary of State willing and able to work with knowledgeable professionals and with organizational arrangements that effectively represent them.

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Notes and References:

1. All dates with no year given are from 1971. The most readily available detailed chronology for the 1971 crisis can be found under the heading “Pakistan” in the *New York Times Index 1971: A Book of Record*, pp. 1287-1310. (Cited hereafter as: *NY Times Index*.)
2. Marta Nicholas and Philip Oldenburg, compilers; Ward Morehouse, general editor, *Bangladesh: The Birth of a Nation; A Handbook of Background Information and Documentary Sources* (Madras: M. Seshachalam, 1972), p. 82. [Cited hereafter as: *Bangladesh Handbook*. This contains the “Anderson Papers” reprinted (in pp. 112-34) from the *New York Times* of January 6 and 15, 1972; the Kissinger background briefing of December 7, 1971, reprinted (in pp. 134-42) from the *Congressional Record—Senate*, December 9, 1971; Mrs. Gandhi’s letter to President Nixon, reprinted (in pp. 143-45) from the *New York Times* of December 17, 1971; and other documents.]
3. G.W. Choudhury, *The Last Days of United Pakistan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), p. 68. Choudhury was a senior advisor to President Yahya at

the time, “one of the very few whom [Yahya] took into his confidence about his top secret mission [to Peking].” (*Ibid.*, p. 70).

4. See Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb, *Kissinger* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), pp. 237-38. Unfortunately, they do not give a date, but simply set the time as cherry blossom season in Washington.

5. On President Nixon’s and Kissinger’s belief that secrecy was required, see I.M. Destler, “The Nixon System, a Further Look,” *Foreign Service Journal*, February 1974. See also Secretary Rogers’ reply to a question at the Sigma Delta Chi convention, *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. LXV, No. 1693 (December 6, 1971), pp. 652-53.

6. Made in his background briefing of December 7th. As reprinted in *Bangladesh Handbook*, p. 139. The remark refers to Nixon’s alleged hostility to Mrs. Gandhi; in the earlier part of his reply, Kissinger denies that either he or President Nixon had a preference for Pakistan or for Pakistani leaders.

7. “Anderson Papers” as reprinted in *ibid.*, p. 125. All statements about WSAG deliberations hereafter are from this source.

8. See the study for the Commission by Joan Hochman, printed in Appendix H.

9. *Recognition of Bangladesh*, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, March 6 and 7, 1972; testimony of Christopher van Hollen, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asia, pp. 6-25, *passim*.

10. As reprinted in *Relief Problems in East Pakistan and India, Part I*, hearings before the subcommittee to investigate problems connected with refugees and escapees of the Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate (hereafter: *Kennedy Subcommittee*), June 28, 1971, p. 87.

11. Many reports, from the onset of the crisis, mention this; see, for example, some of those reprinted in *ibid.*, pp. 95ff.: Peggy Durdin, “The Political Tidal Wave That Struck East Pakistan” (reprinted from the *New York Times Magazine* of May 2, 1971), *ibid.*, pp. 95-105; Mort Rosenblum, “Army, Rebels Fight Over Ruined Pakistan” (reprinted from the *Baltimore Sun*, May [?] 1971), *ibid.*, pp. 110-11; *et al.*

12. As reprinted in *ibid.*, pp. 118-20; the article introduced is by Anthony Mascarenas, “Why the Refugees Fled,” *ibid.*, pp. 120-32.

13. *New York Times Index*, p. 1296, col. 1 (original article: *New York Times*, August 16, 1971, p. 6.).

14. The International Genocide Convention (not ratified then by the U.S.), defines genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group. . . .” Quoted in Michael Bowen, Guy Freeman, Key Miller (Roger Morris, Project Director), *Passing By: The United States and Genocide in Burundi, 1972* (Washington: The Carnegie Endowment for Interna-

tional Peace, 1973), p. 18. In addition to eyewitness testimony (see note 11, above), the fact that after May virtually all the refugees were Hindus supports the view that actions by the Pakistan army in East Bengal constituted genocide by third definition. However, the language used in public even by critics of U.S. policy did not include the word “genocide;” for instance, in Senator Kennedy’s report *Crisis in South Asia*, we get only an indirect usage: “Our national leadership has yet to express one word that would suggest we do not approve of the genocidal consequences of the Pakistan Government’s policy of repression and violence.” (*Crisis in South Asia*, a report by Senator Edward M. Kennedy to the Kennedy subcommittee, November 1, 1971, p. 55.) Nor is there any evidence that a “demand” was made by any member of Congress, or by any FSO, to condemn Pakistan for committing “genocide.” There was some indirect evidence in the interviews I had that policy positions which would have had the U.S. strongly condemn the killing—and place the blame on the Pakistan Government—were put forward within the State Department; the issue was raised, even if the word “genocide” was not used.

15. *Crisis in South Asia*, p. 56.

16. *Relief Problems in East Pakistan and India*, Part I, Kennedy subcommittee hearings, June 28, 1971, p. 46.

17. Roger Morris, “Clientism in the Foreign Service,” *Foreign Service Journal*, February 1974. Ambassador Farland, while perfectly correct in his relationship with the Government of Pakistan and his superiors in Washington, did “represent” the point of view of Pakistan to Washington (\*).

18. See *Crisis in South Asia*, p. 57, for excerpts from the cable.

19. Jack Anderson, with George Clifford, *The Anderson Papers* (New York: Random House, 1973), pp. 242-45.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Kalb and Kalb, pp. 258-59.

22. *Relief Problems in East Pakistan and India*, Part I, Kennedy subcommittee hearings, June 28, 1971, p. 82.

23. *Relief Problems in Bangladesh*, Kennedy subcommittee hearings, February 2, 1972, Appendix III, pp. 85-92.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

25. *Ibid.* Note that none of these shipments were illegal, nor did they violate overall U.S. policy on arms to Pakistan.

26. *Relief Problems in East Pakistan and India*, Part III, Kennedy subcommittee hearings, October 4, 1971, p. 376. Christopher van Hollen’s testimony.

27. “Anderson Papers” as reprinted in *Bangladesh Handbook*, pp. 132 and 125.

28. *New York Times*, March 29, 1972, p. 1.



29. The position that the bulk of U.S. relief should go to East Pakistan was congruent with administration policy after August to portray the refugee outflow as the result of the threatened famine. But before August, the official view that all was “normal” in East Pakistan as the Government of Pakistan contended led the administration to resist Congressional efforts—especially those of Senator Kennedy—to get recognition of the danger of famine. Aid to the refugees in India, I surmise, was to ease India’s burden so that she would not have that excuse to go to war to stop the drain on her economy. Interviewees, however, discounted these explanations for the “humanitarian aid was centerpiece” view.

30. As of October 19, 1971, the U.S. had contributed 42 per cent of the “world’s” total to refugee relief in India (and 71% of the total for East Pakistan relief). *Ibid.*, p. 40. Senator Kennedy, pointing out India’s burden, concludes “we realize how little the outside world is really doing, and how paltry the American contribution is comparatively.” (*Ibid.*, p. 41.).

31. *U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970’s: The Emerging Structure of Peace*, A report by President Richard Nixon to the Congress, February (9), 1972, (hereafter: *State of the World Message*), p. 159.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-60.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 162.

34. Kissinger backgrounder, as reprinted in *Bangladesh Handbook*, p. 136.

35. *State of the World Message*, p. 162.

36. Kissinger backgrounder, as reprinted in *Bangladesh Handbook*, p. 140.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 141. These points only emerged from close questioning of Kissinger at the backgrounder of December 7th.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

39. Kissinger backgrounder, as reprinted in *Bangladesh Handbook*, p. 144.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

41. The Pakistan point of view was that the war broke out with India’s large scale incursion in support of Mukti Bahini operation on November 21st. President Nixon’s phrase was “when war erupted toward the end of November” (*State of the World Message*, p. 164). This view is supported by Wayne Wilcox (*The Emergence of Bangladesh*, Foreign Affairs Study 7, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, 1973), p. 51, but a *New York Times* report of November 24th (*NY Times Index*, p. 1301, col. 3) says that “U.S. officials . . . dispute Pakistani charge that India has launched fullscale invasion,” and an important Pakistani General (Farman Ali), as reported on November 26th (*Ibid.*, p. 1302, col. 1), said that “field reports indicate conditions on East Pakistan border [were] returning to normal tenseness.” India, of course, held that the war began with the Pakistani air attacks on 8 Indian airfields on December 3rd; most observers agree.

42. *State of World Message*, p. 162.
43. Kissinger backgrounder as reprinted in *Bangladesh Handbook*, p. 137.
44. “Anderson Papers” as reprinted in *ibid*, p. 133.
45. Kissinger backgrounder as reprinted in *ibid*, p. 138. “We were urging movement at the greatest speed that the Pakistan political process could stand. We felt that one way to resolve this would be for the Indians to give us a timetable of what they would consider a reasonable timetable. . . .”
46. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
47. Mrs. Gandhi’s letter to President Nixon, as reprinted in *ibid*, p. 144
48. “Anderson Papers” as reprinted in *ibid.*, p. 133.
49. *State of the World Message*, pp. 159-60.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
52. Reports of the *Enterprise* task force movements first appeared on December 13th (when it went through the Straits of Malacca), when the Indian army was within artillery range of Dacca. The most detailed account of the task force deployment is in Anderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 259-69 (the chapter is titled “The Brink of World War”).
53. *NY Times Index*, p. 1301 (news story of November 16).
54. “Anderson Papers” as reprinted in *Bangladesh Handbook*, p. 128.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
56. *NY Times Index*, p. 1306, col. 2.
57. “Anderson Papers” as reprinted in *Bangladesh Handbook*, p. 130.
58. *NY Times Index*, p. 1307, col. 1.
59. Quoted in Robert Shaplen, “The Birth of Bangladesh—II,” *The New Yorker*, February 19, 1972; as reprinted in *Relief Problems in Bangladesh*, Kennedy subcommittee hearings, February 2, 1972, p. 117.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
61. “Anderson Papers” as reprinted in *Bangladesh Handbook*, p. 132.
62. Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 228.
63. “Anderson Papers” as reprinted in *Bangladesh Handbook*, p. 115.



## The Birth of Bangladesh: Nefarious Plots and Cold War Sideshows

By Roger Vogler

### I. Tanks

“Has the United States Government lost all sense of direction in Asia?” asked former Ambassador to India Chester Bowles in March 1970. “Can it learn nothing from its past mistakes?” He was referring to President Richard Nixon’s impending approval of the shipment of one hundred US - built M-47 tanks from Turkey (to whom they had previously been given under a NATO agreement) to Pakistan. “American military assistance to Pakistan in the last fifteen years,” Bowles continued, “will, I believe, be listed by historians as among our most costly blunders.”<sup>1</sup>

It was costly indeed, a year later, to a group of unsuspecting students at East Pakistan’s University of Dhaka. On the evening on March 25, 1971, four American-built M-47 tanks, followed by a platoon of West Pakistani soldiers, pulled up in front of its two dormitories: Iqbal Hall housing the Muslim students and Jagannath Hall housing the Hindus. Without warning, they commenced shelling both buildings at a range of fifty yards. Robert Payne describes the scene:

Many of the students were already in bed, others were working late, still others were discussing the political situation, which had grown increasingly tense during the last few days. But on that dark and sultry night, the last thing to occur to them was that they were in danger.

The shelling lasted five minutes, killing about thirty students . . . . Then the soldiers, shouting loudly, broke into the dormitories, shooting at random, and ordering the students to come out with their hands above their heads. Those who did not come out fast enough were shot or bayoneted. Once outside the building, the students were lined up against the walls and mown down with machine guns fired from the tanks, and from armored cars that had come up so that the Punjabi officers could observe the scene. Students who remained alive were bayoneted to death.

Within a quarter of an hour 109 students were dead. The bodies of the Muslim students were dragged up to the roof of Iqbal hall, where they

were left to the vultures. The bodies of the Hindu students were heaped together like faggots and later in the night, six students, who had been spared, were ordered to dig a grave for them. After they had dug the grave they were shot.<sup>2</sup>

Thus began the Civil War that culminated, nine months later, in the destruction of Pakistan as it had originally been constituted, twenty-four years before.

As a young American Architect living and working in North India at that time, I was well aware of this war's grim start. Although the western world had paid them scant attention, the natural and political events that precipitated it had been emblazoned for months on the front pages of every Indian newspaper. Many of my Indian friends had relatives who were directly affected by them. And as an American on the scene, I observed with helpless dismay the consequences of my own country's - Richard Nixon's and Henry Kissinger's - foreign policy with regard to these events: a policy blinded by a Cold War mentality that excluded all understanding of its tragic human impact.

## **II. Typhoon and Election**

By late 1970, long-standing ethnic, political and economic differences between Pakistan's two "wings," the Punjabi-dominated West and the Bengali East, a thousand miles distant on the other side of India, had descended to its lowest point in the nation's history. Open demands for secession were increasingly heard on the streets of Dhaka. According to BBC correspondent Owen Bennett Jones, "the future of East Pakistan depended on a struggle among three men: West Pakistani General Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan, a habitual drunk; Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a professional agitator; and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a political operator par excellence. Relying respectively on military force, street power, and pure guile, this volatile trio pursued their incompatible objectives."<sup>3</sup>

General Yahya had been installed as Pakistan's Chief Martial Law Administrator a year before in an "invited" military coup, replacing a fellow general, Ayub, who had been strongly suspected of diverting substantial government funds into the pockets of his relatives. Under intense pressure from the East, Yahya had set a date in late November for Pakistan's first nationwide parliamentary election. However, two weeks before this was to take place, on the night of November 12, 1970, a tremendous typhoon swept up the Bay of Bengal, driving a thirty-foot tidal wave deep into East Pakistan's densely populated Ganges delta. According to some estimates a million people were left dead in its wake. It was perhaps the worst natural disaster the world had ever known.

A Dhaka correspondent reported after a visit to the area “One cannot walk without trampling on the dead.”<sup>4</sup>

Even from the aircraft it was possible to smell the odour of death, but the pilot said the situation had improved on that of two days ago when the smell almost made pilots vomit and then take sleeping pills after their flights over the area. For days, however, the planes flying over the area carried only journalists. By November 16,<sup>5</sup> no relief had come. Pilots said the Government was “thinking about” their offer to run emergency food drop flights to survivors. In the meantime, at least seven American-provided Pakistan Air Force C130 cargo planes remained on the tarmac 1,000 miles away in Rawalpindi.<sup>6</sup>

An Indian offer to provide helicopters, riverboats, food and medical supplies was summarily rejected. An Air Force pilot complained to friends at a party in Dhaka that he was exhausted from his hours of flying. Delivering relief supplies? No, from practice bombing and strafing runs. “This disaster has made us terribly vulnerable,” he explained. “The Indians could walk right in and take over. We’ve got to stay alert!”<sup>7</sup>

After returning from a week in the devastated area, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (“Mujib”), a political firebrand in his student days and now the outspoken leader of East Pakistan’s major political party, the Awami League, addressed an assembly of more than two hundred journalists in Dhaka on November 26. Twenty-five percent of those who had survived the cyclone, he claimed, had died because relief had failed to reach them in time. He accused the Government of “deliberate, cold blooded murder”:

“While we have Army helicopters sitting in West Pakistan we had to wait for helicopters to come from the other end of the world. Is this why we have channeled 60 percent of our budget all these years for defense services? The people have had enough of the crimes committed in the name of national integration, and the urge of the people of Bangla Desh for autonomy cannot be denied.” Observers regarded the Sheikh’s speech as the most explosive threat of secession since the foundation of the State of Pakistan.<sup>8</sup>

Yahya postponed the election to December 7, but the political damage to his administration had been done. Bengalis responded passionately to Mujib’s call. On Election Day his Awami League won all but two of East Pakistan’s 162 seats in the

National Assembly. They won none in the West, but since seats had been allocated to districts on the basis of population, and the East Wing was then more populous, Mujib's 160 seats out of 300 nationwide constituted an absolute majority in the new Parliament. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) won 81 seats in the West, but none in the East. The remaining seats (2 in the east and 57 in the west) went to minor parties and independents.<sup>9</sup>

The elected Assembly was required to draft a new national constitution within 120 days of its first sitting as a constituent body. Yahya and his West Pakistani advisors had been confident that the constitution-writing process would be one of extensive give-and-take. With the actual result, however, it appeared that the charismatic Mujib would be able to push through a new constitution to his own liking, and to become Pakistan's next Prime Minister as well.

Neither of these outcomes was acceptable to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. "He was a deeply ambitious man whose undoubted abilities were matched by his massive ego. (After a day of talks with President J. F. Kennedy in 1963, Kennedy looked at Bhutto and said 'If you were American you would be in my cabinet.' 'Be careful, Mr. President,' Bhutto replied. 'If I were American *you* would be in *my* cabinet.')<sup>10</sup> Bhutto was also impatient. After the election, one senior minister told Yahya that if Bhutto did not become Prime Minister within a year he would literally go mad. In the light of Mujib's victory, however, it was clear that he had no chance to become Prime Minister of a united Pakistan.

Mujib urged Yahya to set an early date for the National Assembly to meet, to install himself as Prime Minister, and to begin writing his new constitution. Bhutto, realizing that Mujib had the votes to do just that once the Assembly went into session, urged Yahya to delay setting a date, so that concessions could be inveigled from Mujib before the Assembly met. Pressured from both sides, Yahya finally set March 3, 1971, as the date for the opening of the National Assembly. Bhutto's response, however, was the final blow to any prospect of reconciliation. After enlisting the backing of key Army leaders, by persuading them that they had as much to lose as he, Bhutto announced at a mass rally in Lahore that his PPP party would boycott the Assembly altogether - and that if any other West Pakistan party had the temerity to attend it, he would see to it that "their legs will be broken."<sup>11</sup> Civil war was thus assured - but so was Bhutto's position as leader of whatever remained of Pakistan at the end of it.

On March 1, Yahya, frustrated by his inability to bring the two sides together, impotent in the face of intense pressure both from his Army patrons and from Bhutto's PPP, and humiliated by his perception that the whole world was laughing at him,<sup>12</sup> canceled the March 3 Assembly opening. The result was immediate and disastrous. A massive strike in Dhaka shut down the city and much of its province

for a week. Bands of *Mukti Bahini* - militant young Awami League supporters - sought out and massacred thousands of West Pakistanis and other non-Bengali Muslims,<sup>13</sup> collectively known as “Biharis” for the Indian state of Bihar from which many of them had come at the time of Partition.

Recognizing his mistake, Yahya announced a new date of March 25 for the Assembly to meet, but again the damage had been done. Sham negotiations continued with the Awami League, as Yahya instructed his generals to finalize operational orders for military action “to reinstate public order and central authority in East Pakistan,”<sup>14</sup> and the Army rushed thousands of troops to the East wing.

For Yahya, an army officer whose highest calling, according to one colleague, “was generally felt to be a divisional commander,”<sup>15</sup> this was the only course he could envision. The slippery, gutless Bengalis had always knuckled under before to a show of Punjabi force: it was time to give them a refresher course.

### III. Genocide - and 9,889,305 Refugees<sup>16</sup>

Seven thousand people, including the unsuspecting students at its university, died in Dhaka that night. Another three thousand were arrested, Sheikh Mujib among them. Four days later he was flown to West Pakistan, where he spent the next nine months in prison, incommunicado. All foreign journalists were confined to their hotel, threatened with a bullet in the head if they so much as poked their noses outside the door. The next day “they were taken to the airport under armed guard, searched, stripped of their notebooks and film, and warned that it would be better for them if they wrote nothing about their last night in Dhaka. Most of them left in the early evening.”<sup>17</sup>

Tens of thousands of ordinary citizens, mostly Hindus, fled their homes in a frenzied dash to the country’s borders. The East Wing was almost entirely surrounded by India: its border with that country in fact exceeded thirteen hundred miles. To its west lay the Indian State of West Bengal; to the north Assam and Meghalaya; to the east, from north to south, Tripura and Mizoram. Tripura itself penetrated deep into the East Wing’s east side, extending to within 50 miles of Dhaka; thus it was to this State that many of the early refugees fled. By the end of May, nearly 900,000 had arrived in the border town of Sabrum, utterly demolishing the tenuous balance of Hindus and Tribals that had made up Tripura’s 1,500,000 indigenous residents. Most were herded into what became perhaps the largest refugee camp in the world. Its director, asked what he would describe as his greatest need, replied “a crematorium.”<sup>18</sup>

Nor was Tripura the refugees’ only destination. Dr. Mathis Bromberger, a German physician at a camp in Nadia district, West Bengal, reported:

There were thousands of people standing out in the open here all night in the rain. Women were with babies in their arms. They could not lie down because the water came up to their knees in places. There was not enough shelter and in the morning there were always many sick and dying of pneumonia. We could not get out serious cholera cases to the hospital. And there was no one to take away the dead. They just lay around or in the water.<sup>19</sup>

At My Long Camp in Meghalaya, a 200-bed hospital was forced to accommodate 600 cholera victims. Patients were lying in the corridors, between the beds, in every available space. Peter Hazelhurst wrote:

They lay on the cold floor, a hundred men, women and children, retching and shaking, their terrified eyes fixed on the back entrance of the hospital where the corpses were piling up ..... Cramped in the tiny village hospital, some only half alive, they are all victims of the cholera epidemic sweeping through the refugee camps ..... A dying baby still clings to its dead mother's body. An old man coughs and dies a foot away from my feet.<sup>20</sup>

Hundreds, perhaps thousands of villages, most chosen simply because they were predominantly Hindu, were sacked and burned to the ground by Yahya's troops. Demra, nine miles from Dhaka, was typical: every woman between the ages of twelve and forty was raped, every man between twelve and forty was shot. Every village along a main road, Hindu or Muslim, was razed simply to allow army units to move safely from place to place in less than battalion strength. "Biharis" cooperated with the army by pointing out Hindus and intellectuals in the street, who were shot on the spot, no questions asked. Those unfortunate enough to be arrested were trucked to remarkably efficient death camps such as Hariharpura, near Dhaka, a warehouse beside the Buriganga River, where the prisoners were roped together in groups of six or eight, marched into the river, and machine gunned. The bodies were disposed of by the simple expedient of allowing them to float downstream.<sup>21</sup>

As the flood of refugees across India's borders swelled exponentially, the logistical burden she faced to accommodate them rose to monumental proportions. "These problems that confront us," Prime Minister Indira Gandhi told her Parliament on May 24,

are not confined to Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and West Bengal. They are national problems. Indeed the basic problem is an international one.

We have sought to awaken the conscience of the world through our representations to the United Nations, and, at long last, the true dimensions



of the problem seem to be making themselves felt in the sensitive chanceries of the world. However, I must share with the House our disappointment at the unconscionably long time which the world is taking to react to this stark tragedy .....

Condition must be created to stop any further influx of refugees and to ensure their early return under credible guarantees for their safety and well-being. I say with all sense of responsibility that unless this happens, there can be no stability or peace on this subcontinent. If the world does not take heed, we shall be constrained to take all measures as may be necessary to ensure our own security and the preservation and development of the structure of our social and economic life.

#### **IV. “Massive Inaction”**

But the world, or at least the United States, did not take heed. Instead, it responded to these events with a policy aptly described by the diplomats ordered to implement it as “Massive Inaction.” The American Government, according to its April 8, 1971 press report, “viewed the struggle between the Pakistan central government and the dissident East Pakistanis as essentially an internal matter, and that American pronouncements on the situation would therefore be unjustified.”<sup>22</sup> The Administration’s ostensible rationale for this stance only came to light three months later, when it was revealed that Henry Kissinger, Richard Nixon’s Assistant to the President, had secretly flown from Islamabad to Beijing in July, under arrangements negotiated by Pakistan, to lay the groundwork for Nixon’s historic trip to China in February 1972. Nixon’s and Kissinger’s overarching fear was that these arrangements, hitherto known about in the US only by the two men themselves, would collapse if leaked beforehand, and with them their grand design for Triangular (US-China-USSR) Diplomacy.

Rapprochement with China was not the only factor underlying American foreign policy, however. Another was the irrational antipathy that Richard Nixon harbored toward women in power - and toward Indira Gandhi in particular. CBS State Department correspondent Marvin Kalb remarked in an interview that Nixon “had a psychological thing about female leaders. He just didn’t like Mrs. Gandhi. I remember Nixon referring to her as ‘that bitch’ ten or twelve times.” Kissinger himself, in his 1,500 page memoir *The White House Years* [page 848] wrote that “Nixon’s comments after meetings with her were not always printable” and that he found the “bluff, direct chiefs of Pakistan” more congenial to deal with than “the complex and apparently haughty Brahmin leaders of India.”



Nixon and Kissinger were the only two men responsible for the formulation of American policy over the course of the Bangladesh conflict. Neither man, however, ever really understood, or made any effort to understand, the practical regional issues that India faced: its history as a nation, its political realities, or the cultural values of its tremendously diverse society. In particular, they never grasped the deep emotional attachment to the territory of Kashmir that resides within the hearts of the great majority of Indians - not as a stepping stone to hegemony over all South Asia, but as an inalienable part of their own country. To the contrary, both men, self-inculcated as they were in a global, geopolitical view of the world that saw every event as an integral element of the Cold War, peremptorily dismissed the advice of anyone who did understand. Nixon, in response to an extensive briefing by Kissinger, initiated the "Massive Inaction" policy with a blunt handwritten order: "To all hands: Don't [underlined three times] squeeze Yahya at this time,"<sup>23</sup> as the General relentlessly pursued his campaign of genocide. Nixon complained that every ambassador we sent to India became an "India lover"; Kissinger railed at a State Department "heavily influenced by a traditional Indian bias." When American Consul Archer Blood and nineteen members of his staff in Dhaka sent a telegram to Washington registering "strong dissent" with its failure to condemn the slaughter, Kissinger accused them of employing "a favorite device of subordinates seeking to foreclose their superiors' options" by deliberately giving the cables low classification and hence "wide circulation." (In fact, they were sent through the State Department's "Dissent Channel,"<sup>24</sup> specifically set up for just such purposes. Blood was fired for his effort.

