Role of the United States in the 1971 War
Implications for India–US Relations

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The India–Pakistan War of 1971 happened at the time when the US was developing a new balance of power relationship in Asia with US-China-Pakistan at its core. This new balance of power initiative was based on the United States' 'Opening to China' through secret diplomacy with the help of Pakistan, and this resulted in a convergence of interests of US, China and Pakistan. The extraordinary similarity of perceptions and approaches of the US and China to the crisis, and the US military aid to Pakistan emboldened the Pakistani military to continue repression in the East Pakistan and wage a war against India. When the 1971 war started, the US openly supported Pakistan at the cost of basic human rights and democratic values. The US dispatched the warship 7th Fleet to support a military dictatorship, President Yahya Khan, and to threaten a democratic country, India. Though the 13-day war ended with a decisive victory for India and Bangladesh was liberated from Pakistan's military rulers, the role that the US played during the war deeply affected India–US relations and continues to shape their ties. This article aims to analyse and examine the major reasons behind the United States and India's divergent perceptions and approaches to the India–Pakistan War of 1971. It examines the different foreign policy goals, ambitions and perspectives of the two countries during this period and their implications for the war and India–US relations.

Keywords: *East Pakistan Crisis, US Military Aid to Pakistan, US 'Opening to China', Balance of Power, India–Pakistan War, US 7th Fleet, Indo-Soviet Treaty, Foreign Policy Perceptions and Approaches*

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Introduction

India–US relations have transformed over the last two decades with the two countries having upgraded their relations to a 'comprehensive global strategic partnership' and their perceptions and interests are converging on a wide range of areas, including at bilateral, regional and global levels. However, this was not the case always, as they remained at loggerheads over a number of areas and their relationship was often characterised as 'estranged democracies'. The 1971 India–Pakistan War is one such example.

The crisis in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) led to the India–Pakistan War of 1971, also known as the Bangladesh Liberation War. The war started on 3 December 1971 with 'Operation Chengiz Khan', when the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) launched pre-emptive air strikes on 11 north-western Indian airfields, including in Kashmir, Punjab and Agra. The very next day, on 4 December, the then US Ambassador to the UN, George H.W. Bush, who later served as the forty-first US president, brought up the issue at the UN Security Council (UNSC), where he accused India of being responsible for the war, and proposed a ceasefire and withdrawal of troops. After President Richard Nixon failed in his efforts to end the conflict, he ordered the US Navy's 7th Fleet on 10 December to enter into the Bay of Bengal to threaten the Indian activities.

This move by the Nixon Administration marked the lowest point in India–US relations, and the scars it created never left the Indian psyche. In response to this move, India activated Article IX of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, which called for immediate consultations and appropriate measures in the event of a threat of attack from outside on any of the two countries. Following which, the Soviet Union sent a list of ships from Vladivostok towards the Bay of Bengal. The sending of the 7th Fleet by the US became a mere political but not an effective military measure. Defying US pressure, India signed the Treaty with the Soviet Union, the chief foe of the US, for 20 years on 9 August 1971 that assured India of military and diplomatic support in the event of a war with Pakistan, which seemed inevitable at that time.

Meanwhile, the US established its relations with China with the help of Pakistan, India's foe, which resulted in a convergence of US–China–Pakistan's interests, a move that India perceived as a serious security threat. Moreover, on 14 December 1971, columnist Jack Anderson published the minutes of Washington Special Action Group (WSAG) meetings of

2, 4 and 6 December 1971, revealing National Security Advisor (NSA) Henry Kissinger's statement to the WSAG relaying President Nixon's strong pressure to 'tilt' towards Pakistan.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered a unilateral ceasefire on 16 December after around 93,000 Pakistani soldiers surrendered to the Mukti Bahini and the Indian Army in Dhaka, and the war ended on 17 December. The 13-day war was one of the shortest wars in history, which ended with a decisive and glorious victory for India, and Bangladesh was liberated from Pakistan's military rulers. The US recognised Bangladesh in April 1972 and established its diplomatic relations with Bangladesh in May 1972. However, the role that the US played during the 1971 war deeply affected India–US relations and it continues to shape their ties to this day. With this background, the article aims to analyse and examine the major reasons behind the divergent perceptions and approaches of the US and India towards the India–Pakistan War of 1971. It examines the different foreign policy goals, ambitions and perspectives of the two countries during this period and their overall implications for the war and India–US relations.

Divergent Foreign Policy Goals, Ambitions and Perspectives

India and the United States shared a mutually suspicious relationship following India's independence in 1947 till the beginning of the 1971 war, which was mostly due to the different foreign policy goals, ambitions and perspectives of the two countries. It was because of their divergent perceptions and approaches that they could not develop strong bilateral relations, despite having several overlapping political and strategic interests. The US foreign policy prioritised to contain communism and desired to create blocs of military allies to prevent the advancement of communism, in which India was not interested.

India has rejected this policy of alignment from the very beginning and has remained officially non-aligned. India's professions of non-alignment had no appeal for the US Administrations which only strengthened US' suspicions about India. Importantly, the US energies 'were largely focused on the economic and security problems of Western Europe'.[1] South Asia, particularly India, was not considered important to the US in its major foreign policy decisions of that time, including containment of communism, maintenance of international peace, security and stability.[2]

India's decision to not join the US-led military blocks attracted considerable criticism from the Washington. The US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles termed India's non-alignment policy as an 'immoral' policy. However, the major factors that encouraged India to adopt a foreign policy strategy of non-alignment were the desire for economic development, the nature of Indian political leadership, the character of Indian public opinion, the exigencies of security and political stability.[3] This policy was also derived from its desire to pursue an independent foreign policy free of external influence and the realisation that the developmental needs of a newly independent state would not permit heavy defence expenditure.

Moreover, India and the US differed on each other's role in world politics. Indian leaders, particularly Jawaharlal Nehru believed that India would be able to acquire an international political and moral role by abstaining from bloc politics.[4] Hence, rather than looking for an ally, India preferred a minimal superpower presence in the South Asian region. While the US branded India as a Soviet supporter, India considered the US as a hegemonic power.

India–US relations briefly improved during the 1962 Sino-Indian War. The US provided military and diplomatic support to India to counter Chinese aggression. The spontaneous US arms' assistance to India during the Sino-Indian War created goodwill for America amongst Indians. Then US Ambassador to India, John Kenneth Galbraith noted in his journal that the US support to India significantly enhanced 'American prestige' overnight and it was regarded as 'a first friend'.[5] However, this strong pro-American feeling began to evaporate, as India gradually recovered from the shock of the unexpected Chinese attack and as a sharp reaction set in because of the joint pressure of the US and the UK on India and Pakistan to hold a series of meetings for resolution of the Kashmir issue.

Then US Undersecretary of State, Chester Bowles observed that this was like taking advantage of Indians extremity to influence them to take actions they did not want to take.[6] Chester Bowles wrote that 'We had also—rather ineptly—seized upon India's acute need for US assistance as a lever to force India to make concessions to the Pakistanis in regard to Kashmir, which no democratic Indian Government could make and survive.'[7]

However, the US perceptions and attitudes towards the Sino-Indian War were largely determined by its negative image of China and strategic

calculations.[8] The US Administration knew that if immediate military aid was not provided to India, then the Soviet Union could make political capital out of India's difficulties, which would facilitate the extension and intensification of communist influence in the Indian subcontinent. It demonstrated that the US was prepared to help India only to such an extent that did not undermine its own security and strategic interests both within the framework of its global as well as regional diplomacy.

