

# ***Doomed to Separate: A Neoclassical Realist Perspective of the Third India-Pakistan War of 1971 and Independence of Bangladesh***

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## ***Abstract***

*The nine-month long violent civil war in East Pakistan in 1971, its culmination through the third Indo-Pakistan War and emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country is arguably the most significant series of political events in South Asia since 1947. Legacies of those events are still vigorously present in current Subcontinental domestic politics and international relations. Most popular historical accounts of the events leading to creation of Bangladesh in 1971, argue that the separation of the two halves of Pakistan was not an inevitable outcome but a product of contingency, world historical developments and choices made by political actors. In this paper I argue from a perspective of Neoclassical Realist theory of International Policy-making that not only the separation of the two halves of Pakistan was highly predisposed but also a violent parting was highly probable. I also argue that contingent and individual choice-based accounts of the events in 1971 help perpetuate misperception in current politics of the subcontinent and accepting the inevitability of the emergence of Bangladesh would go a long way in normalizing relations between countries.*

## **1.0. INTRODUCTION**

The nine-month long violent civil war in East Pakistan in 1971, its culmination through the Third Indo-Pakistan War in December 1971 and emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country at the end of that war is arguably the most significant series of political events in South Asia since 1947. As a result of those events India emerged as the undisputed dominant power in the region and the claim of religion as basis for state-building ideology was severely undermined while language and ethnicity became recognized as vital parts of collective identity among the people of South Asia<sup>1</sup>. Legacies of those events still play crucial roles in current domestic politics of the participating countries and cast a shadow over international relations among them. A War

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<sup>1</sup> Ganguli (2001), page 71-72

Crimes Tribunal set up in Bangladesh nearly 40 years after the war to bring to justice local collaborators of Pakistan Army who are accused of aiding in committing atrocities against civilians during the war, has widened the political cleavage within the country and sparked series of deadly political violence that are almost unprecedented in a country already famous for its intense and violent politics<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile refusal by successive Pakistan governments to acknowledge and apologize for the genocidal conduct of Pakistan Army in Bangladesh in 1971 has been a consistent source of aggravation in relations between the countries<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, continued resentment over India's role in independence of Bangladesh adds yet another historical grievance in Pakistan's sizable agglomeration of grievances against India.

Over the decades since 1971, the prominence of the events in that year in both public memory and general politics of South Asia has stimulated regular scholarly publications both within the region and in the west. There have been few attempts to explain the conflict in terms of underlying systemic causes rather than contingent ones; the few and far between endeavors have not significantly registered both in scholarly debates or public discourse. Popular scholarly literature has focused on descriptive historical development, crisis behavior of the political actors and groups, (mis) perception of leaders, decision-making styles etc. narrative devices<sup>4</sup> and these have largely influenced the ongoing public discourse and political relations. I contend that the marginalization of systemic determinacy of the 1971 conflict from public discourse has significantly contributed not only in Pakistan's recalcitrance in assimilating the outcome of 1971 war but also in Bangladesh's worsening division in politics and society.

In this study I seek to explain the 1971 India-Pakistan conflict from a framework of Neoclassical Realist theory of foreign policy and try to show that both Pakistan's military crackdown on civilians of East Pakistan and India's decision to midwife independence of Bangladesh through military means were highly predisposed because of the systemic exigencies mediated through the nature of the polity in Pakistan and India. After the two countries set on a direct path towards conflict, military balance, strategic conditions and global political context also highly predisposed an Indian victory. Therefore, historical scholarship emphasizing contingencies,

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21591887-ruling-party-will-win-bangladeshs-election-country-will-lose-campaign-trail?zid=306&ah=1b164dbd43b0cb27ba0d4c3b12a5e227>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/11/23/world/asia/ap-as-bangladesh-war-crimes.html>

<sup>4</sup> Itty Abraham (1995), page 21

(mis) perceptions of leaders and their decision-making, help perpetrate an account that, although riveting in dramatic content, fail to explain the underlying causal dynamics of the 1971 conflict.

The study is divided in eight sections. In the second section I discuss background to India-Pakistan relations from their independence in 1947 up to 1971. In the third section I discuss some of the popular scholarship on the 1971 conflict and show why a Neoclassical Realist perspective adds important insights. In the fourth section I discuss why, among many classes of Neorealist Theories of international relations, Neoclassical Realism is better equipped to explain greater likelihood of adopting specific policy by a state in a particular structural circumstance. In the fifth section, I discuss several of the Neoclassical Realist theories proposed by the scholars and specify a particular theory that is better applicable to the 1971 conflict. In the sixth section I explain Pakistan's policy in 1971 with the help of the selected theory. In the next section I repeat the process for Indian decision-making in 1971. In the last section I discuss why many of the historical narratives fail to account for the systemic determinants of the conflict and conclude the study. A timeline of the important events is provided in the Appendix 1 to aid the readers in following the case-studies.