In Nixon's and Kissinger's Cold War mentality, India's refusal to align itself with the United States could only mean that it was a satellite of the USSR. Non-alignment, to them, was not a viable option. Their critics within the diplomatic service understood India's disappointment when the young nation, justifiably proud of her accomplishment in bringing together a group of races and cultures as diverse as all of Europe into the world's largest democracy, was summarily rejected as a partner by the United States in favor of a blatant military dictatorship. They understood the inherent tolerance and respect for all life shared by the great majority of Indians and their deeply ingrained tradition of coming to the aid of one another in times of crisis. But Nixon's and Kissinger's polarized conception of the world was too deeply embedded in their minds for them to perceive in Mrs. Gandhi's words a plea for help. Rather, they saw in them only a threat to go to war.

By July, India had set up 650 refugee camps, containing a total of "about seven million human flotsam waiting hopelessly for a meal. Outside the camps, squatting on hilltops, on river banks, and along roadsides was the remainder of an estimated one and a half million displaced persons, who had been forced to flee

to India because of killing, looting, mistrust, and fear of lives.”<sup>25</sup> As the price of available foodstuffs went up it was not only the refugees who suffered but the indigenous villagers living near the camps as well. The financial burden on India, one of the world’s poorest countries, was intolerable, and the situation became increasingly desperate as a million new refugees poured into the country every month.

Henry Kissinger repeatedly refers in *The White House Years* to American financial aid to alleviate the crisis, but his remarks, written years after the events, bear more resemblance to a verbal shell game than to a dispassionate presentation of fact. On page 856 he claims the US “had agreed to assume the major cost of refugee relief,” and, on the next, states “[our] original authorization of \$2.5 million in the spring of 1971 was eventually multiplied a hundredfold to \$250 million.” But there is no further reference to \$250 million in his account. On page 861 he asserts that the American contribution by July “had reached nearly \$100 million” and complains [page 867] that a September letter from Prime Minister Gandhi took no notice of our “substantial” economic assistance for the refugees. In that same month, however, the World Bank reported that a total of just \$200 million in relief funds had been pledged by 66 nations for the fiscal year ending in December, by which time, the Bank predicted, the camp population would rise to nine million, and the refugee cost for the fiscal year would be \$700 million. Even if the entire \$200 million was delivered by the end of 1971, India’s burden would be \$500 million - the net total of all her foreign aid for that year. The report concluded that the world community should not expect India to bear the bulk of the costs. But, Sydney Schanberg reported from New Delhi, “Diplomatic observers here are doubtful that there will be an increase in foreign aid of the necessary magnitude. Some, in fact, think that foreign interest in the refugee problem will wane as the months go by and the situation remains unchanged.”<sup>26</sup>

Kissinger understood India’s emotional response even less than its financial plight. Or perhaps, as some recent critics have suggested, he simply chose to disregard it. His memoir is peppered with assertions that the United States was aware from early on in the crisis that Bangladeshi independence was inevitable (e.g. “An independent Bengali state was certain to emerge, even without Indian intervention” [page 853] but “our policy was to give the facts time to assert themselves” [page 858]). In a brilliant stroke of American diplomacy, he and Nixon assured Mrs. Gandhi, Yahya had been persuaded to proclaim amnesty for all of the refugees, to promise a civilian government in Islamabad, and to grant Bangladesh independence soon thereafter. India should back off, send the refugees home at once, and await the conclusion of this inevitable evolutionary process, which, in Kissinger’s words, was a “near certainty” to occur by the following March. Yet an unreasonable and obstructive India, he claimed, refused to encourage the refugees’ return even

after Yahya's promise of amnesty. Mrs. Gandhi was determined to go to war "not because she was convinced of our failure, but because she feared our success." She was determined, in Kissinger's view, to seize the opportunity the Bangladesh crisis had presented to crush all of Pakistan - East and West - by force of arms, reducing it to a "vassal state."<sup>27</sup>

This evaluation was a megalomaniacal caricature of reality.<sup>28</sup> No one, the least knowledgeable of the country or its people, would conceivably have expected India to send these millions of human beings, related as they were to their own citizens by race and religion, back to a country where thousands of their fellows were being slaughtered every day by the very man promising the amnesty. Even if Yahya had been sincere in his offer, which was doubtful at best, there could be no assurance that his troops in the field would observe it, international oversight or no. And there was in any event no conceivable way in which such a mass return could have been implemented from a logistical standpoint, amid the carnage that went on unabated on the ground. Even if Kissinger's "near certainty" of a political solution came to pass by the following March, which he himself soon acknowledged was highly unlikely,<sup>29</sup> hundreds of thousands more would have died by then in the continuing genocide. Indian values would not have tolerated these additional months of slaughter. Nor, it is to be hoped, would those of the American people – even if their leaders did not share them.

## **V. Nefarious Plots**

There was general and justified outrage as during April [1971] reports began to come in of Pakistani atrocities in Bengal . . . . But 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 Pakistan military. But Pakistan was our sole channel to China to make arrangements for Nixon's secret visit to Beijing in February [1972]; once it was closed off it would take months to make alternative arrangements.<sup>30</sup>

So wrote Kissinger in 1979. To "condone a brutal military repression" was of course precisely what the United States effectively did. The following year, however, Christopher van Hollen, then a Senior Associate of the Carnegie Foundation for International Peace, but who had been Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs from 1969 to 1972, flatly contradicted Kissinger's "sole channel" claim and many of his other after-the-fact assertions. Van Hollen's article "The Tilt Policy Revisited: Nixon-Kissinger Geopolitics and

South Asia,” published in the respected journal *Asian Survey*, was in fact a point-by-point rebuttal of virtually all of Kissinger’s words and actions throughout the India-Pakistani conflict of 1971 and 1972. Kissinger’s references to “justified outrage” and “Pakistani atrocities,” he wrote,

are the words of the elder statesman-author, viewing events retrospectively. They were not the words of the Assistant to the President in March-April 1971. At no time during that period is Kissinger on record as voicing outrage or humanitarian concern as the Pakistani armed forces obeyed Yahya’s orders with a vengeance.<sup>31</sup>

Pakistan was not our only channel to China, van Hollen said. At the time fighting broke out on March 25 there were two open channels to Beijing, one through the Pakistanis and one through the Romanians. Moreover, he added, “it is most unlikely that a statement of disapprobation would have caused Yahya to back out of his intermediary role. He was honored to have been tapped by Nixon as a communications link with China, and desperately wanted to retain the goodwill of both Washington and Beijing.”<sup>32</sup>

“To some of our critics,” Kissinger lamented, “our silence over Pakistan - the reason for which we could not explain - became another symptom of the general moral insensitivity of their government. They could not accept that it might have been torn between conflicting imperatives.” But the “imperatives” existed only in the astigmatic imaginations of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger. One has to wonder how different America’s relations with South Asia might have been if they had simply extended a hand of friendship to India in its time of need.

“Throughout April [of 1971]” Kissinger wrote [page 855]:

signs began to appear that India’s proposed solution to the undoubted burden of millions of Bengali refugees was not so much to enable them to return as to accelerate the disintegration of Pakistan . . . . On March 31 the Indian Parliament unanimously expressed its whole-hearted “sympathy and support” for the Bengalis. As early as April 11, I reported to the President that the Indians seem to be embarking on a course of public diplomatic and covert actions that will increase the already high level of tension in the subcontinent and run the risk of touching off a broader and more serious international crisis. On April 14 a Bangladesh government in exile was established in Calcutta. By the middle of April we received reports that India was training Bengali refugees to become guerilla fighters in East Pakistan

..... By the end of April we learned that India was about to infiltrate the first 2,000 of these guerillas into East Pakistan.

And on page 856 he added:

As the weeks passed, we began increasingly to suspect that Mrs. Gandhi perceived a larger opportunity. As Pakistan grew more and more isolated internationally, she appeared to seek above all Pakistan's humiliation, perhaps trying to spread the centrifugal tendencies from East to West Pakistan. When the United States agreed to assume the major cost of refugee relief [it never did, as we have seen] India switched to insisting that the refugee problem was insoluble without a political settlement. But India's terms for settlement escalated by the week. When the United States offered to alleviate the famine in East Pakistan, India ..... demanded that the relief program be run by an international agency. The reason was ostensibly to ensure its fair distribution, but it would also prevent the Pakistani government from gaining credit with its own population.

The specific events cited by Kissinger in the first of these two excerpts did in fact occur in India. Apart from the burden they faced caring for the refugees, Indians everywhere were deeply shocked and dismayed by the events taking place just beyond their borders - indeed within what had been their own borders just a quarter century before. Yet Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon in faraway Washington, wrapped up in a geopolitical view of the world that scorned every regional consideration and summarily dismissed any alternative viewpoint, could only see in these events the beginning of a nefarious plot. It was a plot that quickly grew, in their minds, into the *idée fixe* of a Grand Design by India, in which its every action was a calculated step toward complete hegemony over all of South Asia.

Kissinger offered not a shred of evidence that India intended to "accelerate disintegration" or seek "humiliation" of, or spread "centrifugal tendencies" with respect to Pakistan. The refugee problem, as India maintained, was clearly insoluble without a political settlement, unless - as Kissinger's "solution" evidently contemplated - India was somehow to force nearly ten million refugees back across her border on the strength of Yahya's promise of "amnesty." And the likelihood of equitable distribution of food by Yahya's troops to their own victims was remote to the point of absurdity.

Kissinger's entire argument disingenuously ignored the conditions at the scene of the action. Yahya's troops in Bangladesh, numbering 40,000 in April, had been augmented to 70,000 [Kissinger's figure, p. 863] by July, and to 93,000 at the

time of their surrender in December. These troops were there to rape and raze villages, like Demra, and to operate death camps, like Hariharpura. They were not there to dispense food packets to smiling children - amnesty or no amnesty.

Paralleling the refugee crisis, public relations between India and the US plummeted over the summer months. In late April, American Ambassador to India Kenneth Keating, in a statement specifically authorized by the State Department, assured journalists in New Delhi that arms shipments to Pakistan had been completely stopped as of March 25. Two months later, India's Foreign Minister Swaran Singh was given the same assurance in Washington by a high State Department official. Arriving the next day at Delhi's Palam Airport, however, Singh was informed by journalists that two freighters were already en route from New York to Pakistan, loaded with armaments. Two days later the State Department acknowledged that a third freighter had left New York with a cargo of munitions on April 2. On July 9, Henry Kissinger, after a brief stopover in New Delhi on a world "fact-finding" tour, was reported to have been taken ill in Islamabad with a stomach ailment. In fact, he had traveled to Beijing in elaborate secrecy<sup>33</sup> on a Pakistan International Airlines flight, where he had laid the groundwork for President Nixon's famous February 1972 meeting with Chinese Premier Chou En-lai and Mao Tse-tung. Sydney Schanberg summarized India's reaction to these events on July 27:

[Since Swaran Singh's return to Delhi] scarcely a day has gone by when the United States has not been vilified in Parliament and in the press. .... [The news] has stung Indians as a personal betrayal [and] amounts to condonation of genocide .... Indian officials have drawn a pointed contrast between the United States' policy and that of the Soviet Union. Moscow has stated that no Soviet arms have gone to Pakistan since April of last year .... Henry A. Kissinger's secret flight from Pakistan to Peking after a two-day visit in New Delhi has only exacerbated Indian-American relations; [his visit] is seen as merely a "stage prop" for his visit to Peking .....

To the Indians, it has become a moral question of good versus evil - a Bengali people seeking freedom and a military regime suppressing them with bullets. The Americans, in the Indian mind, have lined up with evil.<sup>34</sup>

As an American living in India at that time, waiting in vain for my country to do something I could be proud of, I can well attest to the accuracy of Schanberg's assessment.

On August 9, India, abandoning its long-standing position of Cold War neutrality, signed a 20-year "Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation" with the



Soviet Union. The Soviets proceeded to build a major naval base on India's east coast, providing themselves with direct sea access to the entire Indian Ocean and all of Southeast Asia. USIS offices and American private sector aid organizations such as the Ford Foundation were shut down throughout the country. Intellectual contacts between India and the United States were virtually eliminated.

This "bombshell," as Kissinger described the treaty [page 866] was for him the final proof of India's - and the Soviet Union's - duplicity. Moscow had "thrown a lighted match into the powder keg." By refusing to align herself with the United States in the Cold War, India had clearly demonstrated that she was a Soviet "client," acting as the USSR's proxy at every point. By supporting India's position regarding the refugees, and later by promising to veto any attempt to "try" India as an aggressor in the UN's Security Council, the Soviet Union had "played a highly inflammatory role" in the conflict. The treaty signing proved without a doubt that Kissinger had been right all along.

But what he had believed all along was a self-fulfilling prophecy. It was his and Richard Nixon's own ignorance of and insensitivity to Indian values and national priorities, their irrational personal antagonisms, and an overriding geopolitical mindset in which they saw every world occurrence through a prism of the Cold War that ultimately drove India into the Soviet camp. It mattered not at all to Kissinger and Nixon that a policy allowing genocide in Bangladesh to continue for an extra six months or so would result in hundreds of thousands of additional deaths. But it mattered to India.

## **VI. Invasion**

On December 6, 1971, following several days of skirmishes with Pakistani forces along its western border, India responded with an all-out invasion of East Pakistan. Alarmed by India's rapid advance toward Dhaka, and convinced by his own mindset that this was the first step in Indira Gandhi's Grand Design to subjugate all of West Pakistan as well, Nixon - in a power play bitterly resented by India - ordered Naval Task Force 74, which included the nuclear aircraft carrier *Enterprise*, to the Bay of Bengal.<sup>35</sup>

It soon became clear that Nixon's and Kissinger's fears of a Grand Design were unfounded. On December 17, Dhaka fell to Indian troops with the unconditional surrender of all West Pakistani forces. By February virtually all of the refugees had returned to their now independent homeland, and India, after turning its administration over to Mujib's Awami League, had withdrawn its forces to behind its own borders. In the west, the brief military skirmishes between India and Pakistan quickly fizzled out. Mrs. Gandhi, in a public statement December 12,



denied that India had any territorial ambitions in West Pakistan. Nevertheless, as van Hollen noted,

The White House persisted in its conviction that India sought the destruction of West Pakistan . . . . Kissinger emphasized that Indian officials would not deny India had aspirations in Kashmir. But the reasons should have been obvious. Because India had always claimed all of Kashmir as Indian territory, just as Pakistan had made the reverse claim, no Indian official would be likely to give such assurances - nor would any Pakistani.<sup>36</sup>

Nixon and Kissinger never comprehended the passionate intensity of the feelings of both nations over Kashmir. Pakistan and India had fought two wars along their western border: the only conceivable reason, in Kissinger's perception, was that India in her Grand Design for the subcontinent sought to dominate all of Pakistan. But for India, the issue was always just Kashmir. A takeover of West Pakistan, with its powder keg of warring ethnicities, would have presented, as the young India well understood, a potentially catastrophic threat to its own integrity. There never was any "Grand Design."

## **VII. Cold War Sideshows**

"On the eve of the American invasion into Cambodia in 1970," wrote Lawrence Lifschultz in 1979, "Kissinger remarked to his colleagues at the National Security Council,"

'We're not interested in Cambodia. We're only interested in it not being used as a base.' Cambodia was a sideshow. In this exercise on the strategic periphery, nearly 500,000 Khmers were killed or wounded in American bombing, and an estimated two and a half million peasants escaped the air war only by fleeing as refugees. Kissinger's attitude toward Bangladesh a year later was little different. There was small interest in Bangladesh itself or in the issues of democracy and self-determination being confronted within its society. These small nations were simply not interesting for global thinkers, except in terms of manipulation and maneuver within the context of the larger strategic arena.

If Cambodia was a sideshow for Kissinger, one can be sure that Bangladesh did not even make the back lot. Nevertheless, the consequences of Kissinger's pro-Pakistan "tilt" went way beyond Cambodia's casualty and refugee statistics.<sup>37</sup>

Far from forcing the USSR into a corner through an alliance with China, Nixon and Kissinger, through their machinations in this Cold War sideshow, threw all of South Asia into the Soviets' lap. Far from building a constructive relationship with the world's largest democracy, they dissipated all moral authority by abandoning the democratic and humanitarian principles on which America was founded. Far from rescuing the people of Bangladesh from a bloody conflict, they provided the tools with which they were slaughtered.

In the early days of 1946, George Kennan, then an attaché at the United States Embassy in Moscow and regarded as America's leading expert on the Soviet Union, was asked by his superiors to prepare a background memorandum, suggesting how the US might best conduct diplomatic relations with that nation in the increasingly challenging years following World War II. In response, Kennan dispatched his famous "Long Telegram" to Foggy Bottom on February 22, laying out a policy of "containment" (although the word itself never appeared in the telegram) that was to guide United States policy vis-à-vis the USSR for the next four and a half decades. The telegram firmly established Kennan's reputation as America's "high priest of realism" in foreign relations - a reputation that was further consolidated the following year when, now back in Washington as Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, he published an expanded version of his telegram in the prestigious journal *Foreign Affairs* (July 1947) under the pseudonym "X."<sup>38</sup> In it, Kennan advised "a long term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies . . . . by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points." Later in the article he reiterated that United States policy should be one of "firm containment, designed to confront the Russians with unalterable counterforce at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interests of a peaceful and stable world."

Walter Lippmann, America's preeminent journalist and "one-man think tank," immediately responded, condemning Kennan's proposal as

a strategic monstrosity, doomed to fail, that could be attempted only by recruiting, subsidizing, and supporting a heterogeneous array of satellites, clients, dependents and puppets. Propping up anticommunist regimes around the periphery of the Soviet Union would require unending American intervention. Because many of these regimes were dictatorial, they would be prey to insurrection, which they would beseech the United States to quell in the name of anti-communism. Confronted with such demands the United States would either have to disown our puppets, which would be tantamount to appeasement and defeat and the loss of face, or else sup-

port them at an incalculable cost on an unintended, unforeseen and perhaps undesirable issue.<sup>39</sup>

Every one of these prophesies came to fulfillment in a parade of Cold War side-shows - not least, as we have seen, in Bangladesh.

Was Kennan wrong, then?

At first, Kennan accepted President Truman's military reorganization that took effect under the National Security Act of 1947, establishing as it did the CIA as the US's first peacetime intelligence agency, and giving the Executive Branch a virtual blank check for the covert operations that characterized much of the ensuing Cold War. By 1949, however, he had come to regret some of his verbiage in the "X" article, as implying use of military force to an extent he had never envisioned. Indeed, his views regarding Containment became almost identical to Lippmann's. In April 1949, The State Department Planning Staff, responding in large measure to the USSR's announcement the previous July of their successful test of an atomic bomb, formulated a secret plan - NSC-68 - for a massive military response that would immerse the two nations for more than four decades in a mad, blind race for nuclear supremacy. Kennan's vehement opposition to it cost him his job: Secretary of State Dean Acheson fired him as the Staff's Director, installing the hawkish Paul Nitze in his place several months before NSC-68 went into effect.

Kennan's use of the terms "firm containment" and "unalterable counterforce" may indeed have been detrimentally provocative. But to seize on these two phrases as the US did as a nation, and to read into them justification for the greatest military buildup the world has ever seen, was to blind itself to the true spirit, and to the wisdom of Kennan's article as a whole. He spoke over and over again, as "X," of the need for "persistent patience" in dealing with the Soviets, they were "under no ideological compulsion to accomplish their purposes in a hurry." In dealing with them we should remain at all times "cool and collected" and "focused on the long term. They can afford to wait," and, Kennan compellingly argued, "so could we . . . . The future of Soviet power may not be by any means as secure as Russian capacity for self-delusion would make it appear to the men in the Kremlin, The possibility remains (and in the opinion of this writer it is a strong one) that Soviet power . . . . bears within it the seeds of its own decay, and the sprouting of these seeds is well advanced."

This prophecy, too, came to pass, just as Lippmann's did - but not before millions of people in every corner of the globe died as innocent victims of our frantic race for military supremacy. Americans, as Henry Kissinger has observed, are not a patient people.

In the final analysis it is the concluding paragraphs of Kennan's article that reach out most powerfully to the truth - and which have fallen most abjectly by the wayside of political discourse:

The issue of Soviet-American relations is in essence a test of the over-all worth of the United States as a nation among nations. To avoid destruction the United States need only measure up to its own best traditions and prove itself worthy of preservation as a great nation.

Surely there was never a fairer test of national quality than this . . . . The thoughtful observer will find no cause for complaint in the Kremlin's challenge to American society. He will rather experience a certain gratitude to Providence which, by providing the American people with this implacable challenge, has made their entire security as a nation dependent on their pulling themselves together and accepting the responsibilities of moral and political leadership that history plainly intended them to bear.

Blinded by the mass hysteria of the Cold War, America's leaders – and I fear its people as well – ultimately lost sight of these moral and political responsibilities: in Chile, in Nicaragua, in Indonesia, in Vietnam and Cambodia-and in Bangladesh. Can we regain them? The issue is surely in doubt. But America *must* regain them, I believe, if it is indeed to prove itself worthy of preservation as a great nation.

### **VIII. Epilogue**

Shortly after Pakistan's surrender, Yahya resigned in disgrace as its Chief Martial Law Administrator. Mujib and Bhutto, however, were not so fortunate.

Welcomed home as Bangladesh's savior and installed as its first Prime Minister, Mujib proved himself utterly inept as an administrator, allowing his Awami League to descend into abject inefficiency and corruption. On August 14, 1975, in a bloody military coup, he was assassinated in his Dhaka home, together with nine members of his family and staff.

Yahya was immediately replaced in office by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who thus finally realized his burning ambition to become Pakistan's head of state. Setting up a personal army for himself, he settled in for what he doubtless hoped would be a lifetime job. It nearly was - though not, perhaps, for the lifetime he had looked forward to. Becoming increasingly corrupt, he was deposed after winning a rigged election in 1977, charged with attempted murder, found guilty, and hanged on April 4, 1979.

Henry Kissinger, in yet another statement about which one does not know whether to laugh or cry, had this to say about Bhutto's fate:

I found Bhutto brilliant, charming, of global stature in his perceptions . . . . No doubt he was later carried away by excessive self-confidence in his manipulative skills. But in the days of his country's tragedy he held the remnant of his country together and restored its self-confidence. In its hour of greatest need, he saved his country from complete destruction. He later brought himself down by excessive pride. But his courage and vision in 1971 should have earned him a better fate than the tragic end his passionate countrymen meted out to him and that blighted their reputation for mercy.

This is the only heartfelt expression of human sympathy I have been able to discern anywhere in Dr. Kissinger's memoirs.

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Notes:

1. Bowles, *New York Times*, 3/21/70
2. Payne, p. 17
3. Bennett Jones, p. 147
4. UPI dispatch from Calcutta to *The Times* (London) ,11/18/70
5. Zeitlin, *The Times* (London), 11/17/70
6. UPI dispatch from Calcutta to *The Times* (London), 11/18/70
7. Schanberg, *New York Times*, 12/30/70
8. Agence France-Presse, *The Times* (London), 11/27/70
9. Sisson & Rose, Table 2, p. 32
10. Bennett Jones, p. 227



11. Bennett Jones, p. 165
12. Sisson & Rose, p. 130
13. Aziz, p. 170. Qutubuddin Aziz's *Blood and Tears* presented 170 "eyewitness accounts" of these atrocities allegedly perpetrated during March and April against West Pakistanis and Biharis. During the ensuing Civil War the Pakistani Government issued a "white paper" citing these events as justification for their military action against the Bengali populace.
14. Sisson & Rose, p. 132
15. Bennett Jones, p. 272
16. The final refugee total as of 12/15/71 was set by the Indian government at 9,889,305 (Bangladesh Documents Volumes 81 & 82)
17. Payne, pp. 28-9
18. Chaudhuri, p. 87
19. Chaudhuri, p. 86
20. Chaudhuri, p. 91, quoting an article by Peter Hazelhurst in *The Times* (London), 6/3/71
21. Payne, p. 55
22. Benamin Welles, *New York Times*, 4/8/71
23. Kissinger, p. 848
24. Ali Riaz, 2/13/07
25. Chaudhuri, pp. 78-9, quoting data from the Indian government's *Statistical Information on Influx of Refugees*, published 12/3/71
26. Schanberg, *New York Times*, 9/16/71
27. van Hollen, pp. 348-9
28. Or perhaps not. Preservation of the territorial integrity of Pakistan remained a key goal of US policy to the bitter end. Ali Riaz, Bangladesh-born Associate Professor and History Department Chairman at Illinois State University, claimed in a 2007 article that recently declassified documents suggested the Administration undertook at least three initiatives during the fighting aimed at dissipating the Bangladesh movement, in order to preserve the existing status of Pakistan. Riaz states that "US clandestine efforts, although described as a 'political settlement,' contributed to the bloodshed instead of bringing it to an end."
29. "The US recognized," Kissinger said in a prepared statement to the press in December 1971, "that the time required to bring about a solution ..... might be longer than the Indian capacity to withstand the pressures generated by the refugees." *Congressional Record*, 11/20/71
30. Kissinger, pp. 853-4
31. van Hollen, p. 342

32. van Hollen, p. 343. He quotes B.W.Choudhury, a former member of Yahya's Cabinet, writing in *Pacific Community* 7.22, January 1976: "Pakistan was delighted to have this opportunity..... it was almost a God-sent gift for Paikistan."
33. A "double" closely resembling Kissinger was employed to remain in Islamabad during his visit to Beijing.
34. Schanberg, New York Times, 7/27/71
35. Kissinger maintained to the end (at least of his memoir) that it was his and Nixon's decision to order the Enterprise to the Bay of Bengal that caused Indira Gandhi to back away from her "Grand Design" to subjugate Pakistan. van Hollen reports, however (p. 352) that the Brookings Institution, in a careful 1978 examination, concluded flatly that deployment of the ship had no impact whatever on India's policies or actions with respect to Pakistan.
36. van Hollen, p. 352
37. Lifschultz, p. 252
38. Kennan was soon identified as the article's actual author, but its attribution to "X" prevented it from being construed as an official statement of Government policy.
39. Steel, pp. 443--4

## Superpower Relations, Backchannels, and the Subcontinent

By Luke A. Nichter and Richard A. Moss

Ehrlichman: And the India-Pakistan thing in that larger canvas is really not understood by the average guy to be all that important. It's a bunch of—  
Nixon: Unwashed heathen. They're picking away at each other over there.  
Ehrlichman: Either side would have been the wrong side.