The US policy towards India was also influenced by political considerations. As the world's biggest democracy, India was perceived as being important to America's long-term interests. The US policy makers insisted that every effort be made then onwards to assist the countries of South Asia within their capabilities to maintain non-communist governments. They did not wish that India should fall into the Soviet or Chinese spheres of influence. Senator John F. Kennedy called for urgent US participation in this contest to help India in its role as a 'counter' to communist China.[9] He declared that 'no thoughtful citizen' could ignore the US' 'stake in the survival of free government in India,' because 'India stood as the only effective competitor to China'.[10]

Above all, the US–Pakistan relationship became one of the main sources of conflict between India and the US. Since the beginning of Cold War, the US had been looking for new allies in Asia to contain the Soviet Union and China. India's continued adherence to the non-alignment policy and its decision to not join any military alliance, left no option for the US but to turn towards Pakistan. Pakistan's geographical location, its proximity to China and its position below Russia's belly was considered ideal for bases from where the US could operate. Pakistan provided the US a reliable friend in the region, and the US in turn provided Pakistan a security umbrella, including military and financial aid.

Pakistan and the US signed the Mutual Defence Assistance Pact in May 1954, despite strong opposition from India. In addition to this, Pakistan also joined the US-sponsored military alliances—the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in 1954 and the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) in 1955. It was however the remittance of US military aid to Pakistan as an important frontline US ally in South Asia that further alienated India from the US. India protested on the ground that Pakistan had no intention of using the arms aid against China or Russia and that the arms would only be used against India, which proved to be true in the 1965 India–Pakistan War. These arguments by India cut no ice because America's strategic interests demanded alignment with a willing Pakistan.

By the time the 1971 war started, India–US relations reached its lowest point. Henry Kissinger in his memoirs, *The White House Years* noted that the US relations with India reached a state of 'strained cordiality' by 1971.[11] This was despite the fact that there had been a strong American viewpoint that emphasised on the commonality between US and Indian foreign policy interests because of their commitments to democratic values, basic human rights, and willingness to cooperate on important bilateral or international issues. The economic and cultural ties were considered to be brighter spots in an otherwise indifferent relationship, and yet these were dependent on political and strategic relations. The US foreign policy towards India was largely characterised by the application of a global strategy focusing on the 'structure of superpower relationships'.[12] Therefore, the basic problem of India–US relations remained in the divergent foreign policy goals, perspectives and interests of the two countries. In essence, India and the US disagreed on key national security issues, which were considered vital to each other.[13] While the US took a global perspective on its relationships with South Asian countries, India perceived problems from a regional and national security standpoint.

India and the US' Perceptions and Approaches to the East Pakistan Crisis

India and the US viewed the East Pakistan crisis from different perspectives. Their divergent foreign policy goals and approaches to the crisis did not allow the kind of cooperation that was required to resolve the crisis amicably and, the bilateral relations strained on this critical issue. While India supported the Awami League (AL) leaders and the Mukti Bahini, the US sided with the government of Pakistan, which was committing brutal genocide in the East Pakistan. India requested the US to pressurise Pakistan to agree for a political settlement so that the refugees could return to their homes, as their continued presence was a threat to the Indian economy, as also to the peace, stability and security of India. However, the US treated the problem as an internal affair of Pakistan. It took global balance of power approach to the crisis and used Pakistan as a channel for its new China initiative.

India's Perceptions and Approaches to the East Pakistan Crisis

The 1971 India–Pakistan War took place against the backdrop of tensions between the West Pakistan (now Pakistan) and the Bengali-

majority East Pakistan. The crisis started soon after the announcement of the Pakistan National Assembly election results in December 1970, which came as a big shock for President Yahya Khan and his supporters. Nobody had anticipated Awami League's total and decisive victory. Under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, the Awami League (AL) won 160 seats out of 162 seats in Pakistan's Eastern wing and seven women's seats who were indirectly elected. With a total of 167 seats, AL secured absolute majority in the National Assembly of 313 seats. On the other hand, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was able to win only 88 seats, including five women's seats indirectly elected and emerged as the second largest party. This loss of political power was devastating for West Pakistan's military, political and bureaucratic apparatus. On 1 March 1971, President Yahya postponed the National Assembly indefinitely. It was set to open on 3 March. This outraged the AL leaders who took to the streets demanding that West Pakistan's leaders respect the election results. However, President Yahya with his political interest of staying in power delayed the transfer of power to the legitimately elected representative Mujibur Rehman to form a government at the centre, paving the way for a deeper political crisis in the country.

After the collapse of talks between President Yahya, PPP leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and AL leader Mujibur Rehman to resolve the crisis peacefully, on 25 March 1971, the Pakistan Army led by Governor and Chief Martial Law Administrator of East Pakistan, Lt Gen Tikka Khan, who later became Pakistan's first Chief of Army Staff (COAS), carried out 'Operation Searchlight' to curb the Bengali nationalist movement in East Pakistan.[14] A large number of Bengalis—Muslims, Hindus, businessmen, intellectuals and students—were killed during this operation. While Mujibur Rahman was taken into custody by the Martial Law Authorities (MLAs) on the charge of 'treason' along with his principal followers, other supporters were suppressed when the arrest took place.

India was taken aback when Yahya scuttled the democratic process to deprive AL leaders of their rightful claim to form the government and resorted to a brutal suppression of the people. The Government of India expressed shock at the ghastly atrocities by Pakistan in Dhaka and conveyed sympathy for the hapless people of East Bengal.[15] However, the Pakistan Army's military operations in Dhaka continued without interruption and by 27 March when the curfew was lifted approximately 75 to 85 per cent of the population left Dhaka. The History Division,

Ministry of Defence, Government of India, in its study *Official History of the 1971 India–Pakistan War* observed that 'The massacre continued by way of indiscriminate mass killing, loot, arson and rape under a policy of annihilation. Within the next seven days, they burned down most of the populated areas in and around Dhaka'.[16]

The West Pakistani Army declared that it had restored the government's authority over the entire East Pakistan province, but it was the beginning of a bloody civil war. Massive human rights violations were reportedly perpetrated by the Pakistani Army. On 26 March, shortly after the Pakistan military crackdown, an officer of the 8th Battalion of the East Bengal Regiment (EBR) at Chittagong, Major Ziaur Rahman, in a broadcast on 'Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra' had announced the establishment of an independent Bangladesh.[17] Mujibur Rehman, while giving a call for a general strike on 1 March after President Yahya postponed the National Assembly, had warned that 'You will see history made if the conspirators fail to come to their senses.'[18]

Following the West Pakistani Army's crackdown in East Bengal, a large number of refugees, around 10 million, fled East Bengal and entered the Indian states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and West Bengal. A large number of trained Pakistani agents, along with the refugees, had also entered India, which created major economic, social, political, administrative and security problems in India.[19] In addition to this, Pakistan's friendly relations with the US and China aggravated the security concerns of India. As a result, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, External Affairs Minister (EAM) Swaran Singh and other key members of the Cabinet went on a tour of West European countries, the US and others to inform them about the magnitude of Pakistani army's brutal crackdown in East Bengal and its implications on India. Nevertheless, Gandhi and her cabinet's sincere diplomatic efforts failed to convince the Western powers, especially the US, to use their power to persuade Pakistani military rulers to find a solution to the crisis by means of political compromise with the Bengali leaders, so that around 10 million refugees could leave India.

Meanwhile, driven out from East Bengal by the Pakistani Army, the Bengali deserters from the Pakistan military, para-military, police forces, thousands of AL and other volunteers who had taken refuge in India were steeled into the 'freedom fighters', known as the 'Mukti Bahini'. With every repressive action that the West Pakistani army took, there was birth of new freedom fighters.[20] They were the first to start hitting

back at the West Pakistan army, and skirmishes continued all along the border. As the situation unfolded, India first adopted a policy of 'watch and wait', and then took a cautious stand[21] with regard to the recognition of Bangladesh, despite a strong demand for the recognition of Bangladesh by political parties and public in India. But as the condition continued to deteriorate, it got involved in the crisis. It provided political and moral support to the Bengali people, and began to train the Mukti Bahini to help them in their fight for justice and freedom. Consequently, a new and grave international crisis descended on the world stage.