## **2.0. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Both India and Pakistan appeared as independent countries in August 1947, when the British government handed over sovereign power to the newly created states fashioned from the British Indian Empire. Pakistan was created from Muslim majority regions in the North East and North-west of the subcontinent, thus there was a West Pakistan and an East Pakistan separated by one-thousand miles of Indian territory<sup>5</sup>. The rivalry between India and Pakistan has been called “one of the most enduring and unresolved conflicts of our times” that began right in the aftermath of the Partition of British India<sup>6</sup>. Scholars have identified many causes that prompted congenital contention between the countries. The bloody partition itself, in which more than 10 million people crosses borders with all their possessions and many thousands of people lost lives in violence, created a bitter memory<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, Pakistan bitterly complained that India did not hand over the agreed upon share of military and industrial assets of British India<sup>8</sup>. But the most salient cause that

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<sup>5</sup> Guneratne and Weiss (2014) page 173

<sup>6</sup> Paul, T.V. (2006) page 3

<sup>7</sup> Guneratne and Weiss (2014) page 90

<sup>8</sup> Ahmed, Ishtiaq (2013) page 68

launched the enduring conflict is the First India-Pakistan War of 1947-48 over Kashmir. Pakistan regarded that Kashmir should be with Pakistan since it was a Muslim majority Princely State of British India but the ruler of Kashmir acceded to join India. India and Pakistan fought a conflict lasting few months over the territory at the end of which one-third of Kashmir was in Pakistan's hand and the rest under control of India<sup>9</sup>. Kashmir is a core contention in Pakistan's historical grievance against India as Pakistan consider Kashmir as integral part of national identity; the letter 'K' in Pakistan stands for Kashmir.

But most scholars agree that the underlying causes of the 'enduring conflict' is the great imbalance in power between Pakistan and India and Pakistan's resultant perception of insecurity. At independence, the population of India was 340 million while Pakistan's was 73 million (32 million in the west, 41 million in the east)<sup>10</sup>. India's GDP was more than four times the combined GDP of East and West Pakistan. Pakistan's insecurity vis-à-vis India is succinctly captured in the following lines in the 1967 memoire of Ayub Khan, Pakistan's first military ruler and head of the government from 1958-1969,

"India's ambition to absorb Pakistan or turn her into a satellite .... From the day of independence, Pakistan was involved in a bitter and prolonged struggle for her very existence and survival...Indian efforts in the field of foreign policy were all directed towards one aim, the isolation of Pakistan and its disintegration"<sup>11</sup>.

Because of insecurity, Pakistan looked for powerful allies from outside the region to counterbalance Indian power. In 1954 Pakistan became a member of US led anti-communist grouping of nations called Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and later the Baghdad Pact (CENTO). Pakistan's military and economy greatly benefitted from the relationship with USA. Between 1954 and 1965, Pakistan received over 1.2 \$ billion in military assistance from USA and this allowed Pakistan to build up a well-equipped Army of nearly 4,00,000 troops and an Air Force of 250 aircrafts<sup>12</sup>. A chart showing US assistance to Pakistan during 1954-71 is shown in Figure 1<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid page 72-80

<sup>10</sup> Angus, Madison (2003) page 152

<sup>11</sup> As quoted in Fair, Christine (2014) page 155.

<sup>12</sup> Cohen, Stephen (1984) page 138.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/jul/11/us-aid-to-pakistan>

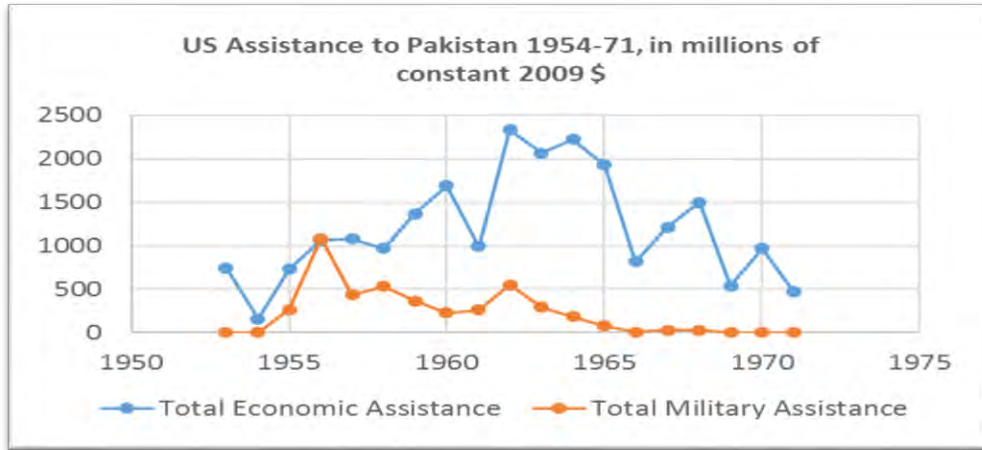


Figure 1 Source (Center for Global Development, Washington, USA)

Pakistan had the first its many military coups against civilian government in 1958 and General Ayub Khan became head of government. Military rule by generals continued under various guises until the end of 1971. Meanwhile border disputes between India and China led to a limited war between these two countries in 1962 that resulted in a very humiliating Indian defeat<sup>14</sup>. Although China withdrew from the advances made deep inside Indian territory, Indian morale was hugely shaken and its security concerns heightened in the aftermath of the war. Figure 2 shows the areas that were taken over by China, we can see that the advance in the East India was quite close to the territory of Bangladesh, which was East Pakistan in 1962.