—December 24, 1971<sup>1</sup>

Kissinger: Mr. President, by next October people will say: "What India-Pakistan crisis?"...When the history is written, this will look like one of our better maneuvers.

—March 31, 1972<sup>2</sup>

In his 1978 memoir, President Richard M. Nixon claimed, "By using diplomatic signals and behind-the-scenes pressures we had been able to save West Pakistan from the imminent threat of Indian aggression and domination. We had also once again avoided a major confrontation with the Soviet Union."<sup>3</sup> Kissinger's far more detailed chapter on "the tilt," in the first volume of his memoirs, *White House Years*, complements and largely corroborates Nixon's.<sup>4</sup> Kissinger argued that Nixon did not want to "squeeze" Pakistani President Agha "Yahya" Khan, and tried to put forward a neutral posture to the bloodshed in East Pakistan that was initially triggered by a series of natural disasters.<sup>5</sup> Kissinger also contended that Nixon did not want to encourage secessionist elements within an ally, Pakistan, which was divided into two wings—East and West—over 1,000 miles apart astride its hostile neighbor, India. Above all, before his secret trip to China in July 1971, Kissinger wanted to preserve the special channel to the People's Republic of China (PRC), and he saw three obstacles to handling the situation in South Asia: "the policy of India, our own public debate, and the indiscipline of our bureaucracy."<sup>6</sup> Kissinger stressed that the US attempted to restrain India by making clear American opposition to Indo-Pakistani conflict and attempting to enlist Soviet assistance with their ally, India, towards the same goal. Nevertheless, the two South Asian countries marched towards conflict following a cyclone in November 1970, the resulting devastation and

flooding in East Pakistan, Yahya's election loss to pro-Bangladeshi independence politician Mujib Rahman in December 1970, and Yahya's subsequent crackdown of "Operation Searchlight" in East Pakistan against Bangladeshi independence in March 1971. The environmental and political upheaval caused an unprecedented refugee crisis as Bengalis fled from East Pakistan into India and, with Indian backing, organized an independent government-in-exile and resistance movement.

The August 1971 Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation on the heels of Kissinger's groundbreaking trip to China was, in Kissinger's view, a particular cause for alarm because it "was deliberately steering nonaligned India toward a de facto alliance with the Soviet Union" and enabled India to take an uncompromising stance against the instability in Pakistan.<sup>7</sup> Kissinger faulted Indian intransigence, interference in East Pakistan, and a refusal to negotiate on substantive matters, rather than Pakistani provocations, as the precipitating causes of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. Kissinger also believed the crisis had been solved at the edge of an abyss by the various messages sent through confidential channels (including the White House-Kremlin "Hot Line") and diplomatic channels to the Soviet Union, which allegedly led to the Indian acceptance of a ceasefire and the preservation of West Pakistan at Soviet behest. Kissinger maintained that Indian restraint on attacking West Pakistan was, in no doubt, due to "a reluctant decision resulting from Soviet pressure, which in turn grew out of American insistence, including the fleet movement and the willingness to risk the [May 1972 Moscow] summit."<sup>8</sup>

In the face of the President's and National Security Advisor's memoirs, however, nearly every other account of the US response to the South Asian crisis has faulted the Nixon administration for its handling of the crisis, for its "tilt" to the dictatorial and arguably genocidal regime of Yahya Khan, its anti-Indian bias, its distorted reading of intelligence, and its claim that the US "saved" West Pakistan by challenging India and the Soviet Union. Critics have further charged that Nixon acted recklessly by sending Task Force 74, a flotilla led by the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier *USS Enterprise*, to the Indian Ocean at the height of the war, thereby exacerbating tensions and risking broader conflict between competing alliances: India and the Soviet Union on one side; the US, the PRC, and Pakistan on the other.<sup>9</sup>

The charges levied by critics trace their origin to investigative journalist Jack Anderson's Pulitzer-Prize-winning syndicated columns in December 1971 - January 1972 that documented the Nixon administration's "tilt" towards Pakistan. Anderson's exposé was based on a selection of sensitive, high level, leaked documents he had obtained from the executive branch and the military. The most damaging sources Anderson obtained came from the Washington Special Action Group (WSAG), the National Security Council-based policy body that addressed the South

Asian crisis. In his 1973 book, *The Anderson Papers*, which further expanded the critique of the Nixon-Kissinger South Asia policy, the journalist charged, “Richard Nixon brought the United States to the edge of another world war. His actions were deliberate; he operated in secret; and he lied to the American people about his actions.”<sup>10</sup>

Those critical of Nixon’s policy have dominated the historiography of the episode on the Subcontinent and have largely followed Anderson’s groundbreaking work, adding new insights based on documentary evidence as it became available over the last four decades. The critics range from ex-State Department officials, such as Christopher Van Hollen and William Bundy, to memoirists, like former Soviet Ambassador to the US Anatoly Dobrynin and Indian Foreign Secretary T. N. Kaul, to journalists, biographers, and historians. Kissinger-biographers number among the critics and include investigative reporter Seymour Hersh, *Time* magazine editor Walter Isaacson, and Finnish scholar Jussi Hanhimäki. Perhaps the best sourced examination focusing on the South Asian episode is the work of historian Robert McMahon, who has based his scholarship on excellent edited volumes produced by F. S. Aijazuddin and Roedad Khan, in addition to two volumes of official documentary series *Foreign Relations of the United States* produced by the State Department.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, despite the preponderance of rich documentary sources, there is still material that has been hitherto untapped. To bridge the gap between the Nixon administration’s perceptions and policy responses to the South Asian crisis and war of 1971, this article uses Nixon tapes material that has never been published, in addition to the recently declassified high level US-Soviet “backchannel” exchanges. The tapes provide the candid assessments by Nixon, Kissinger and other policymakers as events were reported across the executive offices, with moments of excitement, disappointment, and a range of emotions expressed in raw, uncensored language.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to the unpolished nature of the tapes, the published US and Soviet backchannel exchanges show the direct, written communications between the White House and the Kremlin in the lead-up to and during the short Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. Soon after Nixon assumed office in 1969, Kissinger, on the President’s behalf, met privately with the Soviet Ambassador to the US, Anatoly Dobrynin, and conducted a candid exchange of views that grew to encompass all major issues in superpower relations over the following years. The US Department of State and the Russian Foreign Ministry jointly compiled, translated, annotated, and published nearly the entire record—over one thousand pages—in *US-Soviet Relations in the Era of Détente, 1969-1972*. This unique collection provides an invaluable snapshot into these important meetings between US and Soviet interlocutors, a record that was long shrouded in secrecy.<sup>13</sup>

Utilizing these new materials, we argue that the Nixon administration's handling of the crisis on the Subcontinent was neither the abject failure as depicted by critics, nor was it the success that Nixon and Kissinger presented in their memoirs. In fact, this article reaches conclusions midway between the administration and its critics. The picture of the White House response to the crisis reveals that although Nixon and Kissinger superimposed a Cold War distortion on a regional situation, they responded logically. The Nixon administration steadily escalated diplomatic signals and the top policymakers sincerely believed that India had launched external aggression—not Pakistan—with its support for Mukthi Bahini (liberation force) raids into what was then East Pakistan.

Several additional themes run through the narrative of this article, many of which were also reflected in US-Soviet backchannel communications and in the taped conversations. Not surprisingly, Nixon and Kissinger's policy perceptions were clearly colored by their personal experiences with Indira Gandhi and Yahya Khan. The White House was unwilling to dismiss Yahya's role as an honest broker in Sino-American rapprochement and likewise saw duplicity on the part of Indira Gandhi after she visited Washington, DC in early November 1971 and claimed that India had no desire for war with Pakistan. Additionally, the surreptitiously recorded conversations between the President and his advisers, a portion of the 3,700-hour collection of Nixon tapes, are rife with gendered speech and appeals to masculine "toughness" that colored Nixon's actions. Significantly, the frequent contact with the Soviets during the war mitigates some of the criticism of recklessness.

The tapes and communications with the Soviets also demonstrate that Nixon and Kissinger believed that the war started on November 21, 1971, in contrast to the date most often cited as the start of the war, December 3, 1971, when Pakistan attacked forward Indian airbases. The tapes and backchannel records show that Nixon and Kissinger certainly believed in November-December 1971 that an Indian attack could result in the "dismemberment" and Balkanization of West Pakistan, regardless if the impression came from a misreading of intelligence. The Nixon administration attempted to spin the stories on the war to downplay American involvement on Pakistan's behalf, and due to the reliance on backchannel diplomacy, it is understandable that the administration's actions were criticized at the time and afterwards for the dichotomy between the public and private lines. Lastly, the experience of the Nixon White House during the South Asian crisis reinforced the belief in the White House that the Soviets would attempt to gain at American expense and that the administration would need to take a hard line to bring the Soviets into line.

Unfortunately, the focus on the US and Soviet materials is illuminating but cannot comprehensively address the multifaceted 1971 South Asian crisis and war because the situation on the ground outpaced Washington's and Moscow's efforts

to manage the crisis at the time. Until high level Indian materials, Indo-Soviet exchanges, Soviet Politburo meetings and other sources become available—if ever—the Pakistani, Soviet, and Indian sides of the story will remain incomplete. In the interim, a more nuanced understanding of US policy will need to suffice.

### **Backchannels and the Indo-Pakistani War**

The Indo-Pakistani war was the quintessential example of a regional conflict projected onto the backdrop of perceived superpower conflict and foreign policy managed from the White House. Nixon and Kissinger directed policy during the crisis but used the State Department to send messages through official channels and to build a public relations case for action in the UN.<sup>14</sup> The policies partially grew out of inherent distrust for the “bureaucracy” at the State Department, but Nixon and Kissinger still relied on higher level Department officials, such as Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs Joseph Sisco. Although the US response was more complex than either supporters or detractors have argued, it is clear that the administration used backchannels to convey their desire to use Soviet influence to contain the Indians and to contain the potential risks of the regional conflict expanding into a superpower conflict due to entangling alliances and obligations.

The White House initially believed that India wanted to avoid conflict and argued for several months that the US and the Soviet Union had “parallel interests” in trying to prevent an Indo-Pakistani war. At the same time, American policymakers realistically recognized that a refugee crisis could be the first step down the road to conflict.<sup>15</sup> The theme of “parallel interests” also entered into the Kissinger-Dobrynin backchannel. For example, at Nixon’s request, Kissinger invited Dobrynin to the presidential retreat at Camp David on June 10, 1971, for a *tour d’horizon* of US-Soviet relations.<sup>16</sup> Dobrynin reported back to Moscow that, with regard to the brewing Indo-Pakistani crisis, Kissinger claimed that Washington had “reliable information” that India “has still not rejected the idea of providing armed assistance to East Pakistan.”<sup>17</sup>

Before departing on his secret trip to China, Kissinger informed Dobrynin that he had been instructed by President Nixon to “visit Delhi and confidentially, but in the strongest terms, call Indira Gandhi’s attention to the fact that the US takes a very serious view of this dangerous Indian course of action and the serious consequences associated with it.” In the event of an Indo-Pakistani war, Kissinger warned that the US would “cut off all future economic aid to India.” Dobrynin reported back to the Kremlin: “In short, Kissinger summarized, the US Government is for maintaining the territorial status quo between India and Pakistan while at



the same time seeking a political solution to the problems that have arisen.” Once again, Kissinger had stressed the parallel interests of the US and the USSR, and “made it clear that the President [considered] the confidential exchange of views on this matter between him and the Soviet leadership to be useful,” and it would “revisit this issue” after Kissinger’s return from Asia.<sup>18</sup>

In response to the US opening to China, announced by President Nixon in a nationwide televised address on July 15, 1971, India took the diplomatic initiative by tilting toward the Soviet Union, taking out an insurance policy of sorts. Dusting off a treaty that had been negotiated but never concluded, Indian Ambassador to the USSR and close associate of Indira Gandhi, D. P. Dhar, traveled to Moscow in late July 1971 and quickly concluded the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation on August 9th.<sup>19</sup> This development signified the first shift in the Soviet position on the crisis away from US-Soviet “parallel interests.” Indo-Soviet collusion expanded and was, perhaps, an unintended consequence of US geopolitical paradigm shift towards China, in addition to being a brilliant Indian *Realpolitik* counterpunch to the Pakistani channels Nixon and Kissinger had used to open China.

On the morning of August 9, 1971, Kissinger informed the President about the Indo-Soviet treaty. Nixon inadvertently raised the subject by noting from his morning news summary that he had seen that “Gromyko was down there talking to that damned Indian Foreign Minister [Swaran Singh].” Kissinger replied that the Soviet Union and India had just signed the 25-year treaty and explained that the Indians and the Soviets would “consult with each other in case of aggression of other countries against one of the parties.” Talking with a sense of bravado, Kissinger promised, “to give that Indian Ambassador [to the US, L.K. Jha] unshirted hell.” Audibly angry, Nixon replied, “And the thing is, though, they [the Indians] should well understand if they’re going to choose to go with the Russians, they’re choosing not to go with us.” The President added, “Now, Goddamnit, they’ve got to know this...Goddamnit, who’s giving them a billion dollars a year? Shit, the Russians aren’t giving them a billion dollars a year, Henry.” Kissinger suggested that the response to India and the Soviet Union be handled in the National Security Council, i.e. from the White House and via private channels:

Kissinger: Bureaucratically I am going—we have to keep this in the NSC system because—

Nixon: Hell yes.

Kissinger: —while the combination of Bill [Rogers] and [Joe] Sisco is going to be hip-shooting all over the place if they do it alone, and all on the Indian side because they’re very influenced, as you know, by *The Washing-*

*ton Post* and *New York Times*. So far—

Nixon: [Sighs]

Kissinger: —I've—Bill has, has been fine. But now that Sisco is back—

Nixon: He's going up to New York, is he?

Kissinger: Yeah. Well, I don't mind. I think it's good for him to do the relief—

Nixon: That's on the refugees—

Kissinger: As long it's relief, but all the briefing papers he gets—Every time he listens to his own bureaucracy, he's in trouble because all of them are pro-Indian, all of them are—are really Kennedyites...<sup>20</sup>

As the conversation progressed, Kissinger elucidated the practice of triangular diplomacy and directly linked the policy of improved relations with the Soviet Union through a potential summit meeting to the US opening to China, the simmering Arab-Israeli dispute, and the situation on the Subcontinent. Kissinger believed that the fear of Sino-American collusion would keep the Soviets in line, and the prospect of a summit meeting and the concurrent agreements that would be signed in Moscow could help delay another war in the Middle East and force the Soviets to restrain the Indians and avert war on the Subcontinent:

Kissinger: But their major reason is they're afraid of what you will do in Peking if they're in a posture of hostility to you. So they would like to have the visit hanging over Peking. They would like that you have the visit in the pocket—

Nixon: I see.

Kissinger: So that you will not—So that you will be restrained in Peking. We, in turn, want it because it's helpful to us to have Moscow hanging over Peking. It reinsures...the Peking visit. And, after all, when I handed your letter to Dobrynin, I didn't even mention the summit. He said, "Does the fact that there is no summit in there mean the President has lost interest?" He said, "Because I can tell you unofficially they are considering it now at the highest level in Moscow and there'll be an answer." And he said... speaking for himself—"they're not letting me go on vacation is because they want me to transmit that answer, that proposal."

Nixon: Hmm. Well, either way, we shall see.

Kissinger: ...And for us...then we'd be in great shape. Because if the summit is coming up, say, in the middle of May [1972] in Moscow, we'd know there won't be a Middle East blowup before then, because they'll sit on the Egyptians.

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger: That and India is—are the two big problems.

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger: That means we'll be through the better part of next year, and they can't start something up right after the summit, either.

Nixon: Hmm.

Kissinger: And we can keep the two to control each other.<sup>21</sup>

When Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko visited Washington in early September, the situation in South Asia was discussed within the broader context of superpower relations.<sup>22</sup> Nixon told Gromyko that he feared the situation in the Subcontinent could “explode into war in the area.” Gromyko responded that the Soviet Government also wanted to “prevent a confrontation” and that Moscow had shared its policy with Mrs. Gandhi. Despite New Delhi’s protestations to the Kremlin that it wanted to avoid war, Gromyko noted that the Soviet leadership “did not have as much confidence as in the case of the Indian leadership.” Furthermore, Gromyko “was gratified to know” that Soviet and US policies in averting war were in line and that both “stood on the position of counseling both sides to exercise restraint.” Nixon told the Soviet Foreign Minister that the two would “be in touch with each other on this situation.”<sup>23</sup> Nixon also reminded Gromyko of the importance of using the backchannel: “I do not take charge of things that don’t matter. Where they matter, like between our countries, then I make the decisions.” The President emphasized, “We couldn’t have done it without that channel.”<sup>24</sup>

By late October, as a result of the Indo-Soviet treaty and several high-level trips between Soviet and Indian diplomatic, political, and military officials, Soviet attitudes began to change from agreement with American pronouncements about restraint and averting war towards a sharper criticism of Pakistani actions. As two scholars of the Indo-Pakistani conflict have noted, “the total shift in Moscow’s position on ‘Bangladesh’ occurred only after Mrs. Gandhi’s visit to Moscow from 27 to 29 September.”<sup>25</sup> The change in Soviet attitude did not go unnoticed in American policymaking circles and entered into the various US-Soviet channels amidst multifaceted discussions of summit planning, the Middle East, trade, and other areas of US-Soviet relations. The White House increasingly saw the Soviet Union as an enabler of Indian aggression, a pattern that also fit with the perceptions of the Soviet Union enabling North Vietnamese intransigence by supplying materiel. As the pattern became clear, Nixon and Kissinger felt that the US would have to risk détente, and mild protests gave way to vigorous protests that the Soviet response to American wishes during the Indo-Pakistani war could be a “watershed” in US-Soviet relations.

At the beginning of November, Indira Gandhi visited Washington to press India's case and explain the dire nature of the refugee crisis. Presidential scholar Robert Dallek correctly called the "two conversations on November 4 and 5... case studies in heads of state speaking past each other."<sup>26</sup> It is more likely, however, that Nixon and Gandhi had already made up their minds long before they met in the Oval Office that autumn. Nixon believed that India wanted to confront Pakistan and underlined the potential consequences: American aid to India would be cut off, and the American people would not understand aggressive action. Gandhi knew that Nixon would not take India's side and had already calculated that the consequences would short-lived.<sup>27</sup> The November 4th conversation featured Kissinger doing most of the talking, while the conversation on November 5th was one of Nixon's foreign policy assessments, with Kissinger adding some important details on Southeast Asia, and, particularly, the Peking initiative to assuage Indian concerns.<sup>28</sup>

Most accounts of the Indo-Pakistani conflict, particularly those which have examined the American response, have either ignored or downplayed the events of late-November 1971 and have dated the start of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 to the Pakistani Air Force's December 3, 1971, raid on airbases in northwestern India.<sup>29</sup> The perception that India was going to go to war against Pakistan was fairly well established in the wake of Gandhi's trip to Washington, nearly a month before Yahya commenced the air raid. American policymakers were kept well apprised of events on the ground by their connections to the Pakistani leadership and knew of Mukti Bahini attacks into East Pakistan with the support of regular Indian armor, artillery, and infantry.<sup>30</sup> Kissinger-biographer Walter Isaacson wrote, "On November 22, when India conducted a cross-border operation into East Pakistan in support of Bengali separatists, Kissinger was one of the few (then or in retrospect) who considered this incident the start of full-scale war." Isaacson continued, "The State Department, on the other hand, downplayed the seriousness of these skirmishes; even Pakistan's President Yahya Khan cabled the next day to say he still hoped a war could be avoided."<sup>31</sup>

Although the point about "full scale" war may be accurate, the broader argument missed several important factors, including: the State Department was receiving contradictory reports from both Pakistan and India; as demonstrated in several secretly taped conversations, Nixon and Kissinger genuinely believed that India had started the war by supporting Mukti Bahini forces with regular Indian troops on Pakistani territory; and, most importantly, the simple fact of the situation on the ground was that Indian regular forces had violated Pakistan's border in support of insurgents who were both trained and supplied by India. As Richard Sisson and Leo Rose noted in their landmark study on the conflict, published before Isaacson's biography of Kissinger, "because of the air strikes, Pakistan is often

depicted as having taken the initiative in starting the war. In more realistic, rather than formal, terms, however, the war began on 21 November, when Indian military units occupied Pakistani territory as part of the preliminary phase to the offensive directed at capturing and liberating Dhaka.”<sup>32</sup>

As reports of the number and severity of border skirmishes increased, Kissinger convened the interagency WSAG to develop a response. Kissinger’s planned response of going to the UN—minus the factor of the US-Soviet backchannels, which was unbeknownst to most of the group’s members—developed largely out of the assessment by the State Department’s Joseph Sisco. Sisco told Kissinger:

In the present circumstances, where we do not have an all-out war but do have a significant increase in the numbers of incidents, we could try to get some form of restraining order from the Security Council which hopefully would arrest or slow down further deterioration of the situation... We obviously need facts. But I think we know enough about the nature of the insurgency to believe it would be a good thing to begin to move our efforts somewhat more into the public domain and to begin to place some of the responsibility on the shoulders of the UN.<sup>33</sup>

On November 22, 1971, American policymakers certainly believed that there had been a major incident and that India had attacked Pakistan by Mukti Bahini proxy. Kissinger called Nixon at 12:45 p.m. and said, “There is no doubt there is a large encroachment taking place and it is heavily backed by the Indians.”<sup>34</sup> In a memo later that day, Kissinger relayed Pakistani radio broadcasts of an Indian offensive and added, “we have no independent evidence but it seems apparent that there has been a major incident.”<sup>35</sup> In a never-before-published transcript of Oval Office meeting with the President that afternoon, after continued reports were coming in through regular cable traffic and via backchannels, Kissinger answered Nixon’s queries about the situation on the Subcontinent:

Nixon: Is Yahya saying it’s war or not?

Kissinger: Yeah, they’re saying it’s war.

Nixon: And the Indians say it isn’t?

Kissinger: It isn’t. That’s right. It’s a naked case of aggression, Mr. President ...

Nixon: Goddamnit, maybe we ought to say that.

Kissinger still hoped that war could be averted, despite the ‘naked case of Indian aggression,’ but the threshold had been crossed. As an overall strategy,

Kissinger endorsed the idea of coordinated action with the PRC in the UN Security Council. Kissinger suggested: “we ought to talk to—which I’ll do tomorrow night<sup>36</sup>—to the Chinese to find out what they’ll do at the Security Council...we don’t have to go as far as the Chinese, but I would lean—” Nixon interrupted: “I want to go damn near as far. Now, understand: I don’t like the Indians.” Kissinger responded, “We ought to lean pretty close to the Chinese and make it an international [action]” but was again interrupted. Nixon repeated his theme: “Let’s remember the Pakistanis have been our friends...and the damn Indians have not been. You know?”<sup>37</sup> Kissinger hoped to coordinate with the Chinese and other powers in order to diplomatically isolate India and its Soviet Bloc supporters.

At Kissinger’s suggestion and with Nixon’s approval, the State Department sent a demarche to PM Gandhi on November 27th. To the Indians, the note said, “Military engagements along India’s border with East Pakistan have increased in number and strength. Tanks, aircraft and regular forces have been involved on both sides.”<sup>38</sup> The message to Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev was similar and explicit: “The recent border incidents...in the Jessore section of East Pakistan have been of particular concern to me, as I am sure they have been to you...there appears to be an imminent danger of full-scale hostilities between India and Pakistan.”<sup>39</sup> Despite the Nixon administration’s best efforts to deescalate the situation, decisions in New Delhi and Islamabad had been made and the war was a foregone conclusion by late November. India had thrown down the gauntlet, and the fatalistic Pakistani leader decided to pick it up with a bungled attempt to take out Indian forward airbases on December 3rd.<sup>40</sup>

Nixon and Kissinger decided to fight the battle in the UN, in allegiance with Communist China, and to make the Indo-Pakistani war a litmus test in US-Soviet relations. Kissinger and, particularly, Nixon were disinclined to believe the Indian side of the story and instead trusted the Pakistanis. From the vantage point of the Oval Office, Yahya had served as an honest broker in opening China and had accepted American recommendations for a peaceful resolution of the crisis—despite, as they saw them, exaggerated reports of his domestic strong-arm tactics. Nixon and Kissinger, at the same time, believed that Gandhi had moved away from two decades of Indian non-alignment and had allied the world’s most populous democracy with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, they believed she had lied to them during her trip to Washington. For the Nixon White House, the unanswered questions included the status of West Pakistan and whether or not it would be Balkanized, the fate of Kashmir, and whether or not East Pakistan would gain independence, become part of India, or some combination thereof.