United States' Perceptions and Approaches to the East Pakistan Crisis

The East Pakistan crisis came at a time when the Nixon Administration was set on a new course of developing a new power equation in Asia with US–China–Pakistan at its core. The Administration thought that the new balance of power would be more acceptable in Asia and would enable the US to continue exercising its dominating influence in the region.[22] The new balance of power initiative was based on the Administration's 'Opening to China' through Pakistan channel. In the past, Pakistan's close relations with China had caused tensions between Washington and Islamabad. But under the new initiative, the Nixon Administration took advantage of Islamabad's good relationship with Beijing to convey the Administration's interest in normalising US relations with China.[23] Pakistan became the main channel for passing messages between the US and Chinese leaders when the US–China relations were virtually non-existent. As a result, when the East Pakistan crisis came, the Nixon Administration chose to ignore West Pakistan Army's brutalities in East Bengal. They did not put pressure on President Yahya to stop killing its people and find a political solution with the AL leaders to end the crisis, because they did not want to complicate their new China initiative. In this regard, NSA Kissinger in his memoirs said that the Nixon Administration's initial policy objective was to avoid adding any complications to its China initiative.[24] The ensuing events in the South Asian region and the Administration's perceptions and approaches to the crisis should be seen from this viewpoint.

On 26 March 1971, a day after West Pakistan Army's crackdown in East Bengal, in his Memorandum to President Nixon on situation in Pakistan, Kissinger said that the West Pakistani army has sufficient strength to curb the 'East Pakistan secession movement'. He however doubted the ability of Pakistani army to sustain control in Dhaka over an

extended period.[25] There were about 850 Americans, including 250 US officials and dependents, in East Pakistan when the crackdown began. The immediate goal of the Administration was to ensure their safety and evacuation. Assessing the US policy option of whether or not to involve itself in the crisis, Kissinger suggested to President Nixon the advantage of not getting involved in the crisis by stating that this would not prematurely harm US relationship with West Pakistan.[26]

The WSAG in its meeting on 26 March also reviewed the situation in Pakistan where they supported the Administration's policy of non-involvement in the crisis and recommended that the US should delay any request for recognition of an independent East Pakistani government that might be forthcoming.[27] From the very beginning, it was fully known to the Nixon Administration that the resistance movement will continue despite the arrest of the AL leaders as there was 'tremendous popular sentiment behind them'. In the same meeting, Kissinger predicted that the civil war in the East Pakistan would eventually result in 'independence fairly quickly'. However, the Administration chose not to undertake active policy to warn President Yahya against the imminent civil war. Kissinger in fact pointed out that President Nixon did not want to be accused of breaking up Pakistan. The Administration thus knew that the situation in East Pakistan was poor and it was unlikely that the Pakistan Army would be able to control it over an extended period.

In a series of cables known as Blood telegram, the US Consulate General in Dhaka raised alarm about the atrocities committed by the West Pakistan Army in East Bengal. On 28 March, the Consul General in Dhaka, Archer K. Blood reported that they were horrified witnesses to 'a reign of terror' by the Pakistani army in Dhaka.[28] On 29 March, the Consulate reported that the Pakistani army was burning houses and then shooting people when they came out. Hindus were particular focus of the campaign.[29] On 31 March, Blood reported that Pakistani army had killed about four to six thousand people since the crackdown began on 25 March, and said that Pakistani army's objective 'to hit hard and terrorize' the Bengali people had been fairly successful.[30]

US Ambassador to India, Kenneth Keating also expressed his deep shock and concern over Pakistani army's brutal repression of Bengali people with the use of US military equipment. He called for the US to promptly and publicly deplore the Pakistan Army's brutality and announce the abrogation of 'one-time exception' military supply agreement with Pakistan.[31] The US Embassy in Islamabad also expressed

its sense of horror and anger at the Pakistani Army's brutal crackdown, but it suggested that it was undesirable to raise the issue to an international political level.[32] President Nixon and his NSC team paid no heed to the alarming situation and rather adopted a 'quiet diplomacy'. They never publicly spoke against the atrocities done by the West Pakistan Army. In a telephonic conversation with Kissinger, Nixon agreed with the position taken by the US Embassy in Islamabad, and said that 'I wouldn't put out a statement praising it, but we're not going to condemn it either.'[33] In another conversation, President Nixon said that the US should stay out of this crisis and do nothing as he felt there was nothing for the US to do.[34]

But key officials from his administration did not agree with him. In one of the dissent cables, the Consular Staffs in Dhaka complained that the US has failed to condemn the Pakistani army's suppression of democracy and atrocities in East Bengal.[35] Terming Pakistan army's ghastly crackdown as 'genocide', Consulate General Blood questioned the US foreign policy objectives and moral leadership at this time of crisis.[36] The Consul General Blood and his colleagues in Dhaka urged the Administration to adhere to the traditional US foreign policy and publicly condemn Pakistan's atrocities as they were unaware of the role Pakistan was playing in the secret negotiations with China.

When US Secretary of State William Rogers received this damning telegram from the Consulate in Dhaka, he informed President Nixon that the Consulate in Dhaka was in 'open rebellion'. This however did not bring any change in the Administration's policy towards the East Pakistan crisis, though President Nixon and Kissinger expressed concern that the US might get involved in the crisis. Kissinger's assessment was that if they will support the Bengali cause then the West Pakistan will turn against the US.[37] Nixon did not want Pakistan to turn against them, especially in the middle of his China initiative, which he felt would be a big mistake.

On 27 April, Pakistani Ambassador to the US, Agha Hilaly delivered a key message to the White House from the Chinese Premier Zhou En-lai green lighting a US delegation to visit China. With President Nixon's China initiative poised to take shape, the Nixon Administration was less interested in upsetting Yahya. As a result, when Kissinger sent a memo to Nixon on 28 April on the situation in East Pakistan and defining the future policy option towards Pakistan, Nixon replied, 'Don't squeeze Yahya at this time',[38] because he was arranging Kissinger's first secret visit to China. In this endeavour, Kissinger went to Beijing in July

1971 via Pakistan where Premier Zhou told him that China supports the Pakistan's position on the crisis and criticised India for the present situation. Kissinger responded to Zhou that the Nixon administration also supports Pakistan on the issue.[39] On 15 July, Nixon astonished the world by announcing Kissinger's China mission and his own upcoming visit to Beijing. Then, in a handwritten letter to President Yahya in August 1971, Nixon personally thanked Yahya for his assistance in establishing contacts between Washington and Beijing.[40] These exchanges took place in the middle of the East Pakistan crisis while Pakistani army's killing and repression continued in the East Pakistan.

In a recent interview to *The Atlantic,* Kissinger explained that the East Pakistan crisis was essentially a popular resistance by Bengali people for achieving independence to which West Pakistan leaders responded with extreme violence. He said that by publicly condemning this violence would have destroyed the Pakistani channel which was needed to complete the opening to China.[41] The opening to China was considered essential to a potential diplomatic recasting of the Nixon Administration policy towards the Soviet Union and the pursuit of peace in Asia. In the process it forgot the basic principles of US foreign policy and supported a military dictatorship in Pakistan to pursue its objectives. However, the US Congress, intellectuals, public and media increasingly showed their alertness and sensitivity to the politics of murder being practised by the West Pakistani rulers on their own people.

India–US Dialogue on the East Pakistan Crisis

During the East Pakistan crisis, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her government officials met several times with President Nixon and his Administration officials where the two sides discussed issues relating to the crisis, including the Pakistan military's atrocities, the refugee problem, military aid to Pakistan, US opening to China, and necessary steps required to resolve the crisis. However, their divergent foreign policy goals, perspectives and approaches did not help in developing cooperation on the issue, instead bilateral relations strained considerably. Ambassador Keating, during his meeting with Indian Foreign Secretary T.N. Kaul on 27 March, conveyed his administration's position that the East Pakistan crisis was an internal matter of Pakistan and that it should be resolved internally.[42] However, it was no more an internal matter of Pakistan and also not a mere Indo-Pak issue. Though it was very much a problem for India as a large number of refugees were fleeing into India,

thereby creating economic, social, political, administrative and security challenges, but it was now an international issue.