Figure 2: 1962 India-China Border War Map

<sup>14</sup> Kavic, Lorne (1967) page 170-81

(source: <https://prateekchandrajha.wordpress.com/2013/01/04/sino-indian-war-why-did-china-invade-india-in-1962-a-lucid-treatment/>)

Pakistan initiated the Second War over Kashmir with India in 1965 because Pakistan felt that India's rapid rearmament after the 1962 war with China and its efforts integrate Kashmir with India is rapidly closing opportunity for a military solution for the Kashmir problem for Pakistan<sup>15</sup>. The war was ended by an armistice but both Pakistan and India claimed victory in the war. Pakistan mounted a public-relations campaign to convince the domestic population and outside world that it has demonstrated military superiority over India<sup>16</sup> but one consequence of Pakistan's military adventure was that USA suspended military assistance to both India and Pakistan. We can see from Figure 1 how the overall assistance to Pakistan plunged after 1965. US withdrawal of support hurt Pakistan more than it did to India because India's economy was much larger. India also began to court Soviet Union as an ally to counterbalance China.

Meanwhile the social and political divide between the two-halves of Pakistan continued to grow. At the Partition in 1947, East Pakistan was already a much poorer state with per-capita income 18 percent more in the West<sup>17</sup>. During the 1950s the disparity only grew reaching 29 percent in 1959-60. People in East Pakistan mainly blamed three different policies for the widening disparity<sup>18</sup>. First of all, they claimed that tax receipts were inequitably spent between the two halves. Secondly while East Pakistan ran a foreign trade surplus because of export of jute, West Pakistan ran a trade deficit. Thirdly, East Pakistanis alleged that the central government pursued a development policy of centralized industrialization that favored the West. The drastic cut-down of US development assistance after the war of 1965 hit the East more than the West. East Pakistan's GDP grew only at 4 percent during the period 1965-70 while West Pakistan experience 6.4 percent growth<sup>19</sup>.

Disparity in representation in administration and politics of the state was even more stark. In the mid-1950s only 51 of the top 741 Civil Servants were from East Pakistan. Even by 1963 only five percent of the Officer Corps in Pakistan Army was Bengali<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, East Pakistanis felt

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<sup>15</sup> Ganguli (2001), page 31-48

<sup>16</sup> Cohen, Stephen (1984) page 169

<sup>17</sup> Zaheer, Hasan (1994) page 88.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid page 49-60

<sup>19</sup> Ibid page 95

<sup>20</sup> Sisson and Rose (1990) page 10

that failure of the political order in giving proper representation of numerically larger East Pakistan population was the reason for failure of democracy in the 1950s and the beginning of the long military rule<sup>21</sup>. Opposition to the military regime was more strident in the East than in the West.

Even more than economic and political factors, Pakistan state represented a geographical chimera that had few equals in the modern era. The two halves were not just culturally different; their ethnicity was very dissimilar too. The West had several spoken languages with Urdu being the official one, in the East, Bengali was spoken by the overwhelming number of people. The people also look different, West Pakistanis in general are taller and fairer than the people in the East. Moreover, religion composition of the people was different too. The 1951 Census of Pakistan showed that even after partition a sizable minority of Hindus remained in East Pakistan (77% Muslim, 22% Hindu) while West Pakistan was almost all Muslim (97% Muslim, 1.6% Hindu)<sup>22</sup>. This ethnic and linguistic differences generated institutionalized racism towards East Pakistan in the West and prickly nationalism in the East from the very early days

Leaving East Pakistan completely defenseless in the 1965 War and growing economic discontent created new impetus for autonomy in East Pakistan after 1965<sup>23</sup>. Six months after the war, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leaders of Awami League, the largest political party in the East espoused a six-point demand that called for a federal Pakistan where the center will only be responsible for defense, foreign affairs and currency<sup>24</sup>. The Six Points are shown in Appendix 2. The demands were hugely popular in the East but they were received ominously in the West. Most scholars agree that “Pakistanis in the west viewed this agenda as a poorly disguised prelude to secession”<sup>25</sup>.

In 1966 Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and several Awami League leaders were arrested by the Pakistani government in the famous ‘Agartala Conspiracy Case’ on charges of conspiring with India for break-up of Pakistan<sup>26</sup>. Before the trial could take place a Pakistan-wide political movement began in 1968 for restoration of democracy<sup>27</sup>. Facing growing unrest, the government

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid page 11-15

<sup>22</sup> Census of Pakistan, 1951

<sup>23</sup>23 Cohen, Stephen (1984) page 144

<sup>24</sup> Sisson and Rose (1990) page 19-21

<sup>25</sup> Fair, Christine (2014) page 146.

<sup>26</sup> Zaheer (1994) page 98-99

<sup>27</sup> Sisson and Rose page 22

released Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and promised to hold elections for a constitutional assembly and handover of power to an elected civilian government. The election took place in December 1970 and the results surprised everybody. Awami League won 160 out of 162 parliamentary seats in East Pakistan but not a single one from the 138 seats in West-Pakistan. Similarly, no party from West-Pakistan won anything in the East. The result showed that the population of the two halves of Pakistan are divided more than ever. Moreover, even Awami League leaders realized that the people in East Pakistan has become far more nationalistic than they themselves previously imagined. The military government now contemplated whether to hand over power to the majority party Awami League, whose government, according to the view of the army government, will try to irrevocably weaken the military hold on Pakistan's society in the best case scenario and completely break up the two halves of the country in the worst-case scenario.

### **3.0 HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE 1971 CONFLICT**

Books on the events of 1971 began to appear right after the end of the war and independence of Bangladesh. But these books were mostly memoirs of participants or eyewitness accounts. One of the first books to comprehensively study the “decisional structures and processes” before and during the conflict is “War and Secession” by Richard Sisson and Leo Rose (1990). Their study is one of the most cited work on the conflict and their conclusion about the underlying dynamic of the war is that “the war..., was neither expected nor judged necessary by any of the major players before early fall of 1971. ... India's decision-makers expected that Pakistan's leaders would find a political solution to the country's domestic problems.... Pakistani decision-makers at the outset neither desired this particular war with India nor anticipated it would occur”<sup>28</sup>. In short, Sisson and Rose argued that the main combatants were trapped in an escalating cycle of misperception that eventually led to war and secession.