Kissinger called Nixon on the morning of December 3<sup>rd</sup> to inform him “that West Pakistan has attacked because situation in East collapsing.” As for the Paki-



stani attack on India, Nixon saw it akin to “Russia claiming to be attacked by Finland.”<sup>41</sup> Immediately responding to the news, Kissinger convened an emergency meeting of the WSAG.<sup>42</sup> CIA Director Richard Helms confirmed that the Pakistanis had attacked the Indians, an act, the group largely agreed, likely provoked by Indian actions over the preceding two weeks, although confirming intelligence was not available.<sup>43</sup>

Despite the onset of hostilities, the US-Soviet backchannel dialogue on the war itself, handled via Soviet *chargé d'affaires* Yuly Vorontsov (since Dobrynin had been recalled to Moscow for instructions), did not commence in earnest until the afternoon of December 5, 1971. Kissinger informed the President that the American efforts for a ceasefire and withdrawal had the support of the Chinese, and only Russia and Poland had opposed the efforts. Kissinger was displeased with the Soviet behavior and told Nixon, “Now, what the Russians this morning have launched is a blistering attack on Pakistan in TASS and in effect, have warned China against getting involved. What we are seeing here is a Soviet-Indian power play to humiliate the Chinese and also somewhat us.” If the US failed to support Pakistan, Kissinger warned, “if we collapse now, the Soviets won’t respect us for it; the Chinese will despise us and the other countries will draw their conclusions.”<sup>44</sup>

Kissinger then directed NSC staffer Helmut Sonnenfeldt to draft a telegram and ordered Haig to prepare talking points according to the President’s telephone instructions, in preparation for a meeting with Vorontsov at 4:00 p.m. on December 5th. As scheduled, Kissinger met with Vorontsov in the Map Room at the White House. Kissinger told the DCM that “A letter for the General Secretary would be delivered the next day, but in view of the urgency of the situation, the President wanted it transmitted to Moscow immediately.” At a time of improving relations, Kissinger continued, “The President did not understand how the Soviet Union could believe that it was possible to work on the broad amelioration of our relationships while at the same time encouraging the Indian military aggression against Pakistan.” The President believed that Indian ‘aggression’ in instigating armed conflict with Pakistan violated the established order and the UN charter, and wondered why “a member country of the United Nations was being dismembered by the military forces of another member country which had close relationships with the Soviet Union.”<sup>45</sup>

The next day, Kissinger had Nixon’s formal letter delivered to Vorontsov at the Soviet Embassy, but not via “usual channels.”<sup>46</sup> Still hoping to move from confrontation to cooperation, Nixon wrote Brezhnev that it was his understanding from his September meeting with Gromyko that the US and Soviet Union were “entering a new period in our relations which would be marked by mutual restraint and in which neither you nor we would act in crises to seek unilateral advantages.” Soviet



support of “the Indian Government’s open use of force against the independence and integrity of Pakistan, merely serves to aggravate an already grave situation,” Nixon warned. The only solution, in the president’s determination, was that “Urgent action is required and I believe that your great influence in New Delhi should serve these ends.”<sup>47</sup>

Vorontsov met with Kissinger at 11:00 p.m. to personally deliver Brezhnev’s equally firm reply. According to Vorontsov, Brezhnev argued that the root cause of the conflict was the “result of actions of the Pakistani government against the population of East Pakistan” and that the Soviet Union desired “a political settlement in East Pakistan on the basis of respect for the will of its population as clearly expressed in the December 1970 elections.” In Brezhnev’s mind, the US did not act “actively enough and precisely enough...towards removing the main source of tension in relations between Pakistan and India.” Brezhnev vigorously disputed Nixon’s argument that the India-Pakistan crisis would be a watershed in US-Soviet relations:

Differences in the appraisal of specific events in the world...may arise, and there is nothing unnatural in that. However, if in such cases, instead of business-like search for realistic solutions, to start talking about a “critical stage” or “watershed” in Soviet-American relations, it would hardly help finding such solutions, and would make it still harder to envisage that it will facilitate improvement of Soviet-American relations and their stability.<sup>48</sup>

In the face of Soviet pushback, Nixon took an even harder line with the Soviets and used additional signals, some public and some private, to reiterate the importance of preserving West Pakistan. To increase pressure on India and demonstrate to the Soviet Union that the US was serious about West Pakistan, Nixon authorized the movement of the *USS Enterprise* task force to the Bay of Bengal, and reiterated to Vorontsov—through Haig—that the White House expected a written reply to Nixon’s letter of December 6th. Furthermore, Nixon and Kissinger called in the Soviet Agriculture Minister, Vladimir Matskevich—then visiting Washington—to the Oval Office to convey to the Soviet leadership the seriousness with which American policymakers viewed the Indo-Pakistani war. Clearly informed by the memory of the Jordanian crisis of September 1970, both Nixon and Kissinger wanted to play it tough with the Soviets on India-Pakistan and save West Pakistan from dismemberment.<sup>49</sup> Both men also determined that forcing a change in Soviet behavior was worth risking the summit and even the backchannel itself.

In a brief afternoon discussion on December 6th about cutting off aid to India, Kissinger raised the late night meeting the previous evening and the receipt

of the Soviet oral note from Vorontsov. He explained, "I really read the riot act to him...about Soviet participation. And we're sending a note that you dictated today over to...Brezhnev." Nixon blurted out, "I don't know whether it'll do any good. Goddamn them, they haven't done anything yet...!" Alluding to the Jordanian and Cienfuegos crises a year earlier, Kissinger exclaimed, "My worry is, Mr. President, that...we may get into a summer 1970 situation if we don't show some firmness with them, now. Every time we've been tough with them, they've backed off."<sup>50</sup> The theme of playing it tough with the Russians clearly appealed to Nixon, who also counseled Kissinger to stay the course in the UN and to work with the Chinese. "Let's not separate from the Chinese at the UN," he told Kissinger, "That I will not do." Kissinger agreed. Kissinger again appealed to Nixon's sense of bravado: "It's a daring game, but we've always done well with the daring games." Nixon saw a Chinese feinting maneuver as a good strategy, and, with US backing, the Soviets would not dare to attack China: "It's a daring game, so, with the [US backing the] Chinese—[are] the Russians are going to attack China? Are you kidding?"<sup>51</sup>

To convey the message to the Soviets that Nixon expected a formal response to his letter of December 6, Kissinger had Haig call Vorontsov at 3:50 p.m. on December 8. Haig dutifully told the Soviet chargé that Kissinger "wanted you to have this message as soon as possible." In a direct rebuke to the Soviet oral response, Haig read, "the President does not feel a response at this time is necessary until he receives a response to his written communication, and he wanted it understood that the 'watershed' term which he used was very, very pertinent, and he considers it a carefully thought-out and valid assessment on his part."<sup>52</sup> While Haig was communicating with Vorontsov, Nixon met with Henry Kissinger at the President's hideaway office in the Executive Office Building. Kissinger candidly assessed the sequence of events and determined that it was an earlier failure not to act toughly with Mrs. Gandhi and the Russians that allowed the war to commence: "The mistake was that we should have understood that she [PM Gandhi] was not looking for pretext; that she was determined to go. And secondly, we should have been much tougher with the Russians." Nixon asked, "Well, what could we have done?" Kissinger explained:

We should have told them what we finally told them last Sunday [December 5, 1971] that this would mark a watershed in our relationship, that there could be no Middle East negotiations if this thing would grow. We would have had to play it tough. And thirdly, we should have, once the cat was among the pigeons, when they moved on November 22, we had cut [aid] off, as you wanted, but we couldn't get the bureaucracy to do. We could

have cut off economic aid the first or second day, plus all of arms instead of waiting ten days and diddling around.<sup>53</sup>

Vorontsov arrived at the White House on the morning of December 9th to deliver a letter from General Secretary Brezhnev to President Nixon. The Soviet leader placed the blame on the doorstep of Pakistan, for it was Yahya's crackdown in East Pakistan in spite of the December 1970 elections that had caused the exodus of refugees to India and had provided the spark to the proverbial fuse. Echoing American demands for a ceasefire—but not the withdrawal of Indian forces from East Pakistan—followed by a political settlement, Brezhnev stressed that a ceasefire would serve as a practical first step towards negotiation. Brezhnev asked that the US use its influence on Yahya to achieve that end and asked Nixon for a “calm and balanced approach.”<sup>54</sup> If Brezhnev had hoped for a “calm and balanced approach,” he was likely upset by Vorontsov's extremely urgent cable to the Soviet Foreign Ministry reporting a meeting with Kissinger when the chargé delivered Brezhnev's letter:

Kissinger said, as if speaking on his own behalf, that if India turns all its troops against West Pakistan “in the wake of East Pakistan” and tries “to secure a complete victory” over Pakistan, then the United States (“unlike our conduct with regard to events in East Pakistan, where the situation is rather complex and politically complicated”) would prevent a crushing defeat of Pakistan in that case, and to that end would even be willing to undertake steps of a military nature: “The Indians must not forget that the US has allied commitments with respect to defending Pakistan from aggression.”<sup>55</sup>

Nixon took a hard line position when he received Soviet Agriculture Minister, Vladimir Matskevich, at the White House at 4 p.m. on December 9, 1971.<sup>56</sup> After a friendly introduction in which he recalled an earlier encounter in Moscow in 1959, the President pleaded with Matskevich: “I believe that you as one who is very close to the Chairman, and, of course, you as your top ranking representative...I want you to know how strongly I feel personally about this issue, and it may be that as a result of this conversation you could convey to Chairman Brezhnev a sense of urgency that may lead to a settlement.”<sup>57</sup> Intending that his guest serve as a one-way channel to pass along the ominous implications of an Indian attack on West Pakistan directly to Brezhnev, Nixon warned Matskevich:

The first requirement is a ceasefire. The second requirement is that India desist from attacks in West Pakistan. If India moves forces against West

Pakistan, the United States cannot stand by. The key to the settlement is in the hands of the Soviet Union. If the USSR does not restrain the Indians, the US will not be able to deal with Yahya. If the Indians continue their military operations, we must inevitably look toward a confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States.<sup>58</sup>

Reviewing the meeting with the following day, Kissinger assured Nixon that the message that the US would protect West Pakistan would reach the Soviet leadership. The following exchange is particularly telling for Nixon's perception of the Indians and a sense that the Soviets were pulling the Indian marionette strings:

Nixon: But these Indians are cowards. Right?

Kissinger: Right, but with Russian backing. You see, the Russians have sent notes to Iran, Turkey, to a lot of countries threatening them.<sup>59</sup> The Russians have played a miserable game.

Nixon: So we'll do the same thing, right?

Kissinger: Exactly.

Nixon: Threatening them with what? If they come in and what?

Kissinger: They'll do something. They haven't said what they'll do. But they'll settle now. After your conversation with Matskevich yesterday, they're going to settle.<sup>60</sup>

Kissinger met with Vorontsov on the morning of December 10, and delivered a terse letter from Nixon to Brezhnev asserting that Brezhnev's proposals "concerning the political evolution of East Pakistan appear to be met," but that it would need to be followed by "an immediate cease-fire in the West."<sup>61</sup> Kissinger allowed Vorontsov to copy the verbatim text of an *aide-memoire* from November 5, 1962, between then Pakistani leader Ayub Khan and US Ambassador McConaughy, in which the Kennedy administration reaffirmed previous assurances to "come to Pakistan's assistance in the event of aggression from India against Pakistan."<sup>62</sup> As Nixon warned in his letter, if a ceasefire in the West did not take place immediately, the US "would have to conclude that there is in progress an act of aggression directed at the whole of Pakistan, a friendly country toward which we have obligations." Nixon continued to urge the Soviets "in the strongest terms to restrain India "from looking westward."<sup>63</sup>

In New York on the evening of December 11th, Kissinger secretly met with Huang Hua, the PRC Permanent Representative to the UN and ambassador to Canada to coordinate Sino-American activities about the Indo-Pakistani War. Kissinger told Huang, "Incidentally, just so everyone knows exactly what we do, we tell you

about our conversations with Soviets; we do not tell the Soviets about our conversations with you.” Kissinger then raised a matter “of some sensitivity.” The US would share information with the Chinese about “Soviet dispositions on your borders” and, vaguely, “if the People’s Republic were to consider the situation on the Indian subcontinent a threat to its security, and if it took measures to protect its security, the US would oppose efforts of others to interfere with the People’s Republic.”<sup>64</sup>

Kissinger called Vorontsov on the afternoon of the 11th to inform the Soviets that the US would “proceed unilaterally,” presumably at the United Nations, if it did not hear from the Soviet leadership. Vorontsov informed Kissinger that Moscow had dispatched the First Deputy Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vasily V. Kuznetsov, to India “in direct connection to whatever we have discussed here.”<sup>65</sup> Nixon and Kissinger worried aloud that an Indian attack on West Pakistan might provoke Chinese action in support of Pakistan against India, which, in turn, could escalate even further if the Soviets moved against China to support India. Nixon believed it would be “crystal clear,” “naked aggression” if India continued military action after East Pakistan was “wrapped up.” Kissinger explained that Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh had “refused to give an assurance” that India did not “have any territorial...ambitions.” Singh had vaguely mentioned “minor rectifications,” a codeword, in Kissinger’s opinion, that meant Southern Kashmir. Nixon remarked, “by God, the country [US] doesn’t give a shit [about India-Pakistan]. That’s the point.”

President Nixon realistically assessed the situation and saw the scenarios involving nuclear war for what they were—unlikely contingencies:

Nixon: Are we being over anxious on the hotline? No, we’re not. Basically, all we’re doing is asking for a reply. We’re not letting the Russians diddle us along, point one...And, second, all we’re doing is to reiterate what I said to the Agriculture Minister and what you said to Vorontsov. Right?

Kissinger: Right.

Nixon: Does that sound like a good plan to you?

Kissinger: It’s a ... typical Nixon plan. I mean it’s bold. You’re putting your chips into the pot again. But my view is that if we do nothing, there’s a certainty of a disaster.

Nixon: Yeah.

Kissinger: This way there’s a high possibility of one, but at least we’re coming off like men.

Encouraging Chinese troop movements against India entailed risks, but Nixon saw them as more of a means of forcing Indian restraint in Pakistan. With US backing,

a Soviet attack on China in support of India was, in the President's estimation, unlikely:

Nixon: The reason that I suggested that the Chinese move is they talked about the Soviet divisions on their border and all that sort of thing. You know that the Soviets at this point aren't about to go ripping into that damn mess, having in mind the fact of their gains from the Indian thing...

Kissinger: The Chinese, well, we asked, but that's not the reason they're doing it.

Nixon: The way you put it, Henry, the way you put it is very different as I understand. You said, "Look, we're doing all these things, why don't you threaten them?" Remember I said, "Threaten, move a couple of people." ... Look, we have to scare these bastards...

Kissinger: My feeling is, Mr. President, leaving completely aside what we've said, if the outcome of this is that Pakistan is swallowed by India; China is destroyed, defeated, humiliated by the Soviet Union; it will be a change in the world balance of power of such magnitude...that the security of the United States for—maybe forever, certainly for decades—we will have a guaranteed war in the Middle East, then...

Nixon: The point is, the fact of the matter is I'd put [it] in more Armageddon terms than reserves when I say that the Chinese move and the Soviets threaten and then we start lobbing nuclear weapons. That isn't what happens. That isn't what happens. What happens is we then do have a hotline to the Soviets and we finally just say now what goes on here?

Kissinger: We don't have to lob nuclear weapons. We have to go on alert.

Nixon noted that the Armageddon scenarios were, however, hypothetical: "Well, we're talking about a lot of ifs. Russia and China aren't going to go to war." Kissinger disagreed, but Nixon pointed out that the timing was just wrong for a world war. The President counseled prudence: "Well, let me put it this way. I have always felt that India and Pakistan, inevitably, would have a war. And there can always be a war in the Mideast. As far as Russia and China is [are] concerned there are other factors too overwhelming at this particular point for them to go at each other."<sup>66</sup>

Less than two hours later, Vorontsov called Kissinger with an "immediate reply" to the President's message:

The first contacts with the Government of India and personally with Prime Minister I. Gandhi...testify to the fact that the Government of India has no intention to take any military actions against West Pakistan. The Soviet



leaders believe that this makes the situation easier and hope that the Government of Pakistan will draw from this appropriate conclusions. As far as other questions raised in the President's letter are concerned the answers will be given in the shortest of time.

Vorontsov said he had not "been instructed to say this," but in his "personal capacity" he wanted Kissinger to know that Gromyko had returned from vacation, and the Soviet Ambassador to the UN had "been discussing with the authorities in delegation along the lines we discussed with the President," with "all kinds of guarantees."<sup>67</sup> Vorontsov repeatedly assured Kissinger that the US and USSR were in agreement, and that there was a chance for cooperation.

Meanwhile, another letter from Nixon to Brezhnev went out via the "hotline" at 11:30 a.m. The message was curt:

[A]fter delaying for 72 hours in anticipation of your [formal] reply...I had set in train certain moves in the United Nations Security Council...These cannot now be reversed. I must also note that Indian assurances still lack any concreteness. I am still prepared to proceed along the lines of set forth in my letter of December 10, as well as in conversations with your chargé d'affaires Vorontsov, and my talk with your Agriculture Minister...<sup>68</sup>

The hotline message showed that the US had clearly taken a hard line with the Soviets and reflected the White House belief that India would attack West Pakistan—regardless of Indian or Soviet pronouncements to the contrary. The next day, December 13, the Soviets responded with a brief hotline message of their own, which stated that they were conducting a "clarification of all the circumstances in India" and that the message had been "in accordance with the confidential exchange of opinions."<sup>69</sup>

### **The Conclusion of the Indo-Pakistani War and the Radford Affair**

As soon as Nixon and Kissinger returned from a two-day summit with French President Georges Pompidou at the Azores, the intensity of the crisis ratcheted up even before the two had returned to American soil. Once Air Force One landed at Andrews AFB, members of the press scurried to report potentially groundbreaking news that the President might cancel the Moscow summit. The source of the news was none other than some comments Kissinger made on the plane that were supposed to be "unattributed," a journalistic rule of thumb known as the "Lindley Rule."<sup>70</sup> In violation of a gentlemen's agreement that went back to the 1950s, the



*Washington Post* attributed the comments to the National Security Adviser on the front page the next morning.<sup>71</sup> The *Post* story distracted Nixon and Kissinger's attention from what would become a much larger problem inextricably linked to the India-Pakistan crisis: the Anderson leaks. An investigative journalist in the mold of turn-of-the-century muckrakers, Anderson later topped Nixon's much publicized "enemies list." In particular, Anderson's syndicated column of December 14th set in motion a fast-paced White House investigation.<sup>72</sup> The investigation was led by John Ehrlichman and the White House "Plumbers," which had been assembled in the wake of the publication of the *Pentagon Papers* earlier that year.<sup>73</sup> The Plumbers investigation turned up some alarming news. Under polygraphic interrogations on December 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, Yeoman Charles Radford revealed that the leadership of the US military had been spying on the White House through the JCS-NSC liaison office, and, more specifically, on Kissinger—the lynchpin in the backchannels to the Soviets—since November 1970.<sup>74</sup>

By December 15<sup>th</sup>, the UN Security Council was deadlocked. Representing Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto eloquently argued that the Security Council's failure to act effectively legalized Indian aggression against Pakistan. Bhutto then stormed out of the session. Kissinger-Vorontsov exchanges later that day reflected differences of opinion over the UN deadlock: the US continued to support a UK resolution, while the Soviets pushed a Polish resolution. The real emphasis of the meeting was preventing hostilities in West Pakistan, coupled with a sense that a failure to maintain solidarity in the UN could reflect poorly on the status of US-Soviet relations.<sup>75</sup>

The Nixon White House was clearly displeased that the US and the Soviet Union could not agree to jointly call for a simple ceasefire and withdrawal. Both superpowers had raised the stakes by dispatching naval forces to the Bay of Bengal, and rising tension in the backchannel exchanges reflected increasing antagonism. In a phone call with Kissinger on the morning of December 16, Nixon vented his anger with the Soviets over the course of events. If the Indians failed to accept a ceasefire, after the US had privately applied pressure to the Soviets, Nixon said, "Now in the event we are going to end up by saying to the Russians, 'You proved to be so untrustworthy we can't deal with you on any issues.'" Kissinger saw some hope for the Soviets pushing the Indians into accepting a ceasefire. "They still may get us a ceasefire," the National Security Advisor stated.<sup>76</sup>

With much greater speed than the carefully crafted and symbolic actions of the Kissinger-Vorontsov exchanges, the meeting with Matskevich, the hotline messages, and the frequent phone calls between the White House and the Soviet embassy, the war in South Asia ended. On the afternoon of December 16, 1971, India accepted Pakistan's unconditional surrender in the East, and hostilities quickly

came to a close the next day after India announced a ceasefire in the West. Negotiations over war reparations, POWs, and the political settlement for East Pakistan—now the new nation of Bangladesh—lasted for several months. The lesson Nixon and Kissinger took away from the Indo-Pakistani conflict was that the US needed to act tough with the Soviets, which reinforced their earlier impressions of how to deal effectively with the Soviets.<sup>77</sup>

## Conclusion

Added to extant documentary collections, the surreptitiously taped conversations relating to US-Soviet backchannel and the nearly complete documentary record of exchanges between Kissinger and Dobrynin, Kissinger and Vorontsov, and Nixon and Brezhnev show the Nixon administration's desire to take a hard line with the Soviet Union and to compel the Soviets to restrain the Indians. Although Nixon and Kissinger contended that their actions had forced the Soviet hand and removed the Indian threat of dismembering West Pakistan, the case is still not closed and full confirmation is still not entirely possible in the absence of materials relating to Indian cabinet meetings, notes of the Soviet Politburo, and Indo-Soviet exchanges.

The critics stand on solid ground in arguing that Nixon and Kissinger personalized policy with anti-Indian zeal and sympathy for Yahya, although arguing that these prejudices defined American policy is not entirely accurate. Nixon's and Kissinger's behavior clearly remained within the rational actor model, based on perceived national interests. Initially, Pakistan served as the gateway to Sino-American rapprochement, and then US commitment to a shared ally was designed to impress the Chinese. Moreover, India's tangible support for the Mukti Bahini attacks into Pakistan alienated the White House. Nixon's and Kissinger's prejudicial background, if anything, confirmed their policy perceptions and resulted in more than one outburst captured for posterity by Nixon's taping system. Nixon's personal experience with the Indians and the Pakistanis, and with Gandhi and Yahya in particular, confirmed his views of Indian "aggression" and Pakistani good faith at facilitating the opening to China and accepting Indian concessions, such as allowing UN observers and keeping Mujib alive. Talk of "toughness," "bold action," and "coming across as men," reflected the White House sentiments about masculine virtues, while derogatory remarks about Indira Gandhi reflected the gendered speech of dealing with a very shrewd, tough woman who transcended supposed feminine vices.

On the charge of conflating regional issues with the global Cold War game, the critics of the Nixon administration have a stronger case. Nixon and Kissinger displayed amazing indifference to the fact that the Indians and the Pakistanis were

pursuing their own national interests on the Subcontinent. However, the critics' charge that the White House risked World War Three by its allegedly reckless actions is somewhat mitigated following a review of the fuller documentary record and the substance of US rhetoric and actions via US-Soviet backchannels. The messages to the Soviets primarily revolved around joint action at the UN and encouraging the Soviets to impose restraint on the part of their special ally, India. The backchannel exchanges show a steady—not reckless—progression of actions. At no point did Nixon increase the readiness status of US strategic nuclear forces. The movement of Task Force 74 for ostensibly humanitarian purposes, to aid the evacuation of American citizens from East Pakistan, was plausible, and the real reason—as a response to Soviet naval movements and as a signal to India—was not unjustified.

Nixon's policies on South Asia provided an ideal opportunity for Kissinger to centralize the policy formulation and implementation in the White House. Kissinger bypassed Secretary of State Rogers and the State Department with an impressive degree of self-promotion. Nixon did not completely bypass the State Department during the crisis and war, but he limited its role to presenting the public case at the UN and managing the refugee crisis. Nixon and Kissinger genuinely believed that India had instigated the hostilities and they believed that India had designs on West Pakistan incompatible with US interests. However, the only way to prove that one way or another would be for Indian archives to open to the extent which American sources have become available.

The situation on the Subcontinent ultimately defied the attempts of the superpowers to manage the crisis. The actions of Indira Gandhi, Yahya Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Mujibur Rahman were ultimately more important in determining the final outcome than those of Nixon, Kissinger, Vorontsov, and Brezhnev. Nevertheless, the Nixon White House reliance on backchannels with the Soviet-Union (and tilting to China at the UN) was triangular diplomacy in action. As Jussi Hanhimäki has argued, the tilt towards Pakistan was, essentially, a tilt toward China. The policy actors on all sides were playing roles partially prescribed by Cold War divisions. The procedures they established would prove more useful as Nixon went to China and as the North Vietnamese launched the largest offensive since 1968 against South Vietnam.