In May 1971, Gandhi in her letter to President Nixon spoke about the continuing Pakistan army's repression in East Bengal, pouring of refugees into the Indian states and its impact on India. She urged the US to use its 'power and prestige' to persuade Pakistan military rulers to find a political settlement.[43] Then Indian Ambassador to the US, L.K. Jha warned NSA Kissinger that the Indians might send back some refugees as guerrillas to East Pakistan, unless Pakistani military rulers take visible actions towards a political settlement. Kissinger responded that President Nixon has 'personal influence' with the Pakistanis, which he would use privately to persuade them to move towards a political settlement.[44] Nixon however did not use his 'personal influence' or US power to persuade Pakistanis to find a political settlement. During a conversation with Nixon when Kissinger said, 'the Indians are massing troops' at the East Pakistan border while the US was willing to help India in its humanitarian efforts but is opposed to any military action. Then Nixon responded angrily that the US will cut off economic aid to India if it takes military action.[45]

Kissinger, during his July 1971 visit to India, shared Washington's concerns and sympathy about the heavy economic burden placed upon India because of Bengali refugees. During his visit, he discussed the situation in East Bengal, his administration's military aid to Pakistan, and the new China policy. He explained that his administration's opening to China was not aimed against India, rather it would restore peace in the world. In fact, he assured that the US will take it seriously in case of any military action by China against India.[46] In July 1971, Acting Secretary John Irwin and Indian Ambassador Jha discussed these issues in addition to the United Nations' role in addressing the refugee crisis in India.[47] In August 1971, Gandhi in another letter to Nixon said that 'the situation has not improved'. She stated that India was not against the US maintaining 'a constructive relationship with Pakistan'. But she questioned US sincerity in working towards a political settlement of the crisis as well as the logic of US arms supply to Pakistan.[48]

Meanwhile, the number of refugees fleeing from East Pakistan reached over 7.2 million by 31 July, which significantly increased the strain on various aspects of public life in India.[49] As the situation further deteriorated and nearly 10 million refugees entered India by November 1971, Gandhi in her last effort visited several countries, essentially to

persuade US, Britain and other Western powers to pressurise Pakistan to accept negotiations with Mujibur Rehman to find a political settlement of the crisis and to create conditions in which the refugees could return. But her trip was futile, as India failed to convince them to adopt an objective position on the issue.[50] In his memoirs, Nixon recalled that Gandhi's 'visit to Washington came at a critical time.' During his meeting with her in the Oval Office on 4 November, Nixon stressed that another war in South Asia was out of question. He warned consequences of war and the actions that the Chinese, the Soviet Union and the US might take if India initiates a war.[51] The next day, on 5 November, while Kissinger and Nixon were discussing Nixon's conversation with Gandhi, Kissinger said that Indians were starting a war there regardless.[52]

US' Military Aid to Pakistan

One of the major issues between India and the US during the East Pakistan crisis was the Nixon Administration's decision to resume military aid to Pakistan. The US military aid to Pakistan had commenced after Pakistan signed the Mutual Defence Assistance Pact with the US and joined the US led military blocks—SEATO and CENTO. Whenever India protested against the military aid to Pakistan on the grounds that these weapons are not going to be used against the Soviet or China but only against India, the US continued to assure that Pakistan will not use them against India. However, the 1965 India–Pakistan War proved otherwise. In fact, US arms had enabled Pakistan to wage war against India. Faced with strong criticism from the public and the US Congress after the 1965 war, US had announced suspension of the export of lethal weapons systems to both India and Pakistan. However, in October 1970, the Nixon Administration approved the sale of 20 aircraft and 300 armoured personnel carriers worth about $50 million to Pakistan under the 'one-time exception' to the US arms embargo.[53] In a statement in the US Senate on 12 October 1970, Senator William Saxbe said that between 1954 and 1965 the US had given Pakistan military aid worth nearly US$ 2 billion by way of hundreds of tanks, about 700 artillery pieces, about 20 squadrons of F-86 Sabre jets and F-104 Starfighters and other equipment.[54] Besides, the US also provided facilities for construction of airfields, military warehouses and other military infrastructure. The US military alliance policy had caused serious security implications for South Asia, particularly for India, and created mutual distrust between India and the US.

Discussing the implications of military aid to Pakistan, Ambassador Keating, during a conversation with Kissinger and NSC Staff, Harold H. Saunders on 3 June 1971, said that any additional military aid to Pakistan would have serious humanitarian implications in the region since four million refugees had already crossed over to India while the Pakistan army continued to kill Bengalis.[55] Kissinger explained to Keating that President Nixon wanted to hold up the 'one-time exception' military aid to Pakistan, but wanted to supply the military spare parts which were not applicable to the crisis. Referring to a State Department's proposed policy decision memorandum on the military supply to Pakistan, Ambassador Keating noted that this would mean ammunition.

Keating said that this military supply would 'bring terrific criticism on the President's head.' He recognised President Nixon's special friendship with Yahya, but, he said, could not understand his Pakistan policy. He suggested that certain conditions should be attached to any further economic aid to Pakistan and emphasised that necessary steps must be taken towards a political settlement of the crisis so that refugees could return to their homes.[56] President Nixon and Kissinger on 4 June discussed Ambassador Keating's approach to the crisis where they felt that Keating had effectively become an advocate for India.[57] Nixon also had doubts about Keating being able to hold the Administration's policy towards the crisis. When Nixon questioned Keating's approach, Kissinger said that he wanted the US to cut off all economic and military aid to Pakistan and support India in the situation.[58] Nixon and Kissinger however did not follow Keating's suggestions. They underlined the importance of giving more time to Pakistan since it was helping them on their China initiative.[59]

When the conflict grew into an India–Pakistan war, in a series of meetings and conversations from 4 to 16 December 1971, the Nixon Administration discussed third-party transfers of fighter aircrafts to Pakistan. In a memo, US Ambassador to UN Bush reported Kissinger's meetings with the Chinese delegation to the UN on 10 December 1971 where Kissinger encouraged China to provide military support to Pakistan and also informed that military aid to Pakistan was being provided through Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.[60] On 12 December, Alexander Haig told the Chinese Ambassador Huang Hua that his Administration was trying its best to provide fighter aircrafts to Pakistan through Saudi Arabia, Iran and Jordan. He was however disappointed when the Chinese informed him that China would not take any military

action against India.[61] On 14 December, the US Department of State noted that Pakistan might have received 11 F-104 fighter aircrafts from Jordan.[62] In a cable to Kissinger on 15 December, Ambassador Farland informed that Pakistan Government had requested for additional fighter aircrafts for the survival of West Pakistan as the current F-104s and Mig-19s could not stop the Indian advance. On 16 December, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) reported that Pakistan had received a squadron of F-104s from Jordan.

It also reported that India had declared a unilateral ceasefire after unconditional surrender of Pakistani troops in East Bengal.[63] In another cable, US Embassy in Iran reported that three US F-5A fighter aircrafts had arrived in Pakistan to help it fight against India.[64] These cables proved that despite the US arms embargo on Pakistan as well as on India, the Nixon Administration provided military aid to Pakistan both through third parties and also directly.[65] On India's protest against the arms supply to Pakistan, Secretary Rogers in a cable to the US Embassy in India suggested that the Embassy neither confirm nor deny the allegations that the US provided military aid to Pakistan via Iran and Jordan.[66]

India's Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet

India and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation on 9 August 1971,[67] which stipulated immediate mutual consultations in case of an armed attack from outside on any of the two countries. It also accepted under Article IV India's non-alignment policy as an important factor in maintenance of international peace and security. The major reasons behind India's signing of the Treaty, which it had resisted in the past, were the deteriorating situation in East Pakistan; continued influx of refugees to India; President Yahya's weekly war threats to India; the Nixon Administration's unwillingness to stop military supplies to Pakistan; and, the US and China's open support to the military leader Yahya, which were creating a dangerous security situation for India.[68]