Srinath Raghavan (2014) in a recent popular account of the conflict also emphasizes decisive roles played by decisions made by leaders but he argues that the decision-making only mattered because of global historical currents and contingencies. According to him, “there was nothing inevitable either about the breakup of united Pakistan... Rather, it was product of historical

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<sup>28</sup> Sisson and Rose (1990) page 4



currents and conjunctures that ranged far beyond South Asia”<sup>29</sup>. He said that the outcome would be very different if the leaders have made different decisions in critical junctures. “Had Bhutto joined forces with Mujib, as several contemporaries expected, the breakdown of Pakistan could have been averted”<sup>30</sup>.

On the other hand, there have been several studies of India-Pakistan conflict from structural perspectives of international relations theory that emphasized that structural factors, material or historically developed, predisposes the two countries towards unremitting conflict. Ganguli (2001) presents a positivist account of India-Pakistan relations since 1947 where he identifies two variables underlying friction between the countries. The first is “fundamentally divergent ideological commitments of the dominant nationalist elites” and the second is irredentist/anti-irredentist relationship between the states, principally over Kashmir<sup>31</sup>. But Ganguli admits that while the two factors explain the overall hostility level between the countries, they are in themselves not enough to explain the outbreak of four conflicts between them. He identifies opportunistic events as “immediate precipitants” of the wars between them<sup>32</sup>.

Rajagopalan (1998) presents a Neorealist perspective on the relation between the two countries where he argues that the gross imbalance between India and Pakistan and Pakistan’s insecurity about the balance is the persistent cause of conflict. He argues that Pakistan’s internal and external balancing efforts to address the imbalance precipitates conflict. He therefore concludes that resolving of specific issues like Kashmir is unlikely to lead to peace between the countries as the imbalance in power remains.

I contend that while Neorealist theories correctly identify the underlying cause of insecurity between the countries and show that balancing by respective countries can lead to conflict, they do not explain why the countries adopt specific policies in particular circumstances that precipitate proper or improper balancing. To understand Pakistan and India’s adoption of policies that set the course to war, we need to bring the nature of the state as variables within the realist framework. Thus Neoclassical Realist theories present a more compelling account of the causal connection between structural conditions and policies, even if the policies were implemented after lot of twists

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<sup>29</sup> Raghavan, Srinath (2014) page 265

<sup>30</sup> Ibid page 266

<sup>31</sup> Ganguli (2001), page 4-7

<sup>32</sup> ibid

and turns of politics and diplomacy. To understand the conflict, we have to focus more on how the decision-makers were constrained by systemic and domestic factors, and what did they actually do rather than what they were saying during the crisis or recalling afterwards.

#### **4.0 NEOCLASSICAL REALISM AS AN EXTENSION OF NEOREALISM**

Although historical accounts of conflicts between states are thick with description of politics between states, individual inclinations of decision makers, contingencies and chance factors, the realist approach of studying international politics focuses on relationship of power between the states as the primary source of friction and conflict. Robert Gilpin wrote, "...the final arbiter of things political is power".<sup>33</sup> Because there is no sovereign power in the international system of states to arbitrate and enforce rules among the states, they have to rely on 'self-help' for their own security. Thus states are compelled to build up power, both military and state power, to secure own place in the system of states and define interest of states in terms of power. But a state seeking security through strength make other states insecure and create competition for more power and thereby reducing security for all; creating a 'security dilemma' (Herz 1950). The security dilemma requires states to analyze and evaluate possible effect of policies adopted by itself and other sates on the security balance among the states<sup>34</sup>. Thus realism puts power relations as the underlying factor for policy-making of states over time. Hans Morgenthau wrote: "The aspiration for power on the part of several nations, each trying either to maintain or overthrow the status quo, leads of necessity to a configuration that is called the balance of power and to policies that aim at preserving it"<sup>35</sup>.

Neorealism or Structural Realism has been the most influential realist theory of international politics developed in the recent decades. According to Kenneth Waltz, the theory's main proponent, the first ordering principle of anarchy and self-help in the international system of states and the second ordering principle of distribution of power among the states, lead to structural constraints that limit the policy choice of states seeking to protect own interest by maximizing

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<sup>33</sup> Gilpin (1986)

<sup>34</sup> Doyle (1997) page 21

<sup>35</sup> Morgenthau (1966)

strength<sup>36</sup>. The main variants of Neorealism explain state behavior over time within structural constraints by assuming that all states have similar objectives, maximizing power or maximizing security etc. But within one NR theory states are undifferentiated in their objectives, though not in their capabilities. Waltz's parsimonious theory is a system level theory that explain patterns of behavior of states over time by explaining the constraints on its choices. "Systems theories are...theories that explain how the organization of a realm acts as a constraining and disposing force on the interacting units within it"<sup>37</sup>. Constraints set the patterns of state behavior.