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 Notes:

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1. Nixon tapes (NT), Executive Office Building (EOB) Conv. No. 309-1, December 24, 1971, 12:00 – 1:37 p.m.
2. Nixon tapes, NT, Oval Office (OVAL) Conv. No. 699-1 between Nixon and Kissinger, March 31, 1972, 10:13–11:14 a.m.
3. Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Touchstone, 1978), p.530.
4. Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (hereafter cited as *WHY*), (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), pp.842-918.
5. Kissinger, *WHY*, p.856. Nixon famously wrote by hand on a memo, “Policy Options Towards Pakistan,” of April 28, 1971, on “Policy Options Towards Pakistan: “To all hands. Don’t squeeze Yahya at this time.” F. S. Aijazuddin correctly notes that the language did not originate with the Nixon, but rather in a cover memo from President, but actually with Alexander Haig, who wrote in a cover memo, “Henry has suggested...you could include a note to the effect that you want no actions taken at this time which would squeeze West Pakistan.” The cover memo is in Aijazuddin, *The White House and Pakistan: Secret Declassified Documents, 1969-1974* (Karachi: Oxford UP, 2004), p.241. The longer memo from Kissinger to the President in *Ibid*, pp.242–247; and *FRUS*, IX, pp.94–98.
6. Kissinger, *WHY*, p.856.
7. Kissinger, *WHY*, p.867.
8. Kissinger, *WHY*, 913.
9. Jack Anderson, *The Anderson Papers* with George Clifford (New York: Random House, 1973) pp. 205–269; Christopher Van Hollen, “The Tilt Policy Revisited: Nixon-Kissinger Geopolitics And South Asia,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 20, No. 4. (April, 1980) pp.339–361; T. N. Kaul, *The Kissinger Years: Indo-American Relations* (New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1980); Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Power Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983) pp.444–479; Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-*

*Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* revised edition (Washington: Brookings, 1994) pp.296–322; William Bundy, *A Tangled Web: The Making of Foreign Policy in the Nixon Presidency* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998) pp.269–292; Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992) pp.371–376; Christopher Hitchens, *The Trial of Henry Kissinger*, (London: Verso, 2001) pp.44–55; Jussi Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford UP, 2004) pp.154–184, 187–191; Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007) pp.325–368.

10. Anderson, *Anderson Papers*, p.205.

11. Aijazuddin, *The White House and Pakistan*; Roedad Khan, ed., *The American Papers: Secret And Confidential India-Pakistan-Bangladesh Documents 1965–1973* (Karachi: Oxford UP, 1999); US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter cited as *FRUS*), v.I, *Foundations of Foreign Policy 1969–1972* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2003); *FRUS*, 1969-1976, v. XI, *South Asia Crisis 1971* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2005); *FRUS*, 1969-1976, v. E7, *Documents on South Asia 1969–1972* <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e7/index.htm>.

12. The bulk of the tapes on the lead-up to the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 and during the war itself have been publicly available for the better part of a decade. Aside from the transcripts in the two *Foreign Relations* volumes and the work of W. Taylor Fain, the authors have not seen any original research on the tapes related to South Asia. *FRUS* cited previously.. Also, W. Taylor Fain, “We’ve Always Done Well With The Daring Games”: The Nixon Tapes, The Indo-Pakistani War Of 1971, And The Early Travails Of De?tente,” conference paper (Dobbiaco, Italy: CD-ROM Document Reader; Machiavelli Center for Cold War Studies, 2002). We hypothesize that the logistical challenges to using these early tapes releases by the National Archives, such as the tapes being available only on relatively poor quality audiocassettes (versus Compact Discs) and access being geographically limited to the audio-visual room in College Park, MD, are the reason most scholars have invested finite research time on document collection rather than listening to and transcribing the tapes. Our website, [nixon tapes.org](http://nixon tapes.org), contains a digitized collection available to anyone with a web connection, with the hope that scholars and the public can more easily access the tapes.

13. Because Dobrynin was in the Soviet Union during the actual war, his backchannel duties temporarily shifted to the Soviet charge d’affaires, Yuly Vorontsov. US Department of State, *Soviet-American Relations: The Détente Years, 1969-1972*, Introductions by Henry A. Kissinger and Anatoly Dobrynin (Washington, DC: GPO, 2007) Hereafter cited as *Détente Years*.

14. Geoffrey Warner, “Nixon, Kissinger and the breakup of Pakistan, 1971,” *International Affairs* 81, 5 (2005) p.1098.

15. "Samuel Hoskinson and Richard Kennedy to Kissinger," May 25, 1971, in *FRUS*, v.XI, p.146.
16. HAK Telcons, Dobrynin File, Box 27, and "Kissinger-Dobrynin Memcon (USSR)," June 10, 1971, *Détente Years*, p.374.
17. HAK Telcons, Dobrynin File, Box 27. Also, *Détente Years*, p.372.
18. "Kissinger-Dobrynin Memcon (USSR)," June 30, 1971, *Détente Years*, p.391. Also, Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, pp.224–225.
19. Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko and Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh officially signed the treaty in New Delhi on August 9. For an English translation of the text, see R. K. Jain, ed., *Soviet-South Asian Relations, 1947–1978*, v.1, (Atlantic Heights, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979), pp.113–116. We are indebted to Tanvi Madan for the "insurance policy" analogy.
20. Kissinger was likely referring to John Kenneth Galbraith, who served as the US Ambassador to India during the Kennedy administration.
21. NT, OVAL Conv. No. 557-1, August 9, 1971, 8:52–11:47 a.m.
22. "Kissinger to Nixon: Your Meeting with Foreign Minister Gromyko," no date, NPMP, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 71, Country Files, Europe, USSR, Gromyko, 1971–1972, NARA II.
23. "Memorandum of Conversation," White House Special Files, President's Office Files, Box 86. Also, NT, OVAL Conv. No. 580-18 between Nixon, Gromyko, Kissinger, Rogers, et al, September 29, 1971, 3:00-4:40 p.m.
24. NT, OVAL Conv. No. 580-20, September 29, 1971, 4:40-5:00 p.m.
25. Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), p.242.
26. Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*, p.339.
27. Although Dallek is generally correct, he evidently confused some of his documentary sources. Dallek states: "According to Gandhi, during their [November 5, 1971] conversation, [Nixon] had Kissinger do most of the talking." Furthermore, Dallek refutes Gandhi's statements by stating, "The official transcript in Nixon's National Security files drawn from an audiotape is a dialogue strictly between the President and the prime minister." Dallek, pp.339, 340. The memo—not a transcript—apparently drafted by Kissinger, was certainly not drawn from an audiotape, which was unknown to Kissinger at the time. No notation on the memo suggests that the conversation was taped. See: *FRUS, South Asia*, E7, online: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/nixon/e7/48213.htm> The conversation was in fact taped, but Dallek does not cite the conversation, which is: NT, OVAL Conv. No. 615-23, November 5, 1971, 11:21 a.m. -12:20 p.m. The conversation did not appear in either



print or electronic publication versions of *FRUS* on South Asia, and has never been published before.

28. NT, OVAL Conv. No. 613-15, November 4, 1971, 10:29 a.m. - 12:35 p.m.

29. For example, Raymond Garthoff writes, "On December 3 the Pakistani air force attacked eight Indian airfields in the region around West Pakistan, and Pakistani armored forces thrust into the part of Kashmir administered by India. This action opened the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971." *Détente and Confrontation*, p.298. *Détente and Confrontation*, f.n. 12, p.298. Robert Dallek entirely ignores the events of November 1971, arguing, "When a full-scale war finally erupted on December 3, the CIA could not say which country had initiated the hostilities. Nevertheless, Nixon and Kissinger blamed New Delhi." *Nixon and Kissinger*, p.341. Isaacson, *Kissinger*, p.374.

30. For example, at a WSAG meeting on November 12, 1971, Joseph Sisco said: "Indian strategy has been to continue the pressure on Yahya and to suck Pakistan in militarily so that the principal onus for starting a war would fall on Pakistan." *FRUS*, XI, p.506.

31. Isaacson, *Kissinger*, p.374. Yahya's cable is published in full in Aijazuddin, *The White House and Pakistan*, pp.364-366. Also, *FRUS*, XI, f.n.4, p.539.

32. Sisson and Rose, *War and Secession*, p.214.

33. "Minutes of WSAG Meeting," November 22, 1971, *FRUS*, XI, p.532.

34. "Nixon-Kissinger Telcon," November 22, 1971, 12:45p.m., HAK Telcons, Chronological File, Box 12. Also quoted in *FRUS*, XI, pp.536-537.

35. *FRUS*, XI, p.537.

36. In his memoirs, Kissinger recounted his "first secret meeting with the Chinese in New York," Huang Hua, on November 23, 1971. Kissinger, *WHY*, p.889. A transcript of the meeting, prepared by Winston Lord, is included in "The Lead-Up to Nixon's Trip to China: US and Chinese Documents and Tapes," William Burr, ed., with Sharon Chamberlain, Gao Bei, and Zhao Hun," May 22, 2002, online: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB70/doc22.pdf> <accessed December 10, 2008>.

37. NT, OVAL Conv. No. 622-1, November 22, 1971, 3:51 p.m. - 3:58 p.m.

38. "Telegram from State Department (Washington) to Embassy in Pakistan (Islamabad)," November 28, 1971, 0101Z, *FRUS*, XI, pp.565-566. Also, OVAL Conv. No. 622-1, November 22, 1971, 3:51 - 3:58 p.m.

39. "Telegram from the Department of State (Washington) to the Embassy in the Soviet Union (Moscow), November 27, 1971, 0103Z, *FRUS*, XI, p.569.

40. Indian Prime Minister Gandhi spoke to her nation on December 3 1971 noting that the Pakistani Air Force had struck six Indian airfields and was shelling positions along the Indian-West Pakistani border. In response, Pakistan claimed it was



responding to “aggressive” Indian reconnaissance over West Pakistan. *FRUS*, XI, p.592.

41. “Kissinger-Nixon Telcon,” December 3, 1971, 10:45 a.m. in *FRUS*, XI, pp.593-594.

42. The minutes of the first meeting were among the leaked documents published by Jack Anderson, in which Kissinger famously said—and has been oft-quoted in news stories and histories ever since, “I’ve been catching unshirted hell every half-hour from the President who says we’re not tough enough. He believes State is pressing us to be tough and I’m resisting...He wants to tilt toward Pakistan.” “WSAG Minutes,” December 3, 1971, 11:19-11:55 a.m., *FRUS*, XI, p.597.

43. *FRUS*, XI, pp.596-604. Kissinger also convened the WSAG on December 4, 1971. DCI Helms noted how the Soviet Union had shifted its position from opposing an Indo-Pakistani war “to the conclusion that Moscow would not do much to try to halt hostilities.” *FRUS*, XI, fn 3, p.621. Also, *FRUS*, XI, pp.620-627.

44. “Kissinger-Nixon Telcon,” December 5, 1971, no time, HAK Telcons, Home File, Box 29. Also, *FRUS*, XI, pp.635-640.

45. “Kissinger-Vorontsov Memcon,” December 5, 1971, NPMP, President’s Trip Files, Box 492, NARA II.

46. “Kissinger-Vorontsov Telcon,” December 6, 1971, 3:32 p.m., HAK Telcons, Chronological File, Box 12.

47. “Nixon to Brezhnev,” December 6, 1971, *Détente Years*, p.532.

48. “Brezhnev to Nixon,” December 6, 1971, NPMP, NSC Files, President’s Trip Files, Box 492, NARA II. Also, Memorandum for the President from Henry Kissinger, December 8, NPMP, NSC Files, President’s Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger 1971, v. 8. Box 492.

49. In his memoirs, Nixon wrote of the September 1970 Jordanian Crisis: “However, one thing was clear. We could not allow Hussein to be overthrown by a Soviet-inspired insurrection. If it succeeded, the entire Middle East might erupt in war... Soviet prestige was on the line with both the Syrians and the Egyptians. Since the United States could not stand idly by and watch Israel being driven into the sea, the possibility of a direct US-Soviet confrontation was uncomfortably high. It was like a ghastly game of dominoes, with a nuclear war waiting at the end.” Nixon, *RN*, p.483.

50. NT, OVAL Conv. No. 630-2, December 6, 1971, 12:02 – 12:06 p.m.

51. NT, OVAL Conv. No. 630-10, December 6, 1971, 3:04 – 3:08 p.m.

52. “Haig-Vorontsov Telcon,” December 8, 1971, 3:50 p.m., *Détente Years*, f.n.3, p.533.

53. NT, EOB Conv. No. 307-27 between Nixon, Kissinger, and Mitchell, December 8, 1971, 4:20-5:01 p.m., *FRUS*, E-7.

54. "Brezhnev to Nixon," December 8, 1971, *Détente Years*, pp.534-535.
55. "Telegram from Vorontsov to the Soviet Foreign Ministry," December 9, 1971, *Détente Years*, pp.535-536.
56. Henry A. Kissinger, "Memorandum for the President," December 9, 1971. NPMP, NSC Files, President's Trip Files, Box 492, NARA II.
57. OVAL Conv. No. 634-12, *FRUS*, E-7.
58. "Nixon, Matskevich, Vorontsov, Kissinger Memcon: Memorandum for the President's File," Washington, December 9, 1971, *FRUS*, XIV, p.771.
59. The Soviets were likely protesting the tacit American encouragement that Pakistan receive military aid through third parties, such as Iran and Jordan. *FRUS*, XIV. Also, "Kissinger-Bhutto Telcon," December 12, 1971, no time, HAK Telcons, Chronological File, Box 11.
60. NT, OVAL Conv. No. 635-8, December 10, 1971, 10:51-11:12 a.m., *FRUS*, E-7.
61. "Nixon to Brezhnev," December 10, 1971, *FRUS* XI, pp.745-746.
62. *Détente Years*, p.538. *FRUS*, 1961-1963, v. XIX, South Asia, Document 191.
63. "Nixon to Brezhnev," December 10, 1971, *FRUS* XI, pp.745-746.
64. "Memcon Huang Hua, Ch'en Ch'u, T'ang Wen'sheng, Kissinger, Bush, Haig and Lord," December 10, 1971, 6:05 – 7:55 p.m., New York City-East Side, DNSA online.
65. "Kissinger-Vorontsov Telcon," December 11, 1971, c.a. 3:00 p.m., *Détente Years*, pp.539-540.
66. NT, OVAL Conv. No. 637-3 between Nixon and Kissinger, December 12, 1971, 8:45 – 9:42 a.m.
67. "Kissinger-Vorontsov Telcon," December 12, 1971, 10:05 a.m., HAK Telcons, Chronological File, Box 12.
68. "Nixon to Brezhnev," December 12, 1971, *Détente Years*, p.543.
69. "Soviet Hotline Message," December 13, 1971, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 492, NARA II.
70. William Safire, "ON LANGUAGE: Off the Record," *New York Times* (October 29, 1989) <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=950DE6DC1F3CF93AA15753C1A96F948260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>
71. James M. Naughton, "Nixon May Review Trip Unless Soviet Curbs India," *The New York Times* (December 15, 1971) p.1.
72. Jack Anderson, "The Washington Merry-Go-Round: US, Soviet vessels in Bay of Bengal," *The Washington Post* (December 14, 1971) p.B15.
73. James Rosen, *The Strong Man*, p.169.

74. Len Colodny, "Excerpt of an interview with Admiral Moorer," January 27, 1987, online: <http://www.nixonera.com/media/audio/transcripts/moorer.asp> <accessed: May 7, 2009>.
75. "Kissinger-Vorontsov Memcon (US)," December 15, 1971, *Détente Years*, pp.552–553. "Kissinger-Vorontsov Memcon (USSR)," December 15, 1971, *Détente Years*, pp.553–554.
76. *FRUS*, XI, pp.837-841.
77. OVAL Conv. No. 652-17, January 20, 1972, 6:08 – 6:36 p.m., *FRUS*, XIV, pp.119-121. Also, "Kissinger to Nixon," December 16, 1971, *FRUS*, XI, pp.843–846, esp. p.845.

## Pakistani-Chinese Relations: An Historical Analysis of the Role of China in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971

By Mavra Farooq

China played an important role during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, a time when drastic changes occurred in the arena of international politics. In 1971 Pakistan faced a great tragedy in the shape of the separation of East Pakistan. On December 16, 1971, Pakistan's Eastern part was separated from West Pakistan. The Indo-Pak war was a major concern for the People's Republic of China (PRC), which had developed deep relations with Pakistan in the 1960s. China's reasons for the development of these relations with Pakistan were numerous, including the deterioration of China-India relations due to the 1962 border clashes, and the importance of the Indian-Subcontinent for superpower politics in the same time period.

While the East Pakistan crisis culminated in the India-Pakistan war and breakdown of diplomatic relations between Delhi and Beijing, the relations between Pakistan and China had already been strengthened in the era of Ayub Khan (1959-1969). The Ayub Khan era saw the beginning of Pakistan's move away from the orbit of the Western world as direct consequence of Pakistan's disillusionment with the politico-military pacts such as SEATO (South East Asian Treaty Organization) and CENTO (Central Treaty Organization). During this time Ayub Khan also "normalized relations with China based on strong friendship constructed within the framework of the principles of Third world solidarity."<sup>1</sup> During Ayub Khan's era, a border agreement signed between Pakistan and China on March 3, 1963 was an indication of the genesis of the cooperation and understanding on all fields of Sino-Pakistani relations, including diplomatic, economic, and cultural. This trend of mutual trust persisted into the 1970s. Geographical proximity is one more important key element in the evolvement of Sino-Pakistan relations. In 1969, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto wrote that "China is our neighbor country and it is essential for us to maintain good relations with all our neighbors on the basis of friendship and equality."<sup>2</sup> Both countries are contiguous to each other and share India as their common hostile neighbor. Moreover, China's ideological differences with the US and USSR affected China's regional interests. A close relation between Pakistan and China provided the ideal counterbalance to the anti-Chinese feelings and anti-Pakistani feelings that prevailed in India in the 1960s. Moreover, Pakistan was quite effective

in Third World cause and one of the most populous Islamic countries in the world. Friendship of both countries (China-Pakistan) held many possible advantages for the PRC itself in the pursuance of the Maoist global objectives. Moreover, China's support for Pakistan also coincided with the pragmatic interests of the Chinese leadership.

China's supportive policy towards Pakistan came at that time when China had reappeared at international diplomatic scene with a new agenda, and one of the repercussions of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966) was its impact on the PRC. China's reaction in East Pakistan issue revealed the essence of Chinese interest in that region as perceived in Beijing.

The most important statement of Beijing's position in the East Pakistan crisis was Premier Chou En Lai's message to President of Pakistan, General Yahya Khan, in April 1971, in which he showed his full support for Pakistan. Chou En Lai's letter addressed many points involving crisis of East Pakistan, including the emphasis that unification of the East and West Pakistan was one of the "basic guarantees" for the construction of Pakistani prosperity. Secondly, Chou En Lai also referred to the separatist movement in East Pakistan as a "handful movement" that desired to sabotage Pakistani unification. Chou En Lai emphasized that "broad masses of the people" had no leaning whatsoever in the direction of separatism. He further said that India was guilty of "gross interference" and exploitation of Pakistan's internal affairs, while also accusing the super powers and India of meddling in the internal problems of Pakistan, arguing that Pakistan's domestic affairs and should be resolved internally by Pakistani leadership. Lastly, Chou assured China's support to Pakistan in the event that the "State and sovereignty and national independence" of Pakistan was threatened by the aggression of the Indian expansionists. Until December, China proclaimed support for the Government of Pakistan. For instance, on May 11, 1971, in an editorial, *Jin Men Jih Pao* condemned "Washington and Moscow for working in close coordination with the Indian reactionaries to crudely interfere in the internal affairs of Pakistan."<sup>3</sup>

Under the treaty with the Soviet Union, India received arms assistance while the US ordered to halt military supplies to Pakistan, "a dilemma which Pakistan protested only broadened the arms dangerous imbalances in favor of India. A vast Indian military moved along the East India Pakistan border raised the tense atmosphere in Pakistan and was intensified by the aggrandizement of the Indian supported guerilla activities."<sup>4</sup> Yahya Khan sent a delegation to China under the leadership of Bhutto. The Chinese Foreign Minister, Chi Peng Fei, stated that secessionists were only a handful while the broad masses of Pakistan were patriotic and wanted to safeguard national unity. Interestingly, Chi Peng Fei did not repeat the speech of Chou En Lai. This was, however, hardly surprising since President Nixon's visit

to China had already altered China's perception of its role in the region and China was working towards normalizing its relations with the US. The Chinese foreign Minister suggested that the issue between two nations should be resolved through negotiations rather than aggression. The Pakistani delegation was unsuccessful in getting solid support from China. China did promise to support Pakistan if India attacked.

The Indo-Pakistan war began on December 3, 1971, when Indian army crossed the international border into East Pakistan. China declared its support for Pakistan, while the Soviet Union backed India, a collusion that intensified throughout the duration of the war. Beijing vehemently accused Moscow of supporting Indian military provocation and subversive activities towards Pakistan. The Soviets, on the other hand, were described by Deng Xiansheng and other Chinese leaders as the power that both occupied the Soviet Union's alleged "ally" Czechoslovakia and instigated the war to dismember Pakistan. The UN's General Assembly was transformed into the hub of Chinese protest on behalf of Pakistan. Clearly the hard Sino-Soviet dialogue in the UN during the period of War showed the significant influence of the traditional Sino-Soviet dispute regarding the PRC's assistance to Pakistan. The Soviet's usage of Veto Power in the UN that encouraged New Delhi to capture the territory of another state "was described as tactic designed to permit India the necessary time to present to the world of a *fait accompli* that is as an occupied East Pakistan."<sup>5</sup>

In 1970, Yahya Khan helped the US establish relations with China that resulted in a 1971 visit to China by then US National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger. Pakistan played key role as a bridge between the US and China. Pakistan provided crucial support in China's membership of the UN as "Peoples Republic of China" which resulted in PRC's inclusion as a full member on October 25, 1971. The Chinese, in turn, showed support for Pakistan by raising a draft resolution at the United Nations. In this resolution, China strongly condemned

the Indian Government's acts of creating so called Bangla Desh and subverting, dismembering and committing aggression against Pakistan and raised a plea that all nations support Pakistan in their just struggle to resist Indian aggression and mutual troops disengagement and withdrawal."<sup>6</sup>

On December 7, 1971, a resolution was adopted by the General Assembly and on December 21, 1971, another resolution (NO: 307) adopted by the Security Council called for the immediate end to the war and troops withdrawal on the both sides."<sup>7</sup> Huang Hua, the PRC representative at the UN Security Council, expressed the "dissatisfaction of China over the failure of the resolution to make anyone note of

Indian aggression” and any call for the support of Pakistan although China voted for the resolution.”<sup>8</sup>

Pakistan received moral and verbal support from China in the 1970s. China also took every opportunity to criticize India and the Soviets. On December 16, 1971 China gave its final statement in support of Pakistan when Pakistani forces surrendered, stating:

The Soviet Government has played a shameful role in the war of aggression launched by India against Pakistan. The whole world has clearly seen that it is back stage manager of the Indian expansionists. For many years the Soviet Government has energetically been fostering the Indian reactionaries and abetting India in its outward expansion.<sup>9</sup>

The Chinese attitude remained the same throughout the period of turmoil in Pakistan. But in another statement, the Chinese, for the first time, recognized the refugee problem in East Pakistan: “As for the question of the return of the East Pakistan refugees to their homeland, it should, and can only be settled by India and Pakistan through consultation.”<sup>10</sup> Neither Chi Peng- fei’s speech to the Pakistan delegation in November nor Chou En Lai’s message to Yahya Khan in the previous April made any reference to the existence of the refugee problem in East Pakistan.

China emphasized the importance of negotiation rather than conflict in seeking a diplomatic resolution in East Pakistan. China described Bangladesh as a “puppet regime” which was “inserted into East Pakistan by armed forces,” and the Soviet Union was accused of increasing arms shipments to India in order to “bolster and pep up” the Indian aggression.<sup>11</sup> China once again protested the Soviet Union’s tactics at the UN, stating that “what makes people indignant is that the representative of the Soviet Government in the UN Security council has time and again used the veto to obstruct the ceasefire and troops withdrawal which are desired by the overwhelming majority of the countries and the people over the world.”<sup>12</sup> Chou En Lai declared that the separation of East Pakistan “was an event which marked the commencement of endless strife on the Subcontinent and the beginning of India’s ultimate defeat.”<sup>13</sup> China supported Pakistan politically, morally, and materially, discontinuing American military shipments in March in 1971. Given the diplomatic background of Sino-Pakistani relations, the Chinese clearly provided a politically logical alternative to the US.<sup>14</sup> China gave military aid to Pakistan from 1966 until the outbreak of the East Pakistan crisis in 1971, serving as Pakistan’s main source of arms<sup>15</sup> (according to the US observer in Pakistan, during the five year period from 1961 to 1966, Beijing contributed over \$130 million worth of military equipment and supplies). A Pakistani spokesman revealed in 1971 that the “PRC had



dispatched 200 military instructors to Pakistan for the purpose of the training of Pakistani troops for guerilla warfare.”<sup>16</sup> Moreover, according to a US observer, in the final week of the Indo Pak. War, “China supplied 200,000 rounds of anti-craft and tank ammunition for Pakistan.”<sup>17</sup> Indian Institute for Defense Studies (I. I. D. S.) estimated that the free Chinese arms assistance of Pakistan in 1971-72 consisted of 225 T-59 tanks, one squadron of II-28 bombers, and four squadrons of MIG-19 interceptors, along with “an unspecified number of river boats and coasters and Chinese assistance in the construction of two major ordinance factories.”<sup>18</sup>

However, since the Soviets had signed a treaty with India, openly supporting Pakistan could have provoked war between China and the Soviet Union. The PRC would not endorse the Bangladesh movement, which they did not regard as the “war of liberation.” Chou En Lai stated that it was a separatist movement perpetrated by a small group of persons who want to sabotage the unification of Pakistan. Beijing issued the following statement about the nature of the war: “The Chinese government and people consistently oppose imperialism, expansionism, colonialism and neocolonialism and firmly support the people of all countries in their just struggle in defense of their state sovereignty and territorial integrity and against foreign aggression, subversive, interference control and bullying. The war between India and Pakistan is a struggle between aggression and anti-aggression between division and anti-division between subversion and anti-subversion.”<sup>19</sup>

These international developments also affected the geo-strategic situation of Pakistan. These were clear-cut factors in shaping and determining Pakistan’s foreign policy in the 1970s. Pakistan secured independence in 1947 and from the outset its foreign policy was shaped by security issues relating to India, the resolution of the Kashmir dispute, and the acquisition of aid from the developed world. As Liaquat Ali Khan told the National Press Club in Washington during his official visit to the United States in May 1950, “Our strongest interests, therefore, are firstly the integrity of Pakistan.”<sup>20</sup>

According to Keith Callard, the primary object of Pakistan’s foreign policy since its independence “had to be to show the world that Pakistan was a reality and was capable of maintaining its independence.”<sup>21</sup> President Ayub Khan wrote that, “We have an enemy, an implacable enemy in India,” and referred to “India’s ambition to absorb Pakistan and turn her into a satellite.” The Indian leaders made no secret of their political designs. Mr. Acharya Kripalani, who was President of the Indian National Congress in 1947, declared that “neither the Congress nor the nation has given up its claim of United India.”<sup>22</sup> On March 19, 1966, Bhutto asserted that India could not tolerate the existence of Pakistan and that “in the destruction of Pakistan lay India’s most sublime and finest dream.”<sup>23</sup> On December 21, 1973, Bhutto defined the objectives of his foreign policy: “The object of a foreign policy

is to promote friendship, to foster understanding, to clarify certain issues and to remove frictions and confusions.”<sup>24</sup> In Pakistan’s quest for security, territorial integrity, and national unity, equitable settlement of its disputes with other states and economic development for the welfare of the people were the principle objectives of Pakistan’s foreign policy. Security was another constant factor, as G. W. Chaudhury details:

In search for security against a potential Indian threat, Pakistan turned to the Commonwealth and to the Muslim countries in the early years of her independence (1947-53); then she turned to the USA by entering into a number of bilateral and multilateral defensive pacts. Then in the 1960’s Pakistan found that her Western allies had disturbed the balance of power in the Subcontinent by arming India against China ... Pakistan therefore turned to new friends, if not allies, in her same search for security.<sup>25</sup>

During the War of 1971, China had a pivotal role in formulation of Pakistan’s foreign policy. The Chinese veto on the admission of Bangladesh into the United Nations was a statement of complete political support for Pakistan during this crucial time.