The Treaty assured India of military and diplomatic support in the event of a war with Pakistan which was seen as inevitable. At the same time, Kissinger's visit to Beijing in July 1971 gave an indication of normalisation of US–China relations with adverse effects on Soviet Union's strategic posture and global policy. The deteriorating Sino-Soviet

relations also led to the strengthening of the Indo-Soviet relationship, particularly in the field of defence cooperation. India's relationship with Pakistan and China had already declined. These fast-changing strategic realities further facilitated the establishing of a new relationship of trust, confidence and awareness between India and the Soviet Union.[69] The Treaty essentially took care of India's chief apprehension regarding military pressure from the US and China coordinated with the challenge from Pakistan. It permitted India the freedom to militarily counter Pakistan. After signing the Treaty, EAM Swaran Singh on 9 August 1971 said that the Treaty would be a stabilising factor in the South Asia region as it would provide peace, security and development for India and the Soviet Union, as well as for the region as a whole. He underlined that it was not aimed against any third country.[70]

As was expected, the Nixon Administration expressed its resentment over India's signing of the Treaty with the Soviet Union, and considered it an unanticipated and disturbing event in South Asia. It said that the Treaty added dangers and difficulties to the region, and complicated US relations with India and Pakistan. The US Embassy in Moscow, after analysing the Treaty, said that the Treaty consolidated Soviet Union's position in India. At the same time, the Soviets accepted deeper involvement in the South Asian conflict.[71] In a similar vein, Kissinger in his memoirs *The White House Years* assessed that the Treaty provided India a Soviet guarantee against the Chinese intervention if India goes to war with Pakistan. It also opened the door to war in South Asia and the Soviets' involvement in it.[72]

President Nixon viewed India as a Soviet client for the rest of the East Pakistan crisis. In response to the critics of the Indo-Soviet Treaty, Prime Minister Gandhi said, it was strange that those who denounced India's non-alignment policy all along were now criticising the Treaty on the basis of India's policy. Whereas the Treaty itself clearly recognises India's non-alignment policy.[73] India's signing of the Treaty was however a big blow to the US as it saw the Treaty to be the result of deliberate collusion between Moscow and New Delhi.

Failure of Nixon Administration to Resolve the Crisis Politically

President Nixon in his *Annual Report to the US Congress* in February 1972 said that the US did not ignore or support the Pakistani military action in East Bengal.[74] Nonetheless, he and Kissinger did not take any action to stop the Pakistani army's atrocities in East Bengal and never made

any public statements deploring its brutal military repression. Although Nixon in his letter to President Yahya urged to make political concessions in East Bengal, he fell short of pressing Yahya to start negotiations with AL leader Mujibur Rahman.[75] Because of his special relationship with Yahya and Yahya's role in the opening to China, Nixon did not publicly deplore Pakistan's military actions. He thought this would complicate the situation for president Yahya and embarrass him.[76] In another instance, Nixon said that the US would not measure its relationship with Pakistan on the basis of what it had done in East Bengal. By that criteria, the US would have to cut-off ties with all Communist countries because of the slaughter that took place in those countries.[77]

In a memorandum of conversation, Kissinger told Keating that President Nixon had a special friendship with Yahya and that the US cannot make policy towards Pakistan on that basis, but 'it is a fact of life.'[78] Importantly, Kissinger, during his secret meeting with Chinese Ambassador Huang Hua on 10 December, said that the US was not interested in a political settlement of the crisis and they 'will not encourage talks between Pakistan and Bangladesh'.[79] He said that the US objective was 'to protect what is left of Pakistan' from being disinterested as it has happened in the East. Thus, Nixon and Kissinger were singularly unsympathetic to the crisis.

Meanwhile, the influx of nearly 10 million refugees became too much for India to handle and posed a serious concern. The Mukti Bahini was launching guerrilla attacks to fight against Pakistani repression. Eventually tensions between India and Pakistan were uncontrollable. All these causes were intensified by the lack of US public criticism for the root cause of the crisis—the Pakistan military rulers' disregard of the December 1970 national election results, 25 March brutal crackdown in East Bengal and the refugee crisis that followed the carnage. Besides, the lack of a political solution in East Pakistan, the Pakistan Army continued military repression and Indian support to the Mukti Bahini led to the war between India and Pakistan.

Start of the 1971 India–Pakistan War

By May 1971, the US Department of State knew that a war could take place between India and Pakistan. In a memo to President Nixon, the State Department noted three causes for the possible start of India–Pakistan war: (i) continued repression by the Pakistani army and lack of political accommodation in East Bengal, (ii) continued flow of Bengali

refugees into India, and (iii) the Indian support to Bengali Guerrillas.[80] Nixon however stressed that the US would not allow India to use the Bengali refugees as a pretext for starting war. He viewed that some Indian and Pakistani interests might be served by going to war, but it was not in the US' interests as this could imperil its China initiative.[81]

Nixon in his memoirs noted that Gandhi had already made up her mind to attack Pakistan when she met him in Washington in November 1971, but she assured him that she would not.[82] Kissinger in his memoirs stated that Gandhi went to war not because of the US' failure to resolve the crisis, but because of the fear of their success.[83] It was very much clear by this time that India's dialogue with the US would not help resolve the crisis.

The India–Pakistan War began on 3 December when the PAF launched pre-emptive air strikes on north-western Indian airfields under code named 'Operation Chengiz Khan'. In response to the PAF's attacks, Prime Minister Gandhi in her address to the nation called the air strikes a 'declaration of war against India'. Then Indian troops struck back fiercely on both the Western and the Eastern fronts of Pakistan. India's attacks in the Western front were intended to ensure success in the Eastern front where Indian troops with active support from the Mukti Bahini reached Dhaka.

The US Response to the 1971 War

President Nixon was upset when the India–Pakistan war started. He wanted to avoid the war, but he had to support Pakistan as an ally. He contacted Kissinger and during their conversation Nixon said, 'Pakistan thing makes your heart sick',[84] after they warned Prime Minister Gandhi not to start the war. Nixon thought Pakistan's pre-emptive air strikes on the Indian airfields was 'a reckless act' that led India to declare war. Kissinger in his reply said that in any case Pakistan would lose half of their country whether they fight or not.[85] Then they decided to continue their military and diplomatic support to Pakistan. Nixon asked Kissinger to approach China, France and the West Asian states—Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran—to send fighter aircrafts to Pakistan to help it fight against India.[86]

On 4 December, Ambassador George Bush, accused India of being responsible for the war and introduced a seven-point draft resolution (S/10416) in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), which called upon India and Pakistan for immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal

of their armed forces.[87] India expressed its 'disappointment, shock and surprise'[88] over the accusation and tabulation of the resolution. However, China supported the resolution, but it was vetoed by the Soviet Union. Then, the US along with its allies put immense pressure on the Soviets to get India to withdraw troops, but they failed. On 6 December, the day when India recognised Bangladesh Government, the US announced suspension of economic aid to India, including US$ 87.6 million worth of aid that was in the pipeline and US$ 14 million of military equipment. In fact, Kissinger said, they 'have cancelled the entire military equipment line to India', specifically 'all radar equipment for defence in the north'.[89] On 7 December, Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco accused India of holding 'major responsibility for the war'.[90]

US Tilt towards Pakistan

When the India–Pakistan War was going on, the Nixon Administration tilted towards Pakistan in its public statements, supported Pakistan in the UN, supplied military equipment to Pakistan despite US embargoes, suspended economic and military aid to India, and in discussions with China encouraged Beijing to take military action against India. The 'tilt' also involved the dispatch of the US warship 7th Fleet to the Bay of Bengal to threaten the Indian activities. But the Administration publicly denied that they were following any specific anti-India policy. The NSC's Washington Special Action Group meetings however reveal that Kissinger was livid that they were not more responsive to President Nixon's desire to 'tilt' towards Pakistan.

In their efforts to 'tilt' towards Pakistan, the Nixon Administration was not just trying to express its appreciation to the Pakistani military rulers for their help in establishing contacts between Washington and Beijing, but they were also trying to impress the Chinese. The NSC staffer Harold Saunders in an interview revealed that Kissinger said on a number of occasions that Beijing would be watching how Washington treats its ally Pakistan. If Pakistan breaks up what would the Chinese think about US' reliability as an ally.[91] A few days later, syndicated columnist Jack Anderson published the minutes of WSAG meetings of 2, 4 and 6 December 1971, revealing Kissinger's statement to the WSAG relaying President Nixon's strong pressure to 'tilt' towards Pakistan. The US Congress, media and public criticized the Nixon Administration's policy 'tilt' towards Pakistan and handling of the South Asian crisis. The major factors that influenced the Administration's policymaking leading

to the 'tilt' towards Pakistan were Nixon's friendship with President Yahya, the latter's role in his China initiative, and his dislike of the Indians, especially Prime Minister Gandhi.