Dependence on constraints of state behavior as dependent variable make Waltz's theory indeterminate about the specific policies that states adopt in particular circumstances because structures work indirectly and indeterminately through states. Waltz himself said that, "Structures limit and mold agents and agencies and point them in ways that tend toward a common quality of outcomes even though the efforts and aims of the agencies vary. Structures do not work their effects directly. Structures do not act as agents and agencies do...In itself a structure does not directly lead to one outcome rather than another"<sup>38</sup>. A page earlier Waltz say that a systemic theory "can tell us what pressures are exerted and what possibilities are posed by systems of different structure, but it cannot tell us just how, and how effectively, the units of a system will respond to those pressures and possibilities". Waltz regarded the problem of indeterminacy in system level theories is not only unimportant but also fallaciously ascribed. He said that a theory of international politics "bears on the foreign policies of nations while claiming to explain only certain aspects of them. It can tell us what international conditions national policies have to cope with. To think that a theory of international politics can in itself say how the coping is likely to be done is the opposite of the reductionist error"<sup>39</sup>.

The limitation of indeterminacy in Neorealism has not deterred many noted realist theorists to add to the theory or revise it for greater policy determinacy. Barry Posen argues that both organization theory and structural realism have critical bearing upon states' foreign policy<sup>40</sup>. He borrowed structural variables from Neorealism and internal state variables from Organization Theory to develop a theory how states adopt military doctrine and pursue policies in particular

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<sup>36</sup> Waltz (1979) page 117 -118

<sup>37</sup> Waltz (1979) page 72

<sup>38</sup> Waltz (1979) page 74

<sup>39</sup> Waltz (1979) page 72

<sup>40</sup> Posen (1984)

circumstances. According to Posen Organization theory and structural conditions do not always work in tandem. During peacetime, military doctrine is greatly influenced by organization theory but as conflict become close, structural conditions take more important roles in policy decisions<sup>41</sup>. Critics have said that Posen's theory do not adequately explain why "irrational" balancing frequently occurs in international crisis and suggested that individual psychology in crisis situations as well as to the pervasive influence of domestic politics should be taken in account<sup>42</sup>.

Several defensive realists who built of Waltz's theory brought on the variable of 'rogue states' who misread or ignore the true security-related incentives offered by their structural conditions to explain who irrational balancing takes place<sup>43</sup>. Critics have argued that bringing in 'rogue states' or misperception show that theoretical limitations is "forcing its (defensive realism) adherents to contract out the bulk of their explanatory work to domestic-level variables introduced on an ad hoc basis"<sup>44</sup>.

Neoclassical Realism developed as a school of theory within realism to bring system level variables and state level variables within a coherent theoretical framework and add greater determinacy to the explanations. It borrows from Neorealism the idea that systemic factors determine the general direction of policy but it also recognizes that domestic variables intervene in the policy decision made by the decision-makers<sup>45</sup>. Thus while relative material balance establishes the parameters of states' foreign policy, the reason why different states or even the same state pursue particular policy in an international context is dependent on variables within state. As Gideon Rose argued "there is no immediate or perfect transmission belt linking material capabilities to foreign policy behavior. Foreign policy choices are made by actual political leaders and elites, and so it is their perceptions of relative power that matter, not simply relative quantities of physical resources or forces in being. This means that over the short to medium term countries' foreign policies may not necessarily track objective material power trends closely or continuously"<sup>46</sup>. The following diagram shows the basic process of policy decision-making according to Neoclassical Realism.

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<sup>41</sup> Rosencrance (1986)

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*

<sup>43</sup> Rose (1998)

<sup>44</sup> Rose (1998)

<sup>45</sup> Rathbun (2008)

<sup>46</sup> Rose (1998)

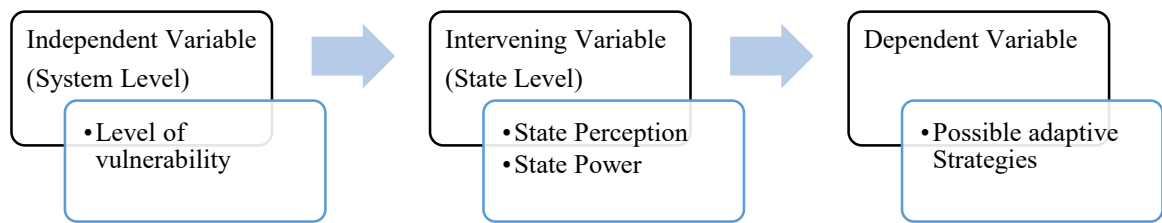


Figure 3: The Neoclassical Realist Model of Policy-making (adapted from Taliaferro 2006)

Because NCR integrates the variables associated with decision-makers with systemic variables, theorists believe that it addresses the indeterminacy of neorealism to a large extent. According to Colin Elman, domestic variables can be “layered in” to flush out and make neorealism more determinate<sup>47</sup>. It should be emphasized that NCR theorists are not making claims about certainty, they are arguing that addition of intervening variables and their interaction with the systemic variables enable NCR theorist to hypothesize about “likely diplomatic, economic and military responses of particular states to systemic imperatives”<sup>48</sup>.

It also should be noted that NCR theorizes a top-down conception of state where both the perception of threat and determination of state policy ultimately pass through a foreign policy executive (FPE) or a national security executive, comprised of head of government, ministers, officials<sup>49</sup>. The FPE exists at the small juncture between domestic and international politics; thus it focuses both on domestic and international threat to the regime. Because of its unique place in state and decisive role in formulation of policy, FPE can pursue foreign policy with the goal of manipulating politics and economy within the country or also act locally to draw in foreign-powers into further involvement<sup>50</sup>.