### **CHINA’S POLICY DURING THE WAR OF 1971**

The domestic crisis had massive regional and international ramifications. It is to these we will now turn, paying especial attention to China’s response to the unfolding crisis in Pakistan. China’s initial response was made public on April 12 via a message from Chou En-Lai to Yahya Khan.<sup>26</sup> The main points of this message were as follows:

- (i) the “happenings in Pakistan” “a purely internal affair” to be solved by Pakistani people without “foreign interference”. This favored the principle of non-intervention could also be seen in China’s protest Note to India of 6 April 1971;
- (ii) That China opposed the separatists as was seen in the expression: “The unification of Pakistan and the unity of the people of East and West Pakistan are the basic guarantees” for Pakistan’s prosperity and strength;
- (iii) China felt the separatists to be in a minority, “a handful of persons who want to sabotage the unification of Pakistan”;
- (iv) on the issue of solving problems, China’s preference for negotiations can be seen in the expression that “through the wise consultation and efforts”

of the Government and “leaders of various quarter in Pakistan”, the situation will remain peaceful;

(v) taking note of the “gross interference” by India in the affairs of Pakistan, China understood the US and the USSR collusion with India. In the protests note of 6 April also China accused India of “‘flagrantly’ interfering in the internal affairs of Pakistan”;

(vi) that China’s support to Pakistan was assured if “the Indian expansionists dare to launch aggression against Pakistan.”

During the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971, China adopted the non-intervention policy that it had suggested in the previous April. China repeatedly reminded Pakistan of its support. Bhutto, along with an eight-man delegation, visited Peking as the personal representative of the President. The reasons for this visit were manifold and included both the expansion of Indian troops on the East Pakistan border and the increase of activity of guerrillas trained by India, as the shelling of border towns between India and Pakistani troops in East Wing increased the danger of a fight between the two. Additionally, on August 9 1971, India signed the Twenty Years treaty of peace with USSR, who correspondingly increased military aid to India. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, had visited European countries to encourage a favorable world opinion of India, while the US stopped military aid from March 25th 1971, and cancelled licenses for the exports of 3,600,000 dollars worth of military equipment to Pakistan. India, in contrast, received arms supply from the USSR, further widening the military disequilibrium in the South Asia. In this crisis, Pakistan sought strong military and diplomatic aid and China was the only country that was able to provide support. Although no joint communiqué was issued at the end of Bhutto’s visits, it may have been because he was not holding an official governmental post at the time.

Minister Chi Peng fei stated China’s stance on the crisis in a speech, the message of which was later reiterated by Premier Chou En lai: “should Pakistan be subjected to foreign aggression,”<sup>27</sup> “China would play a positive role in favor of Pakistan, “resolutely support[ing] the Pakistan Government and People in their just struggle to defend their state sovereignty and national independence”<sup>28</sup> Mr. Chi Peng fei expressed the view that “secessionists were a handful of persons” and “broad masses of Pakistan are patriotic and want to safeguard the national unity and oppose internal split and outside interference.”<sup>29</sup> China stressed that “disputes between states should always be settled through consultation and not by resorting to force.”<sup>30</sup> Indian interference activities in East Pakistan were criticized on the basis of China’s support for the principle of non-intervention. It is also important to note that China did not reiterate its previous allegation that the US was collaborat-

ing with India. This omission was likely related to President Nixon's planned visit to Peking.

President Nixon's visit was a "complete success." Yahya Khan and Bhutto pointed out the possibility of China's intervention if India attacked Pakistan. It was a distant possibility because Pakistan was not extremely concerned that China intervene in its affairs. China did not give any assurance of physical intervention or diversionary action on the Sino-Indian border.

On November 22, 1971, during the Indo-Pakistani War, the Indian Army entered East Pakistan. China continued to constantly reaffirm its support for Pakistan. China denounced India and the Soviet Union on different occasions, such as during the reception on the Albanian Independence Day, at the banquet in the honor of the Sudanese delegation and the United Nations forum, and on the Tanzanian National Day. China opposed the Soviet Union's interference and expansion in Asia, since the Soviet Union supported India militarily and in its subversive activities against Pakistan. When Bangladesh was recognized by India, China denounced it as arising from New Delhi force and as a puppet "forcibly imposed" upon the East Pakistani People by India.

Siding with Pakistan, China denounced the twenty-year treaty of peace that it had signed with India and the Soviet Union. During speeches at the United Nations, China reminded the UN what the Soviet Union did in Czechoslovakia and of the actions of India in Tibet and Kashmir. Debates were held at the Security Council and the General Assembly regarding the Indo-Pakistani conflict. These debates also evidence the growing differences between China and the Soviet Union.

China drafted a resolution that condemned India and requested that warring parties withdraw their troops, calling on "all states to support Pakistan" in its struggle to resist "Indian aggression."<sup>31</sup> China voted for the General Assembly resolution of 7 December 1971. The Chinese representative, Chiao Kuan-Hua, called for a ceasefire and withdrawal of troops between the two countries. "China, however, expressed its dissatisfaction with the fact that the resolution did not denounce India's aggression toward Pakistan."<sup>32</sup>

The Indian government claimed that the problem of East Pakistani refugees necessitated invasion of Pakistan. India also sheltered the exiled government of China's Tibet, headed by the Chinese traitor Dalai Lama who was a Buddhist leader of religious officials of the "Yellow Hat" branch of Tibetan Buddhism. The Indian Government used the refugee question as pretext for invading Pakistan, much as they used the Tibetan refugees as a pretext for invading China. Both scenarios provide evidence of India's attempt to become a superpower. The aggression against Pakistan was the outcome of the implementation of these expansionist actions. China also voted in the UN Security Council on December 21,

1971. China's stance was that the world should not pardon the serious crimes that India had committed against Pakistan. China opposed flagrant aggression, interference and subversive activities of Indian imperialism and colonialism towards other countries. The People's Republic of China also supported the Pakistani people in their struggle against aggression and subversion. The Chinese were optimistic that Pakistan would achieve a victory. The Chinese showed their complete solidarity with Pakistan by opposing the proposal of the Soviet Union to invite a "Bangla Desh" representative to participate in debate of the United Nations and by voting against the Soviet resolution that called for a ceasefire without withdrawal. The Soviet resolution of 5 December secured two votes of Poland, and the Soviet resolution with 12 abstentions passed. The People's Republic of China's representative Huang Hua voted against the Soviet draft resolution due to reasons such as Indian direct interference and aggression in Pakistan, an endeavor which was supported by the Soviet government's provision of large quantities of arms to the Indian expansionists. China saw that the main aim of the Soviet Union was to compete with the US for world hegemony and that the Soviet's assistance of India was in service of this goal: the control over India, fostered by India's dependence on the Soviet's for military support, could lead to Soviet dominance of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent and the Indian Ocean, allowing the USSR to spread its sphere of influence. Due to these reasons China voted against the Soviet draft resolution. Peking Review commented, "India launched a large scale of war of aggression against Pakistan on November 21, 1971 with an active encouragement and energetic support of the government of the Soviet Union. They wanted not only to swallow up East Pakistan but also to destroy Pakistan as a whole. If a timely stop is not put to such aggression committed by the Indian Government, Pakistan will not be the only country to fall victim, inevitably other countries neighbouring on India will also be endangered."<sup>33</sup>

The Chinese Government thus firmly supported the Pakistani Government and its people in their struggle against aggression, division, and subversion: "they not only were doing this politically, but will continue to give them material assistance. China said that there can be no neutrality on the question of aggression versus anti aggression, of division versus division, and of subversion versus anti-subversion. Certain big powers making no distinction between right and wrong and remaining inactive and silent have all along allowed the aggressor to grow through appeasement."<sup>34</sup>

It is noteworthy that, after the outbreak of the war, Pakistan played the role of a bridge between China and the United States, fostering cooperation between the two powers. As a result, in 1971 China visited the United States and vice versa, resolving previous misunderstandings. Like China, the US also accused India of aggression<sup>35</sup> and Moscow of blocking "international action until the capture of East

Pakistan was a fait accompli.<sup>36</sup> Pakistan also believed that India's treaty with the Soviet Union encouraged Indian aggression against Pakistan. Also, with support from India, a guerrilla movement developed in East Pakistan. The US also mentioned the "strategic expansion of Soviet Power."<sup>37</sup> Both the US and China voted for the same resolutions in the General Assembly and the Security Council. In the joint communiqué which was issued in Peking, both countries called for the observance and implementation of the Security Council resolution of 21 December. They did not recognize "Bangladesh." Nonetheless, the use of the term "East Bengal" in place of East Pakistan in a US foreign policy report provided clarification that the US was not against the aspiration of East Pakistan. China, in this joint communiqué, supported Pakistan's sovereignty and independence.

The last crucial official statement made by China on the Indo-Pakistani war occurred on December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1971. On this date, Pakistani forces surrendered in East Pakistan, because the "Indian Government is... moving massive troops to press on the capital; of East Pakistan, Decca."<sup>38</sup> The timing of the statement suggested that China was unaware of the surrender of the Pakistani forces. China's stance on various issues—subversive activities, non-intervention, Indian aggression, and the Soviet Union's role in the war—remained the same.

"Bangla Desh" was considered a "puppet regime" that India forcefully inserted into East Pakistan. China also recognized the existence of a nationality problem in East Pakistan, stating that the Pakistanis should be willing to seek a political solution in the spirit of understanding. China commented on the East Pakistan refugee problem for the very first time and suggested that the problem should be settled by both India and Pakistan in a way that avoided the use of force. This attention to the refugee situation is significant because neither Premier Chou En-Lai, in his message on April 12, nor Chi Peng-fei, in his November 7 speech, had mentioned the refugee problem. The Chinese representative at the UN likened the issue to the Tibetan refugee problem, as it arose out of Indian interference with Pakistani affairs. China openly declared that it was not only supporting the Pakistani people politically but that it "would continue to give them material assistance."<sup>39</sup> India was warned against future aggression: "Henceforth there will be no tranquility... on the South Asia Subcontinent... the Indian expansionists will surely eat the bitter fruit of their own making."<sup>40</sup> China's advice, interestingly, "to the South Asian friendly countries" was "to strength their defense capabilities so as to hit back when attack[ed]."<sup>41</sup>

China's reaction to the occupation by the Indian troops was reflected in Premier Chou's meaningful remark that the "fall of Dhaka is... the starting point of endless strife on the South Asian subcontinent and of their (the Indians) defeat."<sup>42</sup> China also gave material assistance to Pakistan by providing 133 million dollars



worth of arms, remaining Pakistan's main arms supplier between 1966 and 1971, during which the US and European countries had suspended arms trade with the country.

At the end of the War, China also provided "all the weapons and ammunition" that Pakistan wanted, and some were supplied for free. The US Defense Department revealed on 4 November that "Pakistan received arms via shipments from China and Romania. Moreover, excluding arms supply, China supported Pakistan in other ways as well. An Indonesian military spokesman disclosed that China had sent two hundred instructors to Pakistan to train Pakistani troops in counter-guerilla warfare."<sup>43</sup> China also suggested reestablishing two divisions trained in West Pakistan to replace those sent to East Pakistan. In the field of naval and air forces, Pakistan faced difficulties. During the last days of war in East Pakistan, Chinese rescue ships were assembled in the Ganga Delta for the evacuation of the Pakistani army in East Pakistan. Whether these ships were stationed in the Ganga Delta for a possible evacuation was uncertain. The Chinese were ready to help Pakistan, and press reports reveal Moscow's advice that India keep from attacking Chinese ships. The Chinese armada was in the Bay of Bengal during the War.

China made a friendly gesture when ceasefire occurred in the West and Pakistani forces surrendered in the East. In spite of this, Bhashani urged Chairman Mao Tse Tung and Premier Chou En Lai, by means of letters, to recognize "Bangla Desh."

Examining the role that China's support played in Pakistani history sets the events in Pakistan in a historical analytical framework that enables us to look beyond the day-to-day events. China sought to pursue an independent foreign policy line from both that of the US and the USSR. This was explicitly mentioned by Mao in a speech in September 1982, but it had been present during the previous decades: "Our general task is to unite the whole people and win the support of all our friends abroad in the struggle to build a great socialist country, defend world peace and advance the cause of human progress."<sup>44</sup> China's foreign policy had been traditionally influenced by The Five Principles (in handling international relations, China has consistently taken The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as the guide instead of using social system, ideology or the concept of values as the criterion. These principles were first put forward by the late Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai) of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. Theoretically, China's solidarity with Pakistan was a result of the five principles of peaceful coexistence; these principles went directly against foreign aggression. China reiterated this stance in various speeches and statements during the time.

The War of 1971 was understood in China as a struggle between aggression and anti-aggression, between division and anti-division, and between subversion and anti-subversion. China condemned India because it was violating the Bandung Principles. Moreover, China did not forget Tibet and the border war with India. China did not endorse “the war of liberation” theory in East Pakistan. China did not consider the conflict a guerrilla war; it was fought by peasants and workers of their own area. In China’s eyes, the War of 1971 was a separatist movement started not by the broad masses of East Pakistan but by a “handful of persons” “who wanted to sabotage the unity” of Pakistan. Further, the separation of East Pakistan did not take place until 1958, when martial law was imposed and the elite leadership of the Punjab did not allot power to East Pakistan. Instead of sharing power, the Punjab leadership ruled via the “One Unit,” which enabled them to merge the four provinces of West Pakistan into one unit as a counterbalance against the numerical domination of the ethnic Bengalis of East Pakistan. The leadership of the Punjab did not want to see the participation of the East Pakistan in government. Chinese policy has always stated that guerrillas must fight their own wars without the help of foreign aid. Hence, China was averse to the policy of the Awami League. Mujibur Rahman was known as pro-American, and the Awami League stood for developed relations with India. China’s Red Cross society sent a message to the international committee of the Red Cross:

The barbarous outrages perpetrated by the Indian occupation forces against innocent inhabitants in the eastern part of Pakistan not only flagrantly contravene the principle of humanitarianism and the December 21, 1971 resolution of the U.N. Security council but also crudely trample upon the 1949 Geneva conventions to which the Indian Government is a party.... We appeal to the international committee of the Red Cross, the League of Red Cross societies and the National Red Cross, Red Crescent and Red Lion and Sun Societies of various countries... condemn the Indian forces for their sanguinary atrocities of massacring Pakistan People.<sup>45</sup>

Apart from these verbal and theoretical considerations, other factors influenced Peking’s attitude towards Pakistan. The Indian-Soviet Treaty contributed to China’s firm support of Pakistan, increasing China’s negative attitude toward India and its increasingly positive relations with Pakistan.

Realpolitik strategic considerations along with principle of foreign policy influenced China’s position, as China did not want to see a new state of Bangladesh, likely to be friendly with rivals India and the Soviet Union, created on its border. These strategic concerns materialized following the emergence of the Bangladeshi

government's pro-Soviet elements and initial economic agreements. China's stance is also linked to its longstanding cordial relations with Pakistan and lack of border tensions with the country. According to the 1963 agreement, Pakistan yielded some 1,300 square miles of Kashmir to China. Since then, China has linked up the old Silk Route Highway where it runs from Sinkiang to Gilgit in close proximity to the northern region of Ladakh near the ceasefire line. Therefore, Indian occupation of Pakistan Kashmir would make China's position insecure. The threat of Chinese aggression in 1971 prevented India from launching any mass offensive in Azad Kashmir. China also helped Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. But China did not embark on any diversionary moves because of the threat that the Soviet Union could also become involved. The Soviet Union in fact assured India that it would take action in Sinkiang in the event of a Chinese international attack. Bhutto responded by rejecting the possibility of Chinese diversionary moves. India, in response, predicted that China would not intervene on Pakistan's behalf. Following this prediction, India moved her forces from its border with China to East Pakistan. However, protests from China did not effectively prevent India from violating China's border with Sikkim. The first intrusion of Indian forces into Chinese territory was made on December 10, 1971, and the first protest in response was occurred on December 16th. The second protest note was lodged on December 27th, just after the second border violation on December 15th. The suggestion made in the first note to "immediately stop the activities of intrusion into Chinese territory" was reiterated in the second protest note. This time, however, China did not give an ultimatum as it had given during the War of 1965. China's response was lukewarm this time around, the main reason being that China was not directly involved in the War of 1971 as it had been in 1965, since article nine of the treaty of Indo-Soviet cooperation made mutual consultations imperative in the case that any party "is attacked or threatened with attack." As a result, China could not help in Indo Pak war 1971 as China helped in the Indo-Pak War 1965.

The Twenty Years Defence Pact between India and Russia confirmed that the Soviet Union would participate in any war on the side of India, "India could not have liberated Bangladesh (without) the treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union."<sup>46</sup> Premier Chou En-Lai on 31 January 1971 admitted that China's assistance "in the past has remained limited and that China could not do more."<sup>47</sup> On December 14, Pakistan urgently appealed to China and the US for practical aid. It should be kept in mind that China's lack of military involvement in the Indo-Pakistani War was in line with its previous statements; at no time did China ever indicate the possibility of involving itself in the conflict. As for China's relations with Taiwan, China did not resort to use of force. Therefore, it seemed inconsistent for China to assist Pakistan against Indian military aggression that had Soviet

backing. The lack of military support did not shake Bhutto's belief in Pakistan's friendship with China.<sup>48</sup> President Bhutto visited Peking in February 1972. During the meeting, China decided to convert several Chinese loans to Pakistan into grants, and also postponed the payment of the loan given in 1970 by nearly twenty years. China also gave to Pakistan substantial military equipment, including tanks and jet fighters.

Due to its important geo-strategic position, Pakistan is of extreme importance in Chinese foreign policy and is a key area in the South Asia region. China had ideological and strategic reasons for providing diplomatic assistance to Pakistan in 1971. China could not, however, contemplate military intervention in the context of the USSR-India Pact. Nonetheless, the position China took up during the East Pakistan crisis and later Bangladesh War enhanced the perception in Pakistan that China was Pakistan's most "loyal" and reliable ally. This sentiment persists to the present day and colors attitudes towards China both in official circles and public opinion.

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## Shailah Abdullah's *Saffron Dreams*

### Reviewed by Deborah Hall

*Saffron Dreams*. Shailah Abdullah. Ann Harbor, MI: Modern History Press, 2009. 232 pages. ISBN: 978-1-932690-73-6.

Shailah Abdullah's novel, *Saffron Dreams*, chronicles the journey of Arissa from Pakistan to America, from widow to recovered woman, from traumatized daughter then traumatized wife to a professional editor and single-mother devoted to her special-needs child. Her husband's death in the World Trade Center on 9/11 is the critical event around which the plot of this novel pivots, but in the end, *Saffron Dreams* is a novel of hope from which we learn from Arissa how to deal gracefully and patiently with life's cruel turns.

For readers who hope to read a politically-informed cultural critique of the American response to Muslims after 9/11, the novel disappoints. Abdullah isn't so much offering an analysis of the misguided guilt-by-association to which Arissa is subject as she is capturing a human story that happens to be about a Pakistani Muslim couple. In this way, one might fault Abdullah for missing an opportunity or praise her for deftly avoiding the trap of expectation. Of course, most critics expect the novelist to *show* cultural or religious misunderstandings, not to explain them. Otherwise, readers turn away. There is one scene shortly after 9/11 in which Arissa is a victim of physical violence from a racist group of young men who follow her off the subway, harassing her and cutting her clothing. Once they realize she is pregnant, they run off.

In another scene, the hostility is less violent but shows cultural ostracizing. When a 9/11 missing persons flyer of an Arab man catches Arissa's eye because he looks like her missing husband Faizan, she stops, mesmerized until she realizes a white man is staring with hostility at her:

“This one is mine,” I pointed to the flyer of the young man... “Which one's yours?”

He stared at me in disbelief. “None,” he said finally.

I turned to leave.

“I am sorry,” I heard him say but I could not stop and answer. (87)

In this circumstance, one might understand how religious defensiveness grows into religious shame or how one might assimilate into the dominant culture as a survival strategy. In fact, the novel opens with an act that appears as a cultural (or religious) rejection of the veil. Arissa is walking to the Hudson River late at night. It’s been two months since 9/11. It seems like she’s going to throw herself into the dark water. Instead, she “grasped the cold railing with one hand and swatted at the fleeting [veil] with the other as the wind picked up speed...[she] let it sail down toward the depths,” (3). She muses about how this ritualistic unveiling might look like betrayal to a Muslim onlooker, but concludes she is merely shifting the veil “from her head to her heart” (3), but the larger, cultural explanation is that she is making herself less of a target in Muslim-phobic, post-9/11 America.

The characters in *Saffron Dreams* defy simplicity, but more importantly they defy Muslim stereotypes. One example is Arissa’s mother who has a love affair and abandons her family. Arissa’s siblings suffer through the absence of their mother, marry, give birth and move on with their lives. The mother returns to their lives through long-distance phone calls that Arissa will not accept. After missing Arissa’s marriage and failing to come to Arissa’s side during the 9/11 crisis, Arissa is not moved by her mother’s plea to resolve their differences. At the end of the novel, Arissa has the strength to absolve her mother of all obligations toward her. In an act that is horrifying to the mother, Arissa says there is no chance of a relationship. When the mother yells, “You can’t discard me like day-old trash,” (223) the irony is obvious.

In Arissa, Abdullah captures a female character who has escaped the typical confinements of her culture, using tradition when it benefits. Her mother is narcissistic. Her father is a liberal, educated physician who wants his children to be happy. For her younger sister’s happiness, Arissa and her father consent to the younger sister’s marriage before Arissa, the eldest female. While Arissa’s mother behaves in a way that cripples her children and severs the mother-daughter bond, Arissa becomes an example of self-determination when she uses the village matchmaker to her benefit to match her with Faizan and an example of maternal devotion as she raises a special-needs baby as a single mother.

Once Arissa has moved to America with Faizan, a Columbia University graduate student studying literature, she grapples with defining herself within her marriage. Once her husband dies, she must struggle with overcoming her grief, living independently, becoming a good mother, nurturing her creativity and talent (finishing her husband’s novel as a tribute to him) and finding her womanhood

again. The novel follows this journey from Arissa's abandonment by her mother to her becoming a self-sufficient, artistic, sexually-mature, and maternal woman.

The novel's unassuming and poetic style is more introspective than dramatically-rendered thanks to Abdullah's artistic instinct which focuses more on the inner landscape of her characters than the tragic terrorist attack. At times, Abdullah's dramatic scenes are both poignant and intimate. In this scene Arissa's father tells his children, "Your mother has left." Abdullah captures this scene impressively:

The unnerving words echoed across the dining room and like a leech drained the surroundings of all air. The ear-piercing silence that followed became an incessant buzzing that wouldn't go away. Like a bone, the joke we were laughing at minutes earlier got caught in our throats. Zoha's hand, which had just lifted a spoon to bring it to her mouth, came to halt midair, and I saw her lower lip tremble. It could only mean one thing. I curled my fingers over her arm and gently but firmly guided the spoon into her mouth. She began to chew her cornflakes slowly as tears ran down her cheeks. Sian, 14 at the time, laid his spoon on the table on the side of his plate, wiped his face clean with a napkin, and escaped to his room without a word. (23)

Abdullah's writing often captures the sights and smells of her native Pakistan with poetic lyricism. Describing the wedding of Arissa and Faizan, she writes that the separate stages in the wedding hall were "decked with red and orange batik covers and a flowery curtain of *moghrha* (jasmine) and *genda* (marigold) flowers, a mingling of the milk and saffron of our lives, joining the ordinary with the extraordinary, a tantalizing fusion of mind and senses," (40). Often during this novel, the smells and tastes are as rich as the colors of the "tie-and-dye print *dupatta*" used to cover the bride (39).