Collusion of US–China–Pakistan Interests

The emerging US–China–Pakistan axis posed a great security threat to India because of India's already strained relations with both China and Pakistan. Pakistan already had close economic and military relations with China. Nixon's China initiative and the collusion of US–China–Pakistan interests had an impact on the India–Pakistan War. Interestingly, before his secret visit to China, Kissinger had told Ambassador Jha that if China attacks India, Washington's response would be as strong as the 1962 Indo-China War. During his visit to India in July 1971, Kissinger had assured India that in any conflict between India and China, the US will be on India's side. He also said that the US' new relationship with China was not aimed against India.[92] However, after returning from China, Kissinger told Ambassador Jha on 17 July that the US would not involve in the event of war between India and Pakistan even if China takes military action against India in support of Pakistan. Instead, Kissinger, during his secret meeting with the Chinese Ambassador to UN, Huang Hua on 10 December, encouraged Beijing to make military moves against India on its North-Eastern states and assured that the US will not stand by if the Soviets launch attacks against China. He also informed him that the US had moved a number of naval ships, the 7th Fleet, from the Western Pacific towards the Bay of Bengal to support Pakistan.[93] This clearly indicates Washington's duplicity of approach to the crisis, which was of course against India's interest and policy.

Dispatch of the 7th Fleet

When the Indian defence forces launched full-fledged attacks into the East Pakistan, the CIA director, Richard M. Helms warned President Nixon that 'East Pakistan was crumbling'.[94] Then, on 10 December, President Nixon took the decision to dispatch the US Navy's 7th Fleet into the Bay of Bengal, officially to evacuate its citizens from the East Bengal and unofficially to support Pakistan in its war efforts against India. The deployment of the 7th Fleet was however first brought up in an India–Pakistan contingency planning memo in November 1971 where the NSC Staff, Admiral Welander had indicated the approval of

Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) for the deployment of the 7th Fleet in the South Asia crisis.[95]

Then, on 9 December, Kissinger, in his memorandum to President Nixon, mentioned about the deployment of US aircraft carrier where he suggested Nixon to direct the Chairman of the JCS to immediately dispatch the 7th Fleet to the Bay of Bengal under the pretext of evacuating US citizens.[96] This decision came at a time when Pakistan's Western front and Eastern front were crumbling under a coordinated attack by the Indian Navy and Air Force. These attacks by India and the news about the collapse of Pakistani Army at the Eastern front led the Nixon Administration to dispatch the 7th Fleet for contingency purposes.[97] Nixon wanted to save Pakistan from Indian attacks. The deployment of the Fleet was seen as a show of force by the US against India.

India's Response to the 7th Fleet

On 10 December, Indian intelligence intercepted a US message about the marching of the US warship 7th Fleet towards the war zone, Bay of Bengal. Ambassador Jha expressed India's concern over the deployment of the 7th Fleet in the region to the Nixon Administration.[98] In the meantime, based on intelligence intercept, India's MEA assessed that President Nixon had personally taken the decision to accuse India as an 'aggressor' and send the 7th Fleet. The 7th Fleet also had Nixon's blessings to attack Indian Army's communication systems and facilities.[99]

Based on these assessments, the Chief of India's Eastern Naval Command (ENC), Vice Admiral N. Krishnan asked the Indian government to give him the orders to defend the area with the support of Indian Air Force (IAF), following which Prime Minister Gandhi convened a meeting to assess the security implications of the 7th Fleet and the decision was taken to activate the Article IX of the Indo-Soviet treaty which called for immediate mutual consultations and effective measures in the event of a threat of attack to either of the two countries.[100] In response to this move, the Soviet dispatched a naval task force from Vladivostok towards the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal.[101]

On 13 December, Russian Ambassador to India, Nikolai Pegov dismissed the possibilities of the US or China intervening in the war by emphasising that the Russian fleet was also in the Indian Ocean. He assured India that Moscow would counteract any move by the US or China and would not allow the 7th Fleet to interfere.[102] Thus, the Soviet's dispatch of a number of nuclear armed fleets from Vladivostok prevented

the US threat from materialising. Kissinger had cautioned President Nixon about this earlier by stating that given the Soviet factor, 'I must warn you, Mr. President, if our bluff is called, we'll be in trouble... we'll lose.'[103] On 11 December, he briefed Nixon about the presence of Soviet fleet in the Indian Ocean area.[104] Then they took decision to move the 7th fleet away from the area. The 7th Fleet could not come close to Chittagong or Karachi, however, the deployment of the Fleet had generated widespread anti-US feeling in India. Consequently, India–US relations deteriorated considerably.

Pakistani Army's Surrender and the End of the War

The three Indian Chiefs of Staff—Chief of the Army Staff, General S.H.F.J. Manekshaw, Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral S.M. Nanda and Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal P.C. Lal—were in close touch with the situation rapidly unfolding at the Eastern and Western fronts. As Pakistan's forces began to crumble under well-coordinated attacks by the Indian armed forces and the Mukti Bahini at the Eastern front, General Manekshaw, in a radio broadcast told Pakistan's troops to surrender, thereby assuring them of security and safe evacuation from East Bengal. He also told Pakistan's troops that surrendered in East Bengal would be treated with 'the dignity and respect which soldiers are entitled to'.[105] He ordered a suspension of Indian air strikes in the Dhaka area from 5 pm on 15 December until 9 am on 16 December. But he warned that unless the Pakistanis surrendered by then, he would resume his offensive with utmost vigour.[106] He then reiterated his previous assurances made in radio broadcasts, that he would guarantee the safety of all Pakistani military and paramilitary personnel who surrender and would also protect them from any reprisals.

On 14 December, Pakistan's military commander in East Pakistan, Lt Gen A.A.K. Niazi, informed the US Consulate in Dhaka that he wanted to surrender. He however delayed conveying this information because of the assurances given to him by the military leaders in West Pakistan that the US and China would take military action against India, which were evident in the secret Pakistani dispatches. In a secret signal message on 11 December, President Yahya informed Governor A.M. Malik in Dhaka that the US 7th Fleet would very soon be in position.[107]

Lt Gen Niazi was also informed that the Chinese had activated the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA), now Arunachal Pradesh, and the Indians have not announced it for obvious reasons. He was further

informed that the US had put strong pressure internationally on Russia and India.[108] Niazi continued to expect till the last day of the war that the US and China would intervene militarily to support them, but they never did. The major reason behind Beijing's decision to not attack India was that it would invite immediate retaliations from the Soviets because of the Indo-Soviet Treaty that could be tantamount to courting a disaster for Beijing. The US also chose not to attack India realising that the Soviet Fleet was already in the Indian Ocean to counteract. As a result, both the US and China finally chose not to attack India. The Treaty thus stood the test of time.

Once the Pakistani troops became clear that the US and China were not going to fight their war, the dazed and demoralised troops looked eager and relieved as they marched off to surrender areas where they would be protected by the Indian forces from reprisal by Bengali crowds.[109] The Pakistani troops surrendered on 16 December. The chief of India's Eastern Command, Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora and Lt. Gen. Niazi signed the 'instrument of surrender' in a surrender ceremony at the Race Course, Dhaka. As a result of the surrender, around 93,000 Pakistani troops were taken as Prisoners of War (PoW) by India. The news of the surrender and unilateral ceasefire was announced by Prime Minister Gandhi in Parliament. The 13-day war came to an end without a confrontation between the Soviet Union, China and the US; and, Bangladesh was liberated from the Pakistani military rulers. It was one of the shortest wars in history, a glorious and decisive victory for India and a high point of Indian foreign policy. At the same time, it was a humiliating defeat for Pakistan in which they lost half of their country. It was an embarrassing diplomatic setback for the Nixon Administration, especially the way they managed the regional crisis. Above all, it severely damaged the India–US relations and increased the Soviet's influence in India.