As Neoclassical Realist explanation of foreign policy adoption relies on several variables at two different levels, the accounts depend heavily on theoretically informed narratives that are supported by counterfactual analysis<sup>51</sup>. While we can see general agreement among NCR scholars over the application method of NCR theories, there is considerable variation how scholars framed the theory to be applied in explanation of case-studies. In the next section we will describe how various neoclassical theorists have formulated different versions of Neoclassical Realism with

<sup>47</sup> As paraphrased in Rathbun (2008)

<sup>48</sup> Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro eds (2009) page 21

<sup>49</sup> Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro eds (2009) page 25

<sup>50</sup> Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro eds (2009) page 52-54

<sup>51</sup> Rathbun (2008)

specification of different variables. For now, we will address some of the criticisms of Neoclassical Realism.

A main criticism of NCR can be of reductionism, a point on which Waltz was highly critical of multilevel theories. Although NCR regards structural conditions as the main causal variable, it also assigns causal roles to intervening variables, thus it may be accused of reductionism. According to Taliaferro, the charge is mistaken because “reductionist theories locate the causes of systemic outcomes—such as the likelihood of interstate war or general patterns of alliance formation in the international system—in the internal attributes of states”<sup>52</sup>. But NCR do not locate the cause of systemic outcomes of state behavior, it only locates causes of state behavior; outcome is still explained by systemic factors.

Another related criticism of NCR is that the theory violates the structural integrity of neorealism by aggregating two different levels of variables. According to Taliaferro there is no deductive reason in realism that bar a theory to integrate unit-level theories while maintaining the causal primacy of system-level variables. “Unit-level variables are themselves dependent variables of prior structural conditions”<sup>53</sup>.

NCR theorists argue that the theory serve and vindicate structural realism rather than supplant it<sup>54</sup>. Neorealism provide the sufficient framework of understanding when states perceive their material balance correctly and act as unitary actors. But when states do not respond ideally to the structural imperatives, NCR tells us that we should look into domestic politics and ideas for the distortion in rational decision-making process. According to Jennifer Sterling-Folker, states’ “identities, interests and behaviors become tied to process and it then acts as an opaque filter through which assessments, choices, and judgments are being made regarding the international realm. Domestic process would inhibit actors from ever objectively judging choices, behaviors, and outcomes”. Randall Schweller says NCR is essentially a “theory of mistakes”<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Taliaferro (2006)

<sup>53</sup> Taliaferro (2006)

<sup>54</sup> Rathbun (2008)

<sup>55</sup> Schweller (2004)

## 5.0. WHICH NEOCLASSICAL REALISM?

Although a number of scholars of International Relations, e.g. Thomas Christensen, Randall Schweller, William Wohlforth, Fareed Zakaria etc., had already published works that fall in the same theoretical paradigm, Gideon Rose first coined the “Neoclassical Realism” in a 1998 *World Politics* article and gave the school of thought a formal name<sup>56</sup>. In that paper Rose also tried to develop the general theory of NCR, although the theory was not well fleshed out. According to Rose the main independent variable in NCR is relative amount of material power resources countries possess and states seek maximize their influence in international system according to envelope of policies that their relative power afford them. The policy choice is intermediated by two domestic intervening variables, decision-makers’ perception and domestic state power.

According to Rose, “the international distribution of power can drive countries' behavior only by influencing the decisions of flesh and blood officials ... analysts of foreign policy thus have no alternative but to explore in detail how each country's policymakers actually understand their situation”<sup>57</sup>. State power is defined by Zakaria as, “that portion of national power the government can extract for its purpose and reflects the ease with which central decision-makers can achieve their ends”<sup>58</sup>. Thus the final policy adoption depend not only how decision-makers perceive the relative distribution of power but also how much state power is available for policy implementation.

Randall Schweller gives a more full-bodied version of NCR in his paper where he sought to explain why states underbalance in face of adverse relative power distribution<sup>59</sup>. His independent variable is similar to Rose, change in relative power, but he formulates four intervening variables to represent the state and decision making. They are (1) Elite Consensus, (2) Regime Vulnerability, (3) Elite Cohesion and (4) Social Cohesion. Schweller says that “at its core, elite consensus concerns the degree of shared perception about some facts in the world as being problems (vs. not) of a particular nature (vs. some other nature) requiring certain remedies (vs others)”. Regime vulnerability seek to capture the relationship between the rulers and the ruled and try to operationalize the extent to which the current regime is at risk of losing office. Social cohesion

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<sup>56</sup> Rose (1998)

<sup>57</sup> Rose (1998)

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Rose (1998)

<sup>59</sup> Schweller (2004)

describes the strength of ties binding “individuals and groups to the core of a given society” and elite cohesion “concerns the degree to which a central government's political leadership is fragmented by persistent internal divisions”.

Schweller seek to explain balancing behavior of states and his dependent variable can take four different values. Schweller defines balancing behavior as “creation or aggregation of military power through internal mobilization or the forging of alliances to prevent or deter the territorial occupation or political and military domination of the state by a foreign power or coalition ... Balancing requires that states target their military hardware at each other in preparation for a potential war”<sup>60</sup>. Although Schweller defines balancing almost exclusively in terms of military power, Waltz defined Internal balancing as efforts to enhance state's power by increasing economic resources and military strength in response to a foreign power and to compete more effectively in the international system<sup>61</sup>. Thus establishing state control over an internal territory or section of society is also a kind of balancing behavior as long as the balancing is done with respect to relative power of foreign states. His first type of balancing behavior is Appropriate Balancing when state’s correctly balance against an aggressor that should not or cannot be appeased. The second is Overbalancing or Inappropriate balancing which misperceive another state as aggressor and resulting policy decisions create a costly and dangerous spiral of military confrontation. The third is Non-balancing to meet a threat which can take form of buck-passing, bandwagoning, appeasement, distancing etc. Fourth is Under-balancing, which is what when the state balances inefficiently in response to an unappeasable aggressor. The main difference between non-balancing and under-balancing is in the nature of target power; if foreign power is not unappeasable then there is little difference between them.