Arissa's character at the end of this novel symbolizes a maturity and evolution that exemplifies one who has endured not one but many tragedies. While dotting on her son Raian, she ponders how she might tell him about her native Pakistan: "I might...tell him that when you leave a land behind, you don't shift loyalties—you just expand your heart and fit two lands in. You love them equally," (174). The same might be said for a woman who must love again after having loved and lost.

*Saffron Dreams* is an important American novel. The Pakistani-American immigrant story has not seared enough the consciousness of the American psyche. Americans often think that 9/11 was a singular American tragedy. *Saffron Dreams* reminds us that 9/11 hurt Muslims in more devastating ways because it stole their innocence and reputation. It allowed, as Abdullah says, "a lynching of a religion," (155). This novel reminds us that Islam is based on "tolerance, peace and bridge-

building” (120) and the great many non-extremist Muslims around the world (dull, un-dramatic and ordinary as they are) get to define who they are and in what they believe.

As much as I’ve focused on 9/11 in this review, it doesn’t equal the measure of attention Abdullah gives the subject in her novel. She focuses much less. To be sure, *Saffron Dreams* is a love story; moreover, it’s a woman’s journey, and if I strayed from that focus it is because tragedy steals the show. But Abdullah’s instinct resists this very thing. The beauty of *Saffron Dreams* is that it celebrates common acts of humanity and reminds us that while loyalty and devotion might go unnoticed, they are examples of daily heroism. For that lesson, I’m grateful for having read this novel.

## Ali Seth's *The Wish Maker*

### Reviewed by David Waterman

*The Wish Maker*. Ali Seth. New York: Riverhead Books / Penguin, 2009. 421 pages. ISBN: 978-1-59448-879-5.

Ali Seth's first novel is a homecoming, familiar to readers of contemporary Pakistani fiction, of the young adult who has been abroad for a period of university study, and returns to a world which is at the same time "going in circles" and "Basically it's all changing [. . .] it's all up for grabs" (12; 22). The protagonist Zaki Shirazi grows up without a father, an Air Force pilot killed in a flying accident, in a house of strong-minded women; his mother is a politically active journalist who is "friendly with unusual women. Most drove their own cars and went to offices" (56), while Zaki's cousin Samar Api finds herself navigating the space between the conflicting roles of rebellious adolescent and conforming young woman. In fact, it is for her wedding that Zaki returns to Lahore, and much of the political struggle described in the novel has to do with the situation of women, whether educated journalists who step on toes or household servants sacked for not remembering their place. *The Wish Maker* relates the saga of this largely feminine family in the context of domestic and geopolitical turmoil in Pakistan, going in circles while forever changing. Zaki himself is compared to Benazir Bhutto, who provided much hope to these same women, and who also was young when her father was killed (63).

Pakistan's social and political situation receives much attention, as various elections and military coups are described, sometimes in detail, sometimes assuming basic knowledge of contemporary Pakistani history, such as the reciprocal nuclear tests of India and Pakistan in May 1998 (328), or the censorship of PTV during martial law (333). This kind of reflexive, "knee-jerk" censorship is not limited to periods of military rule, as the recent Lahore High Court's instructions to the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority to block Facebook and YouTube sites illustrate (see *Dawn* 21 May 2010)<sup>1</sup>. The 1971 war and the secession of Bangladesh are not left out either: "'They want their own country,' Mabi had said after reading the newspaper. 'They are asking for it.' Papu said, 'They won't get it.' 'Mabi said, 'It's ridiculous.' And it was one of those moments when, by belittling the desires

of other people, they had happened to agree with one another.” (77). The sentiment of unity based on a common enemy is not lost on Ali Seth.

Memory plays an important role, not only in the structure of the novel’s narration, with recollections of time past and family history, going back to before Partition yet later describing television images of 11 September 2001 (395), but within the larger context of Muslim history as well, as Zaki and his mother tour the Alhambra castle in Spain: “‘this is what Muslim culture used to be about: art, music, architecture. It used to be progressive’ [. . .] ‘So what happened?’ [. . .] ‘I don’t know,’ she said, looking around at the roaming tourists, who were mostly white. ‘I suppose they forgot where they came from. They forgot their history, their culture. It happens to people sometimes. They forget’” (281). Collective memory (and collective forgetting) go hand-in-hand with individual experience, an intrinsic and intimate connection which Ali Seth exploits masterfully throughout the novel, but which comes more visibly to the surface from time to time: “News from home makes you aware that the flow of memory has stopped. A life you no longer live is a life you no longer know. But you rely on memory to inhabit, however falsely, what now lies outside your experience; and every homecoming involves the puncture of memory’s airy bubble” (413). Memory thus escapes the bonds of simple nostalgia and souvenirs, locked away in an airtight compartment, and becomes a key element in the structuring of human experience, the creation of meaning, even the construction of reality itself, however unreal the building blocks of memory may be. Daadi, now the matriarch, understands this perfectly, as she ruminates on the nebulous zones between memory, dreaming and reality, after having seen images of the military coup on television: “She thought it was a dream [...] But when she returned she was filled with dread. If she slept now she would dream again, and she knew that it would lead to mutations of the things she had seen in the day, which were mutations of the things she had seen in her life” (346).

Memory and history intersect as well, making the link to political, even geopolitical, turmoil in Pakistan. Although Partition and the 1971 war appear only briefly in the novel, these events nevertheless provide the background whose presence is understood yet goes without saying, the foundational violence in which the country came into existence in its current form, and which plays such an important role in defining national identity, or what it means to be Pakistani. As an adolescent, Daadi experienced Partition directly, losing her best friend Amrita in the process: “The Hindu family next door, the Parsi gentleman who lived in the secretive double-story house and ran the laundry on Mall Road, and Amrita’s family, a Sikh family – all of them had locked their houses and gone away” (347). Daadi’s personal experience is linked almost immediately to the larger issue of political realities: “By summer the madness was everywhere. The British were leaving and



there would be two countries, India in the center and Pakistan on each side – a long strip to the left called West Pakistan, and then to the right, after one thousand miles of Indian territory, another Muslim land called East Pakistan” (351). While many other factors, including economic fairness and even-handed political representation, come into the formula of dissention and the desire for separation, it is clear that the geographic divide of 1947 set the stage from the beginning of Partition for tension between Pakistan’s two wings. Direct mention of the 1971 war is limited to one page, where we are reminded that Indira Gandhi, “an evil genius,” had sought Russian aid on the international front, while on the home front Daadi and her family seek shelter in an L-shaped trench they’d dug in the yard (367). Such understatement in no way diminishes the significance of these events, but rather highlights their status as social representations; everyone within this particular socio-historic context seems to understand what is meant without the need to explain or justify what goes without saying. Partition and the war were of course traumatic events, leaving indelible traces on individual and collective memories, transmitted across generations, and often recollected with difficulty and a pervasive sense of loss.

*The Wish Maker* succeeds, as does much contemporary Pakistani fiction, by not dwelling on the large-scale trauma as such – it becomes too easily abstract – but instead by examining their effects on a human scale, especially on the family. At the end of the novel, the rebellious adolescent Sami has become a young woman, getting married in the traditional style, despite having been nurtured in an environment of unconventional women. Zaki has come home for the wedding, and illustrates his profound understanding of the complex web of social forces and personal fulfillment with a simple question to Sami: “‘You love him?’” She contemplates a while before answering, and her reply shows an equally insightful understanding of what is happening: “‘He loves me,’ she said, ‘and I’m happy.’ I said, ‘Good. As long as you’re happy.’ ‘I am,’ she said. ‘Good.’ It was over, and we were quiet.” (420). It was over, going in circles and forever changing, and nothing else needed to be said.

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Notes:

1. <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/editorial/19-facebook-furore-150-hh-09>

Afzal Ahmed Syed's *Rococo and Other Worlds*,  
*Selected Poems*

Reviewed by Taffy Martin

Afzal Ahmed Syed. *Rococo and Other Worlds, Selected Poems*. translated from Urdu by Musharraf Ali Farooqi. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-8195 6933-2.

Afzal Ahmed Syed's handsome collection, *Rococo and Other Worlds, Selected Poems* is a delight to hold, to peruse and to read. It is also an invitation to wander amongst poems and prose whose principal ingredient, in the face of psychic violence and political oppression, is amused but carefully targeted irony. The volume consists of selections from three earlier works, *Rococo and Other Worlds* (2000), *Death Sentence in Two Languages* (1990) and *An Arrogated Past* (1984). Highly allusive to contemporary Pakistani culture, to everyday events whether political or routine and to the world outside of Syed's native Pakistan, the poems are challenging to read.

The selections from Syed's earliest work, *An Arrogated Past*, appear last in the present volume and consist entirely of poetry. The stanzas and the lines are short, as elsewhere, but the longest poems appear here. Much has been made of the first stanza of the opening poem: "The Moroccans invented the papyrus / the Phoenicians, the alphabet / I invented Poetry." This provocative claim proves, though, to be more than mere posturing. The poem progresses with relentless speed and apparent hilarity through a series of "inventions," each more ominous than the other until, in a final two-line stanza, the speaker admits his about face: "I bartered the whole of poetry for fire / and burnt the Tyrant's hand". The surprise here is not simply the lack of a closing period, but the fact that the "Tyrant" whose hand the speaker has chosen to burn had been, until these closing lines, absent from the poem. The fable is thus not only a reversal of Faustian greed but the taunt of a speaker posturing as madman in response to an invisible threat. Clay mines, body parts, rivers, seas, silkworms, bridges, zoos, merchant ships, courtyards and courthouses are all part of the décor to which the speaker bears witness in an attempt to decipher but not reverse the commerce of a world devoid of sense. In the penultimate poem it is as a dog, one who "has swallowed its chain," that the speaker comes to terms with the

daemons without and, in a surprisingly lyric turn, with the daemons within. The solution, we learn, is to revert to the “script” locked in the heart “like the secret / at which I had first learned / to bark”.

As if in response to the disjointed phantoms of early work, *Death Sentence in Two Languages*, the longest of the three sections of this collection, opens with poems which address an unidentified you. The selection includes prose pieces whose taut simplicity holds absurdity at bay and poems whose implacable precision intensify rather than nullify the horrors they portray. In the poem “To Live Is a Mechanistic Torture,” “the bones of children [which] flex / Like a tree’s green bough,” might have evoked winsome vulnerability had the image not followed upon one of “girls who commit suicide / cutting open their vaginas / [leaving] no farewell note.” The response, not unlike that of the dog who swallowed its chain and reverted to the chain locked in his heart, augurs forbearance: “The poison administered us / shall not be expelled from our body through tears.” Incomprehension informed by utmost respect define the vision of the observer in the prose pieces whose speaker repeatedly effaces himself. He is, as he says, “the weed which grows outside the stable; a tablet with plaintive letters, the loneliest fish in the net...” As if in attempt to comprehend his existence, the speaker repeatedly revisits his birth and the reactions of neighbors to his arrival. He imagines, as well, his death, or rather the moment when death comes calling. Faced at that moment with “the foetus of the poem I could not write,” the speaker seems little inclined to refuse death’s invitation since “now I have nothing to give her.” Death and birth, fertility and sterility as well as fishnets, blood-stained sheets and a “flower bearing five wounds” make of these poems mysteries to be savored rather than resolved. The speaker invents not poetry but the art of survival.

The most recent poems, those drawn from Syed’s 1990 *Rococo and Other Worlds*, open this collection and display once again the constantly accelerating rhythms of the earlier poems. They also display the same amused irony in the face of pervasive terror and oppression. The allusiveness of the texts intensifies as does the surrealist quality of the images while prose and poetry continue to alternate with simplicity of expression. The new element here, in the midst of poems that are more politically open, is love poems, love poems which stylistically are recognizably Syed’s. “Tell Me a Story” thus employs the escalating rhythms of “I Invented Poetry,” but its speaker is a dejected lover whose feverish jealousy pushes him to frenzy and finally a poignant albeit self deprecating anticlimax: “Tell me a story [...] other than that it was not raining that day”. Just as the details of this deception remain unknown, so nearly all of the poems of *Rococo and Other Worlds* carry their share of mystery. In a diabolical political fable, Eva Peron’s casket seems to have been abandoned because of a corroded hairpin. In another of these quirky poems,

the only respite from the pomp and circumstance of political despots and the arrival of “ranger trucks and the armored personnel carriers” is the “language of strawberry and vanilla” employed in a campaign to conquer the people. Once again the last stanza ridicules pretense: “Their campaign / to introduce an ice-cream / was the last pleasant surprise for our city.”

Afzal Ahmed Syed is remarkable for the clarity of his vision, for the manic posturing of his speaker, for his polysemy, his sensuality and surreal images and for his clairvoyant attacks on pretension, neglect and injustice. One hopes that this handsome edition will bring him deserved attention from English-language readers. How, though, will this be accomplished when he appears in the Library of Congress catalogue and those of countless other libraries as Afzal Ahmad Sayyid? How, further, is the English-language reader to appreciate the generous praise for his imaginative use of nazm poetry and the ghazal when he does not understand Urdu? Reading Syed is also frustrating because it is impossible for a reader unfamiliar with Urdu to appreciate the contribution of his translator, Musharraf Ali Farooqi, to the success of the volume. One imagines that the skillful alternation between restraint and excess are faithful interpretations of the original texts, as must be that between utter simplicity and decorative excess.

Despite these frustrations, one is grateful that a translation of Afzal Ahmed Syed now exists. Throughout this volume one senses not only a politically committed poet-speaker but also a poet concerned with the fate of poetry. In “The Dirge of a Rabid Dog,” the final poem of *An Arrogated Past* and so of the volume of selected poems, the speaker assumes the posture of a journeyman and recalls his various incarnations, as laborer, gentleman, teacher or sexton, only to conclude with what might well be a parable of poet as pariah: “In the capacity of a poet / I wrote the dirge of a rabid dog / As a gentleman I recited it and died”. This same concern with the fate of the poet and his ignoble demise reappears in the poem and in the prose piece that conclude the selections from *Rococo and Other Worlds*. The speaker turns his attention from his own disquiet to the fate of his ancestors, first Virgil, thwarted in his attempt to have the manuscript of the Aeneid destroyed, then Aphra Behn whose contemporaries concluded ironically that she had “earned her living, principally, from selling her flesh.” Ironic fate indeed.

In all of these poems, the voice of Afzal Ahmed Syed, be it fatalist or outraged, joyous or nostalgic, surreal, provocative or contemplative is a steadfast reminder that poetry, both lyric and political, is alive and well.

## Translating a Poetic Discourse: *Modern Poetry of Pakistan*

Reviewed by Qaisar Abbas

*Modern Poetry of Pakistan*. Iftikhar Arif, Waqas Khwaja, eds. London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2011. ISBN-9781564786050.

It's a rarity to see English translations of Pakistani poetry from Urdu and regional languages in one anthology. The well known contemporary Urdu poet, Iftikhar Arif, who is also the Chairman of National Language Authority, has accomplished this daunting task as its editor. The forthcoming anthology "Modern Poetry of Pakistan" is an extraordinary work that offers a colorful mosaic of romantic, postcolonial, modernist and postmodernist streams in the contemporary poetic discourse in Pakistan.

The anthology offers 148 poems by 44 poets in English translated from seven languages including Urdu and regional languages-Balochi, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Pashto, Saraiki and Sindhi. It includes stalwarts of Urdu poetry, Allama Iqbal, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Hafeez Jalandhari, Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, and Josh Malihabadi, and the post colonial generation of N.M. Rashid, Meeraji, Ahmad Faraz, Majeed Amjad, Habib Jalib, Kishwar Nahid, Parveen Shakir, Munir Niazi and Iftikhar Arif. The second cadre of poets includes Sarmad Sehbai, Zafar Iqbal, Fahmida Riaz, Mustafa Zaidi, Shabnam Shakil, Ada Jafri and Nasir Kazmi among others. The 344-page anthology will be published in January 2011 by Dalkey Archive Press from London and Champaign with a price tag of \$16.95.

However, it is not inclusion of Urdu poets but the contemporary poets of regional languages that makes this anthology an astounding work. It includes Sheikh Ayaz, Janbaz Jatoi, Tanveer Abbasi, Sehar Imdad and Pushpa Vallabh (Sindhi); Hasina Gul, Ghani Khan, Gul Khan Naseer, Amir Hamza Khan Shinwari and Samandar Khan Samandar (Pushto); Taos Binhali (Kashmiri); Ata Shad (Balochi), and Ustad Daman, Sharif Kunjahi, and Ahmed Rahi (Punjabi).

Other than the stalwarts of the Urdu poetry like Faiz and Faraz who juxtaposed romanticism with ideological rendering and connected it to the common experiences and frustrations of society, a major part of the book includes Urdu poetry that depicts the popular trend of romanticism-just for the sake of romanticism.

Faiz, on the other hand, while signifying the overwhelming burdens of the common humans and their distrust of the state apparatus, as always, is seen mesmerizing the reader:

Those who stir tyranny's poison  
Will succeed neither today nor tomorrow.  
So what if they have already extinguished  
The candles in the bridal chamber of love?  
Show us if they can put out the moon!

The unrelenting saga of our postcolonial verse with its traditional romanticism somehow isolated itself from the rest of the poetic world that was experiencing the modernist waves of ideological undertones exploring the day-to-day issues of gender dynamics, feminism, culture, sexual orientations, power relations, and racism.

However, it is not that modernist trends were altogether ignored in the Pakistani poetic discourse. In fact the anthology includes a good number of poets who were in touch with the realities of their age. These daring souls, most of the time ignoring the traditional structural form of Ghazal, dealt with Nazm, closer to the western style of verse. Included in the anthology are Hasina Gul, Pushpa Vallabh, Sehar Imdad, Sharif Kunjahi, Ustad Daman and Ata Shad who represent the modernist school of poetry. Ata Shad's poem, for instance, "Lament of the Merchants of Hope" exposes new cruelties of the market-based capitalist economy:

And in this marketplace,  
You and I are sold,  
We all are sold-  
And the heart, like beggar,  
Endures the rebuff.

Pushpa Vallabh, in her Sindhi poem, denying the artificial boundaries that divide people, looks for a single global identity of humankind:

I am love-  
Don't assign me a color.  
Whatever color I am painted,  
that is my color.  
Don't look for me in his eyes or her eyes.  
I am in everyone's eye.



Similarly the poetic imagery of Sharif Kunjahi represents images of a society divided into classes and feels ever-growing sorrows of the down trodden in his Punjabi poem:

If I say that you and I are born of the same Adam,  
Why then should one suffer in labor and the other rest in ease?

Ustad Daman's Punjabi poem "Partition" represents postcolonial distresses and excruciating experiences of people on both sides of the newly created border of India and Pakistan:

We may not say it but know it well,  
You lost your way. We too.  
Into the jaws of death alive  
You were flung. We too.

Coming from the complexities of our contemporary "hi-tech" world which is consistently defining and shaping our power structures, communication patterns and life styles, the postmodern discourse goes beyond the postcolonial mindset. Today, contemporary verse is not limited to its own social or personal contexts, it's also global. A poet in this new world of digital technologies, the internet, satellite-based communications and visually created layers of reconstructed realities, becomes a profound communicator consistently engaged in a dialogue with the reader. It is the reader, however, not the poet, who ultimately makes sense of the verse and creates another world of meaning.

Although slowly, our poetic discourse is also embracing these new realities of the twenty-first century. These waves of thought are so alive in the verse of Kishwar Nahid, Sarmad Sehbai, Zehra Nigah, Gul Khan Naseer, Majeed Amjad, Meeraji, Sehar Imdad and Wazir Agha.

Sahar Imdad's Sindhi poem "Living but Dead" blurs the distinction between her and the dead herself:

These feet no longer run after butterflies,  
The wrists no longer move.  
The head that once lay on mother's breast  
Is no longer attached to a body.  
This is me, and this her third world.

Sarmad Sehbai's "Poem for Those Affected by Disaster" looks like an eulogy of victims of the recent floods:

For you, the rulers  
will collect donations from country after country.  
Tickets will be sold  
for exhibits of posters of your dead body.  
God-fearing citizens will buy gifts of prayers.  
You will be publicly buried  
amid gold-robe shouts.

Besides the poetic manifestation, transforming the mood and essence of poetry into new linguistic codes involves a creative process that may or may not reflect the original verse itself as Waqas Khwaja, who led a team of fifteen translators in creating the anthology, correctly points out in his introductory essay "A good translator is an exquisite ambassador." The translators have created an amazing work, with some capacity for improvement. For instance in translating Parveen Shakir's Ghazal "Koo be koo phail gai baat shanasai ki" the word "shanasai" becomes "familiarity" in the translation-"From lane to lane spread the rumor of familiarity"-which is literal, not conveying the mood of the ghazal.

Overall, the advance copy of the anthology that I have received is a remarkable poetic discourse translated in English. Surprisingly, however, not included in the long list of Urdu poets are some of the popular romanticists like Ubaid Ullah Aleem and Noshi Gilani, and some well-known postmodern poets like Iftikhar Nasim. Including everyone in an anthology of this stature is almost impossible, however, this anthology might be viewed by some as publication of a federal organization in Pakistan and even with all the sincerity of its editor in selecting poets, it might be read within the context of its limitations and an inherent political bias. Nonetheless, it is undoubtedly a breath of fresh air!

## The Conflict between Human Growth and Economic Growth\*

By Asad Zaman

World Bank data for 2008 shows that incomes in Norway are about 400 times more than those in Congo. Statistics cannot convey what journalist Kevin Carter did with a photo of a vulture waiting for a starving child to die; haunted by vivid memories of starving children, Kevin committed suicide three months later. At the same time, the rich buy \$20,000 crocodile skin briefcases, and richest 250 people have more wealth than the bottom 2.5 billion. How did the world come to be this way? Can we change things for the better? These questions, and the urge to ‘do something about it’ arise naturally to sensitive and compassionate people.

Prior to World War I, virtually the whole world was under direct or indirect control of European powers. Used as pawns on an international chessboard, the European colonies tasted of wars and revolutions and freedom. These lessons were put to use as nearly all colonies gained independence by the middle of the twentieth century. Leaders of the newly independent countries faced this question in its most urgent and practical form: what policies should we adopt to lift ourselves up from poverty? Long periods of colonization had destroyed indigenous traditions and leadership, and power came into the hands of western educated elites, who naturally pursued western ideas about the nature of the problem of “under-development” and its cure. The striking fact about sixty years of experience with pursuing these strategies is their virtually complete failure. The main reason for this failure has been a deep rooted misunderstanding of the nature of the process of development. Economic theories equate growth with accumulation of capital (or wealth) and give human beings a secondary place in the process. The reality is that human beings are central to the process; as Mahbubul Haq<sup>1</sup> realized after bitter experience, “Human beings are both the means and ends of development.”

In Pakistan, we have first hand experience of this failure. The first and second Five Year Plans of Pakistan were drafted by economic experts from Harvard, who also created academic and bureaucratic institutions (PIDE, Planning Com-

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\*(A slightly shorter version of this article was previously published in *The Express Tribune*, Karachi on April 28, 2010).

mission, CSO, etc.) required for this process. Mahbubul-Haq, one of the chief architects and executors of the Harvard group economic policies, was disillusioned by the outcomes of the much touted “Decade of Development”. In 1968, after ten years of western style development, Dr Haq said that 22 family groups “controlled at that time about two thirds of the industrial assets, 80 percent of banking, and 70 percent of insurance in Pakistan”. He expressed his dissatisfaction as follows: “In blunt terms, Pakistan’s capitalistic system is still one of the most primitive in the world. It is a system in which economic feudalism prevails. A handful of people, whether landlords or industrialists or bureaucrats, make all the basic decisions.”

Post World War II, first generation policies for economic development designed by expert economists led to similar outcomes throughout the world. Widespread failures, and changing political climate, led to the development of second generation development policies, this time based on free markets. The IMF and the World Bank created the “Washington Consensus,” a list of ten universally applicable economic policies for growth. Despite substantial difference in appearance and format, this “new” approach to development has led to outcomes similar to those observed in Pakistan: Increases in concentration of wealth, income inequalities, poverty and unemployment. Social tensions caused by these policies have frequently resulted in political and economic crises. Some economists have argued that much of the poverty we see around the world is due to global imposition of these flawed policies for growth.

In parallel with Mahbubul-Haq, many people associated with the design and execution of the Washington Consensus policies have acknowledged their failure. John Williamson, who coined the term “Washington Consensus,” has summarized the overall results as<sup>2</sup> “disappointing, to say the least”. Despite this acknowledged failure, Williamson, and other economists and policymakers continue to tout third generation reformed and sophisticated versions of these policies, as cures for low income. They attribute second generation failures to institutional weaknesses, flaws in execution and sequencing, corruption, and other factors. In fact, these policies and their background theories are fundamentally flawed. To prove this, Dani Rodrik<sup>3</sup> of Harvard has pointed out that the general economic policies of China and India remained the exact opposite to the Washington Consensus’ main recommendations” “Stabilize, Liberalize and Privatize.” Both had high levels of protectionism, no privatization, extensive industrial policies planning, and lax fiscal and financial policies through the 1990s. They have nonetheless been highly successful in achieving income growth and poverty reduction.

From several different lines of research, it appears that economists have focused on the wrong areas in their search for the engines of growth. Instead of building machines, and exploiting laborers to provide capital for investments, the

best investment is the people themselves. Research shows that the wealth of nations is embodied in human beings, rather than in industries and infrastructure. Intangibles of trust, cooperation, and forging national consensus are keys to progress; unfortunately, these lie outside the ambit of traditional economic theories. Pioneers like Amartya Sen with his “Development and Freedom” and the Human Development approach of Mahbubul Haq have broken fresh ground. Instead of following rehashes of failed policies, policy makers urgently need to adopt these new ways of thinking.