Implications for India–US Relations

The role US played during the India–Pakistan War of 1971 left a deep scar on the India–US relationship. A strong and widespread feeling generated in India that the US and Indian perceptions, approaches and interests in the South Asian region did not converge. The US in particular did not bother about Indian sensibilities and core interests. The US had tried to create a military parity between India and Pakistan by providing large-scale military aid to Islamabad, which threatened peace and stability

in the region. The US Administration perceived the crisis from global balance of power perspective while it was a regional issue with limited global implications.[110]

It seemed that a close relationship between the two countries would be highly improbable for a long time to come. However, once the crisis was over and Bangladesh emerged, both New Delhi and Washington tried to normalise the relationship; the US Administration's recognition of Bangladesh helped in this regard. At the hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, Kissinger made it clear that the new US policy aimed at improving India–US relations, which had deteriorated considerably before and during the 1971 war. He said that now 'Bangladesh exists; our objectives and those of India with respect to it, are quite parallel'.[111] With regard to the US military alliance policy and the US military aid to Pakistan, which encouraged Pakistan to wage war against India, he said that in the event of another confrontation, 'It will not be fought with American weapons'.[112]

President Nixon also said that the US would make efforts to develop 'a new relationship' with the countries of South Asia. Nixon in his *Annual Report to the US Congress* in 1973 expressed hope that India would seek a balanced relationship with the major powers. However, he said that the US will have 'a natural concern' if India's major power relations are directed against the US or its key allies which it values.[113] On the new balance of power relationship, he assured India that the US would not join in any military blocs directed against India. Referring to the new relationship the US was building with China, he further assured that Washington's good relationship with Beijing would not be at the cost of its good relationship with India. The US 'opening to China', as a result of Kissinger's secret visit to Beijing via Pakistan channel, was an important factor in the Nixon-Kissinger 'tilt' towards Pakistan during the 1971 war. Indian and American perceptions and approaches to China significantly shaped India-US relations.[114] In his Annual Report, Nixon emphasised that the US wants to build a mature and new relationship with India based on 'equality, reciprocity and mutual interest.'

On the other hand, New Delhi also thought that it was time to start a new relationship with the US. Prime Minister Gandhi in an article in *Foreign Affairs* wrote that 'We do not believe in permanent estrangement.'[115] Expressing India's readiness to start a new relationship with the US, she emphasised that Washington should respect India's foreign policy decisions and its major power status. Making a case for the

need to improve India–US relations, EAM Swaran Singh in a statement in the Rajya Sabha also expressed India's willingness 'to do everything in our power to normalise and strengthen our relations with the US on the basis of recognition of the new realities and on the basis of equality, reciprocity and mutual respect'.[116]

After a decisive victory in the 1971 war, the debate over India's status as a major power in the South Asian region had also been resolved. India wanted the US to recognise this new reality. President Nixon in his 1973 Annual Report, in fact, recognised India as a major power based on reciprocity. He said that the differences of 1971 injected greater maturity and a healthy realism into the India–US relationship.[117] Thus, efforts were apparently taking place to establish normal relationship between the two countries in the aftermath of the 1971 war.

It was however with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, that the relationship between the two countries really began to develop. The US no longer viewed its relationship with India primarily through the Cold War prism. On the other hand, faced with the new geo-economic and geo-political realities, India brought a paradigm shift in its economic and foreign policies. As a result, a new relationship began to develop between the two countries where the US emerged as the extra-regional defence and security partner of India. Though problems persisted in bilateral relations relating to issues of nuclear non-proliferation, Kashmir and human rights.

The 1998 India's nuclear tests also dashed the prospects for a rapid upsurge in India–US relations as the US Administration imposed economic and military sanctions on India. However, soon the two countries began a 'strategic dialogue', which restored the mutual trust and confidence between the two countries on the matters of defence and security. The March 2000 visit by US President Bill Clinton to India marked a major turning point in the India–US relationship. Since then India–US relationship has been evolving in response to India's emergence as a regional power, emerging market, and its importance in contributing to a stable balance of power in Asia. The relationship is also evolving with a view to their shared values, interests and challenges that they face together in the 21st century. The two sides recognise each other's importance and they have been closely engaged on a wide range of bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest.[118]

Hence, India and the US have come a long way since the India–Pakistan War of 1971. In the last 50 years, India–US relationship has

shifted from 'estranged democracies' to 'engaged democracies', and then from 'engaged democracies' to 'de-hyphenation' of the US' relationship with India and Pakistan,[119] and, now, transformed into a 'comprehensive global strategic partnership' based on their shared values and interests on bilateral, regional and international issues. This transformation in India–US relationship has come at a time when Chinese military assertiveness is growing in Asia and possess huge economic, political, geo-strategic and security challenges both to India and the US. Today, India–US relationship is broad-based and multi-sectoral and enjoys a strong bipartisan and popular support in both the countries. The two sides have established more than 50 bilateral dialogue mechanisms for exchange of views on issues of mutual interest. The US also recognises India as a major defence partner. Amidst all these positive transformations in India–US relationship, the ghost of 1971 war and the resultant 'trust deficit' still continues to haunt Indian consciousness somewhere, which will continue to shape India–US relationship.

Notes

1. Chester Bowles, *Promises to Keep: My Years in Public Life, 1941-1969*, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, p. 638.
2. Norman D. Palmer, 'India as a Factor in the United States Foreign Policy', *International Studies*, Vol. 65, 1964, pp. 2–11.
3. Emeka Ohajunwa, *India-US Security Relations*, 1947-1990, Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1992.
4. Surjit Mansingh, *India's Search for Power: Indira Gandhi's Foreign Policy 1966-1982*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1984.
5. John Kenneth Galbraith, *Ambassador's Journal: A Personal Account of the Kennedy Years*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969, p. 512.
6. Bowles, n. 1, p. 439.
7. Ibid., pp. 439–40.
8. After the emergence of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, there was a debate in the US about who lost China, especially after the start of the Korean War in 1950. Then the containment of China's influence in Asia became US foreign policy priority for which it was looking for a strategic partner or an ally. However, before the 1962 Sino-Indian war, India considered China a friend and not an enemy. It was one of the first countries to recognise the PRC, it supported China's entry to UN and then for a seat in UNSC, and had also signed the Panchsheel Agreement with China. See Mansingh, n. 4, and Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's Foreign*

Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946 to April 1961, Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1961.

9. Selig S. Harrison (ed.), *India and the United States*, New York: MacMillan, 1961, p. 63.
10. US Congress, *Congressional Record*, Senate, 85th Congress, End Session, Vol. 104, 25 March 1958, p. 5248.
11. Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1979, p. 849.
12. Baldev Raj Nayar, 'America and India: The Roots of Conflict', in K.P. Misra (ed.), *Foreign Policy of India: A Book of Readings*, New Delhi: Thomson Press, 1977, p. 276.
13. Dennis Kux, *India and the United States: Estranged Democracies*, Washington DC: National Defence University Press, 1993.
14. The Hamoodur Rahman Commission (HRC) report squarely blames three men—President Yahya Khan, PPP leader Z.A. Bhutto, and AL leader S.M. Rehman—principally responsible for the East Pakistan crisis, loss of 1971 war with India, and the half of Jinnah's Pakistan. The HRC was set up by then Pakistan president Z.A. Bhutto on 26 December 1971 under Chief Justice Hamoodur Rahman as Chairman to inquire into the Pakistani debacle in the 1971. For details, see the text of *Hamoodur Rahman Commission (HRC) Supplementary Report*, Government of Pakistan, Pakistan, 1974.
15. Ministry of Defence, *Official History of the 1971 India-Pakistan War*, Chapter-IV, History Division, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, published on 12 October 2006, pp. 107–27.
16. Ibid., Chapter-II, p. 73.
17. Ibid., Chapter-III, p. 93.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., Chapter-VII, pp. 274–75.
20. As the situation in East Pakistan continued to deteriorate, the strength and operational capability of the Mukti Bahini forces also kept increasing. As a result, the overall strength of the Mukti Bahini reached to over one lakh by 30 November 1971. See Ibid., Chapter-VI, pp. 203–04.
21. Srinath Raghavan in his book '1971' points out that India was very ambivalent in its approach towards the crisis in the beginning and even doubted the capability of Bengali freedom fighters to handle the situation. See Srinath Raghavan, *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh*, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013.
22. Hedley Bull, 'The New Balance of Power in Asia and the Pacific', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 49, No. 4, July 1971, pp. 669–81; and, V.P. Dutt, *India's*

Foreign Policy, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1993, p. 100.