Taliaferro proposed a ‘resource-extraction state’ model of NCR where he characterized the intervening state-variables as factors that determine to what degree a state can extract or mobilize societal resources to pursue adaptive strategies<sup>62</sup>. His independent variable is the level of external threat or vulnerability faced by the state, which in turn is a function of structural conditions like the relative distribution of power (both in the international system and in the particular region), the offense-defense balance, and geography. The intervening variable of extractive ability of state is a

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<sup>60</sup> Schweller (2004)

<sup>61</sup> Waltz (1979) page 168

<sup>62</sup> Taliaferro (2006)



function of institutions of the state—as well as nationalism and ideology. Taliaferro uses “ideology” here to denote the values, causal relationships, and assertions about “proper relationship of the state to domestic society and the role of the state in the international system across a range of issues—political, economic, social, and military”. His dependent variable is the variation in the types and intensity of the adaptive strategies the state will pursue: emulation, innovation, or persistence in existing strategies.

Specifying the intervening state variables is a crucial part in developing a Neoclassical Realist theory of policy-making because this what distinguishes the theoretical school from other realist paradigms. It seems to me that the formulations discussed above suffer from some inadequacy and redundancy. Rose’s specification of decision-makers’ perception do not say where do misperceptions come from and he does not include the political relationship between decision-making elite and the state-society. While I think Schweller’s four variables capture a lot of the factors that influence decision-making, he does not address the role of ideology in elite perception and elite decision-making. Taliaferro’s three variables also incorporate most of the domestic factors but I contend there is a lot of overlap between nationalism and ideology. Nationalism as a well-developed ideology covers many of the beliefs about relationship between state and the people and also between the state and the international system of states<sup>63</sup>. Meanwhile I think that Taliaferro’s specification does not adequately account for the nature of the relationship between decision-making elites and broader society at contingent time of crisis.

I think that it is possible to generalize from these intervening variables to develop a broader and more robust NCR theory. The actual specification of variables used to explain a policy-making during particular historical crisis will have to be context dependent but a generalization can enable us to make NCR a more versatile and transportable theory. With that in mind, I propose that three broadly defined intervening variables can account for most of the factors that influence decision-making during a crisis brought on by structural condition. They are, (i) State Power, (ii) Elite Ideology, and (iii) Elite-society relationship.

Following Zakaria, I also define State Power as the ability of government or the ruling elite to mobilize national resources for security policy initiatives. A higher degree of state power give decision-makers more autonomy to pursue balancing behavior according to the security perception. Elite Ideology cover nationalism, group identity, religious or secular ideology, and

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<sup>63</sup> <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nationalism/#MorClaCenNat>

other belief or value systems that the ruling elite deliberately promote in the society and also adopt for themselves. These ideologies not only shape how the elite perceive the international political landscape but also define how the state and its role in the world is viewed by the society. In general, high degree of nationalism generates social cohesion and greater mobilization ability, but higher ideological intensity can also “facilitate or inhibit elite efforts to extract and mobilize resources, depending on the content of that ideology and the extent to which elites and the public hold common ideas about the proper role of the state vis-à-vis society and the economy”<sup>64</sup>.

Lastly Elite-society Relationship covers not only the vulnerability of the ruling elite regime from the social and political forces but also the extent to which there is fragmentation or cohesion among the elite. There are many ways elite-society relationship affects policy behavior. According to Schweller, when elites are fragmented, the state is unlikely to follow a coherent and effective balancing policy. Theorists have argued that an elite-regime with high state power but facing regime vulnerability through domestic unrest is more likely to pursue an aggressive balancing policy to increase regime’s hold over state and society<sup>65</sup>.

I follow Taliaferro in proposing the independent variable as the level of external threat or vulnerability faced by the state, which in turn is a function of structural conditions like the relative distribution of power, the offense-defense balance, and geography. For dependent variable, I follow Schweller’s balancing behavior of states, but I modify it into three different values because a state cannot know beforehand whether target power is unappeasable or not. I also change the scope of balancing behavior from Schweller’s “internal mobilization or the forging of alliances” only, to also include actually going to war to reduce opponent’s power. Although Waltz defined external balancing in terms of alliances, “moves to strengthen or enlarge one’s own alliance or to weaken and shrink an opposing one”<sup>66</sup>, military intervention to prevent an adverse shift in the balance of power can also be regarded as balancing behavior<sup>67</sup>. The main difference between balancing and predatory military intervention is that objective of predation is acquisition of strategic assets like territory for enhancement of state power.