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Notes:

1. This and subsequent details about Mahbubul Haq are taken from “From Economic Growth to Human Development: The Journey with Mahbubul Haq,” by Faisal Bari, to appear in *Lahore Journal of Economics*. Draft of this article available from [sites.google.com/site/aznews0](http://sites.google.com/site/aznews0).
2. John Williamson, “Did the Washington Consensus Fail?” speech at Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, Nov. 6, 2002. available from: <http://www.iie.com/publications/papers/paper.cfm?ResearchID=488>
3. Dani Rodrik, “Goodbye Washington Consensus, Hello Washington Confusion: A Review of the World Bank’s *Economic Growth in the 1990s: Learning from a Decade of Reform*” *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 44, 2006.

## *Pakistan – Terre de rencontre – L’art du Gandhara*

By David Waterman

*Pakistan – Terre de rencontre (Ier-VIe siècles): Les arts du Gandhara.* Musée Guimet, musée national des arts asiatiques, 6 place d’Iéna, 75116 Paris. [www.guimet.fr](http://www.guimet.fr)



The exposition runs from 21 April to 16 August, 2010, in collaboration with the National Art and Exposition Center of the Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn: [www.bundeskunsthalle.de](http://www.bundeskunsthalle.de) and the government of Pakistan. *Pakistan – Terre de rencontre* is a modified version of Prof. Michel Jansen’s and Dr. Christian Luczanits’s earlier conception, entitled “Gandhara. The Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan. Legends, monasteries, and Paradise,” which was earlier displayed in Bonn, Berlin and Zurich.

This magnificent exhibition brings together over two hundred works of art, sculpture for the most part, on loan principally from the museums of Lahore, Peshawar and Swat, although some pieces come from further afield, notably Taxila and Karachi. The central theme is, as the title in English makes clear, the Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan, although the French title chooses the larger historical background of *rencontre*, or meeting / exchange of cultures. Those who have read Nadeem Aslam's 2008 novel will immediately recognize Gandhara as the region of northwest Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan where *The Wasted Vigil* is set, a detail which the organizers have not overlooked – the French translation of the novel is on sale in the gift shop. We learn, from both the Guimet exhibit and *The Wasted Vigil*, that Gandhara is where the Buddha was first represented with a human face, although given the multiple influences in the region, it is perhaps more appropriate to insist on the plural: human faces.

Historians have called the art of Gandhara “the child of an Athenian sculptor and a Buddhist mother” (*Le Guide Pratique* 2), a largely forgotten child rediscovered at the end of the nineteenth century with the recognition of the multiple influences on the art of the region: Indian, of course, and Greek (including the intervention of no less than Alexander the Great), never forgetting Persian, Scythian, and Parthian influence and later conquests by the Huns, Genghis Khan, and the Mughal empire (*Le Guide Pratique* 3). Under Kanishka, the most illustrious of the Kouchan emperors, around 120 BC, mutual tolerance was the rule, with the result that, for several centuries afterwards, “Buddha and Zarathustra cohabit temples and monasteries of Greek design” – even the coins of the realm reveal the diversity of cultural pressures, depending on which side of the coin one examines (*Le Guide Pratique* 3). The representations of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas are no less diverse, what Pierre Cambon calls “naturalism which makes reference to the world [...] a Hellenic Orient,” where a typically Indian Buddha may be dressed in Greek or Persian fashion, or even more striking, where Siddharta fasting is the skeletal image of a starving man, retaining none of the Buddha's characteristic ample flesh (*Connaissance des arts* 7). The Guimet exhibit provides a wonderful opportunity to see firsthand the life of Buddha in all its diversity, and to become acquainted with the multiple faces of the Buddha(s) from Gandhara.

Even as the current exhibition draws to a close, the Guimet's permanent collection offers a very complete sampling of the art of Gandhara, thanks primarily to the archaeological missions of Alfred Foucher (1895-97), Louis Barthoux (1923) and Paul Pelliot (1906-08; see *Connaissance des Arts* page 7). And a final note: At the moment, the contemporary Pakistani artist Rashid Rana is displaying about twenty of his photomontage works under the title “Perpetual Paradox,” here and there surprising visitors to the permanent collection with an interesting and







provocative juxtaposition of styles; Rana's interrogation of the role of images as the building blocks of how people think, and ultimately create reality, makes his œuvre an example of political art at its finest. The website warns, "This exhibition contains images that may offend sensitive viewers," but not to worry. There is nothing offensive in Rana's "Perpetual Paradox," although viewers may be troubled by the realization that we are all part of the big picture, hence each of us shares a bit of the responsibility for such dislocations, illusions and paradoxes.

Special thanks are due to the exhibition's Commissaire, Mr. Pierre Cambon, as well as to Ms. Hélène Lefèvre, Director of Communication, for their assistance and kind permission to reproduce the accompanying images, not to mention the helpful staff of the museum who went out of their way to answer numerous questions during my visit on 17 July 2010.

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<http://www.guimet.fr/Rashid-Rana-Perpetual-Paradoxe> Accessed 21 July 2010.



## Betrayal

By Rizwan Akhtar

The student union at the university's square  
talks about my country while I sit in a warm room,  
outside gale force winds bang every living thing.  
Our western borders\* are raided by Drones  
and I am reading about Shakespeare's England  
with a subtle English wit over cappuccino  
and French fries,  
seasoned with a layman's vocabulary.  
I am a less ambitious broker  
but our politicians have bartered everything  
so I am selling ideas dipped in the European gravy.  
My wallet is bulged with credit cards  
and I do not miss auctions, second-hand things  
come on rebound,  
haggling, touting, and yelling  
with my English acquaintances  
withdrawn in a muffler and leather  
bidding for a better price  
surviving bombs and crash.

\*Pakistan's western borders.

A Scribe  
Is Visited by a Jinn  
in a Sugarcane Field

By Shadab Zeest Hashmi

When their eyes locked  
she saw paper

acres  
of sweet milled paper

The field had melted  
from green to copper  
pulp to gauze

A hush was falling

She bolted from the gaze  
Upset her inkpot

A rich black  
soaked  
through the chewed up cane  
stain of cynosure  
on the day's lost wages

## Notes for my Husband

By Shadab Zeest Hashmi

I showed Yousuf to the amethyst  
Morning when he was born

Kettledrums play four at a time  
Each tuned to play its own note  
Each he would swallow whole  
With my vertical voice in Urdu

And watch with his cardamom eyes  
The slow flare of Van Gogh's Sun Flowers  
The silk ascent to Victoria's Peak  
The concave shine of mango *achar*

He is slender like pine nuts  
And keen on butter

Yaseen prefers honey  
And tells me the sun on the front door  
Smells like library soap  
I feel the light lathering the knob  
As I open it

The house is filled  
With jazz and bag-pipes  
Iqbal's poems  
On marble construction paper

We weep in both languages  
And anything round is a planet

## List of Recent Pakistan-Related Texts

### Compiled by David Waterman

Abbott, David. *Pakistan (Changing World)*. Franklin Watts Ltd, 2010. 48 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0749695323.

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Chakma, Bhumitra. *Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons (Routledge Security in Asia Pacific)*. Routledge; 1 edition, 2010. 187 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0415590327.

Datta, Rekha. *Beyond Realism: Human Security in India and Pakistan in the Twenty-First Century (Studies in Public Policy)*. Lexington Books, 2010. 170 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0739121559.

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*Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* Vol. 2, No. 3 (2010)

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Husain, Syed Shahid. *What was once East Pakistan*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2010. 350 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0195477153.

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Karim, Saleena. *Secular Jinnah & Pakistan: What The Nation Doesn't Know*. CheckPoint Press, 2010. 332 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1906628222.

Khan, Mohammad Ayub. *Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub: Vision for Pakistan, Impressions, and Reminiscences A selection of talks, interviews, and speeches*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2010. 350 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0195476248.

Khan, Naveeda, ed. *Beyond Crisis: Re-evaluating Pakistan (Critical Asian Studies)*. Routledge India; 1 edition, 2010. 544 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0415480635.

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*Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* Vol. 2, No. 3 (2010)

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## Statements in Support of Fawzia Afzal-Khan's *Lahore with Love*

Fawzia Afzal-Khan's memoir, *Lahore With Love: Growing Up With Girlfriends Pakistani Style*, was published in March 2010 by Syracuse University Press. Those of us who read and assigned it for our classes were shocked to learn that the Syracuse University Press had canceled the memoir shortly after its publication for fear of a lawsuit.

Dr. Afzal-Khan is now publishing the memoir independently through Amazon.com (to be available in January 2011); this republished volume will also include an appendix explaining the entire controversy.

To support the memoir and to protest against the cancellation decision made by the Syracuse University Press we sought statements of support from readers. Provided below (in the order they were received) are the statements of those who were kind enough to share their thoughts with us. We are grateful for your support.

—

**Carole Stone**  
**East Hampton, NY**  
**Saturday, Nov 27 03:10 AM**

Dear Fawzia,

You have my complete support for the continued publication of your book. As I wrote in its foreword, "We have this deeply layered, wondrous story." It must be read.

—

**Richard Schechner**  
**Professor, New York University**  
**Tuesday, Nov 16 18:33 PM**

Dear Ms. Pfeiffer,

When I learned that you/Syracuse University Press, was going to withdraw pulled Fawzia Afzal-Khan's memoir, *Lahore With Love: Growing Up With Girl-*

*Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* Vol. 2, No. 3 (2010)

friends, Pakistani-Style (2010), I was – to put it mildly – shocked. I was shocked by your disrespect for freedom of expression; I was shocked by the apparent cowardice of the Press in refusing to defend one of its authors under attack; I was shocked by the fact that without a thorough investigation of all the circumstances involved, you/The Press would take such an action.

I am personally and professionally concerned because as editor of TDR: The Journal of Performance Studies and as a University Professor at New York University's Department of Performance Studies, I know well Professor Afzal-Khan and her work. She is a Contributing editor to TDR and TDR has published her writing. I also know Lahore With Love. In my opinion it is an important, excellent book.

From discussions with Professor Afzal-Khan I know what the issues are from the Press's point of view: fear of a lawsuit brought by Madeeha Gauhar alleging slander from a piece of sardonic and parodic fiction that is part of Lahore With Love. Although I agree with Professor Afzal-Khan that character of Madina in Chapter 4 is not provably based on Ms. Gauhar; and I agree that the "portrayal is not offensive and damaging to her reputation," the question from my point of view is about whether or not a major university press will stand by its authors or not. After all, you read and accepted Professor Afzal-Khan's manuscript; published her book; and were, I suppose, happy to find out that the book has been well received by both academics and scholars.

—

**Waseem Anwar**  
**Dean, Forman Christian College, Lahore**  
**Tuesday, Nov 16 18:28 PM**

Dear Fawzia,

You remember the launch ceremony of your book at Quaid-e-Azam Library in Lahore, where I moderated the event; this being part of the Special Seminar on Post-post-colonial Studies at Punjab University Lahore that I conducted with full support from all those interested in learning the local in connection with the global, or the post with reference to the colonial. And you also know how lovingly the Seminar became a SUCCESS, and how well received your book was. You then also visited the Punjab University on special invitation by the Chairperson, English Department to give your special talk on your book, the memoir. We, the Po-Co students at Lahore, started loving Lahore all the more after reading your book because it connects to us in soul and spirit.



Support for *Lahore with Love*

We support your democratic voice that opens up opportunities for a constructive debate on issues that we mostly hush-up.

Sincerely and friendly,

Waseem Anwar, Dean of Humanities, Forman Christian College, Lahore

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**Pervez Hoodbhoy**

**Quaid-e-Azam University**

**Tuesday, Nov 16 17:35 PM**

Hi Fawzia, Am glad to see your fighting spirit is strong. Be well. Pervez

---

**Shailaja Valdiya**

**Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute**

**Tuesday, Nov 16 17:04 PM**

I hope Syracuse University sends the right kind of social message by lifting its freeze on the publication of this obviously timely book about the lives of women in Pakistan. Universities are one of our last standing bastions of intellectual honesty, free speech, and social emancipation. Please let us not erode the historic foundations of this institution by preventing our academics from expressing their ideas with impunity.

---

**David Lee Keiser**

**New York City**

**Tuesday, Nov 16 14:54 PM**

Lahore with Love is not only manna for our minds, but water for our throats. The memoir is beautiful, evocative, and singular.

Let us not bow in the face of petty antipathy or envy, and keep it in the forefront of university courses and bookstores.

Censorship is not only wrong and unconstitutional, but craven--surely in this supposed beacon of democracy a university press could show the way. Surely,

*Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* Vol. 2, No. 3 (2010)

a school as resource-rich as Syracuse has staff on retainers for such publishing splinters.

Surely, we can see our way clearly. We need the oxygen!

Keep Lahore with Love in print and distribute it widely!!!!

In love and faith,  
David Lee Keiser

—

**Kathleen Foster**  
**Filmmaker and Photojournalist, New York**  
**Tuesday, Nov 16 04:03 AM**

Now your important book which demolishes stereotypes about Pakistani women and gives a much needed complexity to Pakistan's political past and present will get the circulation it merits.

I will do my part to publicize it.

—

**Pramilavenkatswaran**  
**New York**  
**Tuesday, Nov 16 01:39 AM**

It takes courage to write at all. And it takes even more courage to write despite the threats. I would love to review your book.

—

**Edvige Giunta**  
**New Jersey**  
**Tuesday, Nov 16 01:13 AM**

Memoirists, and all writers, need to pay attention to what is happening to this remarkable memoir. It should be a source of concern for anyone who cares about intellectual and creative freedom. I applaud Fawzia Afzal-Khan for pushing forward and making sure her voice is heard.

—

**Margot Badran**  
**Georgetown University**  
**Tuesday, Nov 16 00:08 AM**

Fawzia I am delighted you are sailing forth with this wonderful book and not letting anyone stop it and in so doing defending freedom of speech for us all!

---

**Sivan Grunfeld**  
**United States**  
**Sunday, Nov 14 15:26 PM**

Fear is the first step in censorship. No book should be recalled for such a reason. Good luck.

---

**Zafar Rao**  
**Abbottabad, Pakistan**  
**Friday, Nov 12 16:18 PM**

Justification given by Alice Pfeiffer, Dir. of SU Press in an earlier post is a admirable to inform the readers about the reason behind the whole issue which says “a character in Lahore with Love very closely resembled, by name and description, an individual citizen in Pakistan”.

Obviously there must be many more people in Pakistan with whom the character must be resembling because the book has been written in that background. To depict a society, a writer has to select/pick characters from that particular society. I am sure she could not, even if she wished to, choose a character from New York for her book written about Lahore.

I fully support the author and request SU Press to lift the ban on this book to afford the reading opportunity to all those who wish to benefit from her book.

---

**Swaralipi Nandi**  
**Kent State University**  
**Friday, Nov 12 15:43 PM**

I have been fortunate to post a review of the book and been appreciated by the author herself, for “getting the book at so many levels”. Indeed the book itself is so intricately written that it will be unfair to call it just a memoir. It is at once the story of an evolving nation and its people, of a simple tale of friendships as well as the complexities of a metropolitan postcolonial critic. Her girlfriends thus cease to be reminiscences of actual persons, they embody the multiple facets of Pakistani womanhood. To ban the book for slandering real people is a gross misreading of the book itself--for it never claims to re-create those real people in the first place! I strongly condemn this ban, not only as a believer of artistic license, but also because it overlooks the larger picture that the book so artfully creates.

—

**Bina Sharif/**  
**New York City**  
**Friday, Nov 12 03:08 AM**

Nothing should be banned especially books. Does any one who ban books understand the word,”IQRA” ?

“READ” “RECITE” Who will be able to read or recite if the word is not printed controversy or no controversy.

Imagine how powerful the written word is!

Every one is threatened by it. For God’s sake it’s 21st Century.

—

**Lubna Sheikh**  
**California**  
**Thursday, Nov 11 23:36 PM**

Enjoyed reading your memoir.

Thanks to Mad and Syracuse it has brought more publicity to your Great Book!

**Sarah White**  
**University of North Texas**  
**Thursday, Nov 11 17:09 PM**

I have been one of the lucky ones who were able to obtain a copy of *Lahore With Love* before Syracuse Press pulled it from the shelves. Not only is this book a wonderful read but I found it to be very politically informative for a sadly under-educated westerner such as myself. Fawzia Afzal-Khan supplies a feminist voice for thousands who cannot utter such sentiments for themselves while providing a testament to the integrality of the bonds that women forge as they come of age. The news of the decision to remove the book from publication deeply saddened me; the justifications for that action that the director of Syracuse Press has offered on this blog angers me. At the very opening of her text Fawzia Afzal-Khan offers the readers the explanation that no given character is any one person but a conglomerate of remembrances. The requirements to satisfy a libel suit include that the document in question be a false statement of fact about the defamed and must be understood to be of and concerning the “defamed” and intended to harm their reputation. Additionally, it is difficult to put stock into there being a strong basis for a libel/character defamation lawsuit in light that Ms. Afzal-Khan will apparently be able to recommence the publication efforts on her own; indicating that a legally valid cease-and-desist order has not yet been produced. I appreciate Director Pfeiffer’s attempt to shed some perspective on this situation but Syracuse’s decision still reeks of cowardice. Find this book and read it a million times over, it is worth the effort.

---

**George F Roberson**  
**Amherst, Denver, Tangier**  
**<http://collaborativemedia.blogspot.com/>**  
**Thursday, Nov 11 16:22 PM**

This is an unfortunate set-back, but Fawzia is a pioneer who will not be stifled. Even as ‘traditional’ publishing withers (for a variety of reasons), voices like Fawzia’s must rise from the ashes harnessing new methods: congratulations to Fawzia for finding ways forward through community and new media.

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**Zahra Ali**

**Thursday, Nov 11 14:06 PM**

I am sad to hear about Fawzia Afzal-Khan's book being banned from the Syracuse press. It upsets me that I can't get a copy to read, but from what I have heard it is a great book. I hope that it becomes available again soon.

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**Shakil Ahmed**

**Lahore**

**Thursday, Nov 11 06:58 AM**

I really enjoyed reading this book. It is certainly a good addition in a new style of writing a memoir. Actually Fawzia Khan is a rebel from the traditional way of thinking so she reflects all her rebellious ideas in this masterpiece. I am reading this book repeatedly and increasing my knowledge about women issues as well. Read it at all costs!

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**Sarah Singh**

**New York**

**<http://www.theskybelow.com>**

**Wednesday, Nov 10 23:42 PM**

Isn't it the expected structure of a memoir to reflect one's experience/personal history?

I look forward to giving "Lahore with Love" as gifts in the new year!

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**Alice Pfeiffer, Dir. of SU Press**  
**Syracuse University**  
**Wednesday, Nov 10 19:48 PM**

I understand that the book *Lahore with Love* has been a topic of discussion on this blog. As Director of the SU Press, I want to offer some perspective on this topic.

Several months ago, the SU Press became aware that a character in *Lahore with Love* very closely resembled, by name and description, an individual citizen in Pakistan. Upon review, the Press found the representation of the character in the book was virtually identical to this citizen, and that the portrayal raised very serious concerns of libel and defamation of character.

The Press discussed these concerns with Dr. Afzal-Khan. She initially offered to revise the book, but later withdrew that offer. After ongoing discussions, both parties ultimately chose to end the contract, as often happens when authors and publishers have issues that cannot be resolved.

SU Press very much recognizes Dr. Afzal-Khan's right to publish her book and the effort she undertook in authoring it. Indeed, SU Press offered to transfer full rights to the book, without cost, to her should she wish to obtain a new publisher. It is our understanding that Dr. Afzal-Khan has done that, and we wish her well moving forward.

Sincerely,  
Alice Pfeiffer  
Director, SU Press

—

**Magid Shihade**  
**Birzeit, Palestine**  
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:53 PM**

Of course, will support you on this. Just curious to know what the controversy/legal case is about?

—

**Nawal El Saadawi**  
**Cairo, Egypt**  
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:49 PM**

Please add my name to people supporting you.

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**Robert JC Young**  
**New York University**  
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:47 PM**

Coraggio Fawzia! As always, attempts to ban books only lead to their wider circulation.

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**K. D. Verma**  
**Editor, South Asian Review**  
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:45 PM**

You have my full support in your fight for freedom of expression. I am very puzzled by the untoward actions of those who want to suppress a writer's freedom. Undoubtedly, you have written a very good book and it has received excellent reviews.

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**Amritjit Singh**  
**Ohio University, United States**  
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:44 PM**

You have our full support and we hope the book will march to success despite this bump in the road.

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**Khurram Khiraam Siddiqui**  
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:42 PM**

Its really disappointing to know about the behaviour of a press in the most developed country of the world. A book of memoir may contain many things which may cause displeasure to others but it doesnot lessen its literary worth and artisitic value. Once the press had published that book it should have stood by you. It will cause no harm to you as we all support you as an excellent and bold writer. we hope that you will continue writing with same strength and vitality.

Regards,

—

**Farida Saeed**  
**New York**  
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:38 PM**

Please support Fawzia in defending her book. All of us here revere the value of free speech -- which is under threat for Fawzia's book!  
(former President, Kinnaird College Old Girls association, USA NY chapter)

—

**Imran**  
**Wednesday, Nov 10 16:36 PM**

Really sorry to hear about this really unfortunate and bizarre situation regarding your book Fawzia. We luckily have 3 signed copies of the book and really enjoyed it. I hope your publisher reconsiders their decision.

I read the article you had attached—a really super article. What has become of our lovely Pakistan. What a tragedy.

—

**Afshan Qureshi**

**NY**

**Wednesday, Nov 10 15:41 PM**

Its interesting what a smart way to get more attention and prominence too. It's too bad that if the person who is suing wanted to remain anonymous they should not have brought out the fact so publicly either and in this manner confirming that it definitely was them and so removing any shadow of doubt about who it could be as the whole world is not aware of it. Maybe Pakistani' and a few others. She could have utilized this book as a venue for stepping up the pressure to be able to perform in more places. Definitely sad its from a person who take real live situations in drama form to get message across to the people via her theater format. Does this mean she will not take situations and recreate them in her her shows; so someone who has gone thro exact situation would stand up and say she did it on them and therefore want to sue her?

I do say you should stand up to it an din fact too bad that Syracuse finds her a threat to contend. On the other hand if she considers that she is a public figure and as such should be aware of consequences for having made that choice. Of all people she should encourage openness and freedom of speech in books as much as she wants freedom to show via theater.

I for one got the book via amazon and as painful as parts are to read it is definitely what the times were and are from transplanted Pakistanis from that era in Lahore as I knew it and lived it then.

—

**Marvin Carlson**

**Graduate Center, CUNY**

**Wednesday, Nov 10 14:27 PM**

I am astonished and saddened by the actions of the Syracuse University Press, which betray the basic obligations of university publishing houses and I hope Fawzia's important work will be quickly made available by from some more responsible source.

—

**Shemeem Abbas**  
**SUNY/Purchase College**  
**<http://www.shemeem.com>**  
**Wednesday, Nov 10 14:21 PM**

Dear Fawzia:

I attended your reading of *Lahore, With Love* at the Hudson Valley Writers' Workshop. I loved the humor and will use the book for my courses at SUNY/Purchase beginning spring 2011.

Shemeem Burney Abbas  
Juanita and Joseph Leff Distinguished Professor  
Department of Political Science  
SUNY/Purchase

—

**Mahmood Mamdani**  
**Columbia University**  
**Wednesday, Nov 10 11:15 AM**

It is appalling that a university press would negate the results of its own peer review process in the face of external political pressure.

—

**Piya Chatterjee**  
**Riverside, CA**  
**Wednesday, Nov 10 05:03 AM**

What a bizarre, yet familiar, theatre of the absurd--desi-amriki-style. I am appalled at the way that Syracuse University Press buckled under this kind of crude blackmail, and extortion drama. What does this say about US academic publishers and their capacities--or incapacities--to stand up to such egregious and dangerous attacks on both academic and creative freedom? Something needs to be written about that. It is this kind of work--of longing and loss-- of stories that expose the sexual/gendered/religious and class hypocrisies of our societies that need to be told--to be shouted from the rooftops. I hope the book finds another publisher--and is read widely.

**Faegheh Shirazi**  
**University of Texas at Austin**  
**Wednesday, Nov 10 04:13 AM**

Last Spring Dr. Afzal Khan was a guest in my class reading a chapter from her book. I heard so many positive words from my students about what they heard. I have read the book and I feel that if we talk about the freedom of speech it really has to be practiced and not to be hushed or halted if we hear things that we personally do not like. I hope this madness stops soon.

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**Henry Louis Gates, Jr.**  
**Harvard University**  
**Wednesday, Nov 10 03:21 AM**

Of course we will support you, dear Fawzia. How horrendously you have been treated.

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**Hasnain Khan**  
**University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada**  
**<http://hasnainkhan.wordpress.com/>**  
**Wednesday, Nov 10 01:47 AM**

Immigrating to Canada as a twelve year old in 2000 was a shocking experience. The new culture wasn't to blame. Rather, the shock was due to the hypocrisy and the untruths peddled by the Pakistani public education system that now lay open before me. Reading was, is, and will remain my first love - since as long as I can remember! But even this obsession with reading did not reveal the truth to me so long as I remained enveloped by Zia's legacy in the Pakistani public school system, its textbooks, newspapers, and almost all other cultural products.

Having read the 'offending chapter,' I am confident that what Dr. Fawzia Afzal-Khan has written must be made available, at all costs. An entire generation's social and political beliefs and values are founded upon lies and deceit in Pakistan.

Support for *Lahore with Love*

Preventing this book from being published and widely read would only add to the sanitization of history that has already occurred in Pakistan and with devastating impacts.