23. Kux, n.13, p. 280.
24. Kissinger, n. 11, p. 848.
25. Louis J. Smith (ed.), *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2005, p. 22.
26. Ibid., pp. 22–23.
27. Ibid., p. 24.
28. US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the US, 1969–1976, Volume E–7, Documents on South Asia, 1969–1972*, Document 125, 'Telegram 959 from the US Consulate General in Dacca to the Department of State', 28 March 1971.
29. US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the US, 1969–1976, Volume E–7, Documents on South Asia, 1969–1972*, Document 126, 'Telegram 978 from the Consulate General in Dacca to the Department of State', 29 March 1971.
30. Telegram 1007 from US Consulate in Dacca to the Department of State, 'Extent of Casualties in Dacca', 31 March 1971, Record Group 59, Subject Numeric File 1970-73, Pol and Def, Box 2530, *The National Security Archive*, at https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB79/
31. Telegram 4494 from US Embassy in New Delhi to the Department of State, 'Selective Genocide', 29 March 1971, Record Group 59, Subject Numeric File 1970-73, Pol and Def, Box 2530, *The National Security Archive*, at https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/
32. US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the US, 1969–1976, Volume E–7, Documents on South Asia, 1969–1972*, Document 128, 'Telegram 2954 from the Embassy in Pakistan to the Department of State', 31 March 1971.
33. n. 25, pp. 35–36.
34. Ibid., p. 37.
35. Ibid., p. 45.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., p. 65.
38. Ibid., p. 98.
39. Ibid., 245.
40. Richard Nixon, 'Hand-written Letter from President Nixon to President Yahya', The White House, Washington DC, 7 August 1971, Record Group 59 PPC S/P, *Directors Files* (Winston Lord), Box 330, *The National Security Archive*, at https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/

41. Prakhar Gupta, 'Henry Kissinger Reveals Why the US Supported Pakistan in 1971', *The Atlantic*, 17 November 2016.
42. n. 25, p. 32.
43. Ibid., pp. 117–19.
44. Ibid., pp. 129–30.
45. Ibid., p. 140.
46. Ibid., p. 234.
47. US Department of State Cable, 'Indo-Pakistan Situation', 15 July 1971, Nixon Presidential Materials Project (NPMP), National Security Council (NSC) Files, Indo-Pak War, Box 578, *The National Security Archive*, at https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/
48. n. 25, pp. 349–51.
49. Since the crackdown began in 25 March, the number of East Pakistan refugees reaching India reached to over 9.5 million by 31 October 1971, and the community-wise breakup of the refugees was: Hindus 82.3 per cent, Muslims 17 per cent, and Budhists, Christians, etc., 7 per cent. The majority, 82.3 per cent, were Hindus because of the targeted killing by the Pakistani army. See *Official History of the 1971 India-Pakistan War*, Chapter-III, n. 15, pp. 194–95.
50. Text of the Letter dated 15 December 1971 from Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to President Richard Nixon on Event in Bangladesh, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India (GOI), *Foreign Affairs Record*, 1971, pp. 393–94.
51. Richard Nixon, *RM: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, London: Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd., 1978, pp. 525–26.
52. n. 25, p. 499; and, US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the US, 1969–1976*, Volume E–7, Documents on South Asia, 1969–1972, Document 150.
53. The Nixon Administration also reaffirmed the intention to continue the 1967 policy of 'one-time exception'. See Kux, n. 13, p. 284; and, Kissinger, n. 11, p. 849.
54. Vinod Gupta, *Anderson Papers: A Study of Nixon's Blackmail of India*, Delhi: An ISSD Publication, 1972, p. 65.
55. n. 25, p. 164.
56. Ibid., p. 165.
57. Ibid., p. 167.
58. US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the US, 1969–1976*, Volume E–7, Documents on South Asia, 1969–1972, Document 136.
59. n. 25, p. 167.

60. 'Event Summary by George H.W. Bush', 10 December 1971, George Bush Presidential Library, George H.W. Bush Collection, Series: *United Nations File*, 1971-1972, Box 4, *The National Security Archive*, at https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/; and, also see Ibid., pp.751–63.
61. n. 25, p. 783; and also see Memorandum of Conversation between Deputy NSA Alexander Haig, Senior NSC Staff Winston Lord and Chinese Ambassador to UN Huang Hua, 12 December 1971, Record Group 59, PPC S/P, *Directors Files* (Winston Lord), Box 330.
62. 'Situation in India-Pakistan as of 0700 hours (EST), 14 December 1971', India-Pakistan Working Group Situation Report #41, NPMP, NSC Files, Indo-Pak War, Box 573.
63. 'India-Pakistan Situation Report as of 1600 (EST), 16 December 1971', Intelligence Memorandum, CIA, NPMP, MDR# 4. And, 'The Tilt: The US and the South Asian Crisis of 1971', *National Security Archive*, Electronic Briefing Book No. 79, 16 December 2002.
64. 'Telegram 7391 from US Embassy in Tehran to the Department of State', 29 December 1971, 'F-5 Aircraft to Pakistan', NPMP, *NSC Files*, Indo-Pak War, Box 575.
65. In a NSC memo on 7 December, NSC Staff Harold H. Saunders observed that 'by law', the US 'cannot authorize' any military equipment transfers to Pakistan either directly or any third party unless the Administration was willing to change the policy.
66. Telegram 230056 from Department of State to the US Embassy in New Delhi, 23 December 1971, 'Supply of Third Country US Arms to Pakistan', NPMP, *NSC Files*, Indo-Pak War, Box 575.
67. Before signing the Treaty with the Soviet Union, India assessed whether the Treaty would adversely affect India's long cherished non-alignment foreign policy objectives. It found that the Treaty would not conflict with the basic tenets of non-alignment policy, on the contrary it would strengthen it. See the text of Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of India and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, signed between EAM Swaran Singh and Russian Foreign Minister, A.A. Gromyco in New Delhi on 9 August 1971.
68. n. 15, pp. 142–47.
69. See text of the Statement by EAM Swaran Singh in the Rajya Sabha on 19 July 1971, MEA, GOI, *Foreign Affairs Record*, 1971, pp. 137–38; and, also Kux, n. 13, pp. 289–312.
70. EAM Swaran Singh further emphasised that 'It strengthens our policy of non-alignment ... and will become an effective instrument for the safeguarding of our national interests'. See Statement by EAM Sardar Swaran Singh in Parliament on the Indo-USSR Treaty of Peace, Friendship

and Cooperation on 9 August 1971, MEA, GOI, *Foreign Affairs Record*, Vol. 17, No. 8, 1971, p. 159.

71. n. 25, pp. 313–15.
72. Kissinger, n. 11, p. 767.
73. Indira Gandhi, 'India and the World', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 51, No. 1, October 1972, p. 74.
74. Richard Nixon, *Third Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy*, President Richard Nixon, the White House, Washington DC, 9 February 1972 available at http://www.presidency.ussb.edu/
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77. n. 25, p. 325.
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83. Kissinger, n. 11, p. 880.
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86. 'Role of Big Powers in Indo-Pak War of 1971', by ANI, 16 December 2015, available at https://www.india.com/news/india/role-of-big-powers-in-indo-pak-war-of-1971-788574/
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97. Simha, n. 95, 14 December 2016.

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