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<sup>64</sup> Taliaferro (2006)

<sup>65</sup> Oakes (2006)

<sup>66</sup> Waltz (1979) page 118

<sup>67</sup> Haldi (2003) page 8-15

Thus the dependent variable values are appropriate balancing, over-balancing or inappropriate balancing, and under-balancing. Thus the schematic presentation of the theory would be like following,

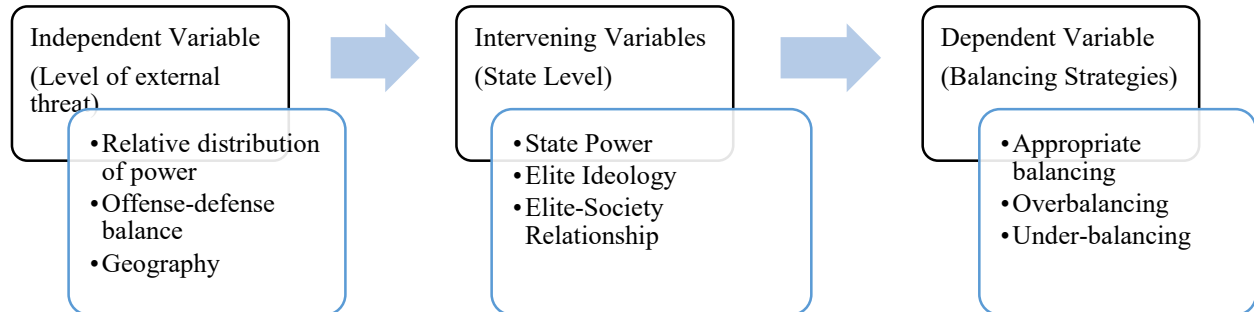


Figure 4: Proposed Neoclassical Realist theory of balancing policy adoption

The causal chain that link dependent variable with independent variable works generally like this. Change in relative power → State choice of policy is constrained by mobilization power of state → Ideology of the ruling elite shape both perception of relative power and adoption of potential policy → policy adoption is circumscribed by cohesion among elite and elite-society relationship → continuity or change in policy. Although the causal chain gives impression of additive nature of the variables, we cannot ignore that there are deep interactions among variables. For example, theorists have suggested that ideology of ruling elite can have effect on mobilization power of state<sup>68</sup> or state power can affect elite cohesion or elite-society relations. This is why detailed case-history is indispensable in NCR explanation of policy.

Now we will analyze Pakistan’s decision-makers’ perception of the security environment in early 1971 and explain how NCR informs us that a policy of military crackdown on East-Pakistan was the very likely the only balancing strategy of choice for the decision-makers. We will then show that India’s policy to support the secessionist movement was also the likely strategy. When the respective balancing policies of the two antagonists were firmly in place, structural factors made Bangladesh’s independence the most likely outcome by far.

<sup>68</sup> Schweller in Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro eds (2009) page 21

## 6.0. PAKISTAN'S OVER-BALANCE IN 1971: NO IMPETUOUS POLICY

### 6.1. PAKISTAN FACING CATASTROPHIC LOSS IN POWER IN 1971

Pakistan Army and the military-backed government started an extensive public-relations campaign after the 1965 India-Pakistan war targeting both domestic and foreign audience<sup>69</sup>. The campaign's message was that the war clearly demonstrated the marital superiority of Pakistan over its larger neighbor. But the army and the government faced increasingly worrying prospect in balance of power vis-à-vis India. The most immediate impact was the cessation of US military assistance and drastic cut down in foreign economic assistance (Figure 1). Pakistan army built its reputation of a strong, modern army largely on the lavish supply of US arms and equipment from 1954 to 1965<sup>70</sup>. Pakistan's defense expenditure soared as it sought to replace the free but aging and worn out equipment from USA. While GDP growth rate in the four years leading to 1965 averaged nearly 8% annual growth rate, the average for the next four years was below 6%<sup>71</sup>. Meanwhile, although both Pakistan and India's overall defense expenditure declined for some time after the 1965 War, the decline was steeper for Pakistan in percentage terms.

	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970
India	2050	1850	1800	1900	1950	2050
Pakistan	500	350	300	370	400	420

Table 1: Defense Expenditure, India and Pakistan (in millions of dollars 1973 constant), Adapted from Cohen 1984 chart page 22.

While USA was progressively disengaging from South Asia in the 1960s due to engagement in Vietnam<sup>72</sup>, India was developing a strategic partnership with Soviet Union; particularly to after the disastrous 1962 Border War with China<sup>73</sup>. Pakistan counterbalanced the relationship by deepening its relationship with China with China becoming increasing more important source of arms and equipment for the army.

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<sup>69</sup> Cohen, Stephen (1984) page 69

<sup>70</sup> Ibid page 138

<sup>71</sup> World bank Data <http://data.worldbank.org/country/pakistan>

<sup>72</sup> Cohen (1984) p 139

<sup>73</sup> Malone (2011) page 235

An important structural aspect of the regional system is South Asia was that although it was one of the world's most conflict prone regions and several conventional war took place Pakistan and India before 1971, none of these war resulted in total defeat of one side or large territorial dismemberment. The international community intervened for ceasefire before any decisive results occurred. Going into 1971, Pakistan army was confident that that international community would thwart any Indian military design on separating East Pakistan through conventional military means<sup>74</sup>.

The most important issue to occupy the government and military of Pakistan during the last years of 1960s was the growing political movement for democracy and autonomy in East Pakistan and resulting regular political unrests. As mentioned in the background section, the government and the bulk of the West Pakistan elite viewed the six-point demand for federalism and autonomy, an ill-disguised bid for complete secession. The elite in West Pakistan held it to be axiomatic that India never reconciled with the partition in 1947 and Indian policy and strategy are directed to isolation of Pakistan and its eventual disintegration<sup>75</sup>. Indeed, decades later, some of the political leaders of East Pakistan who were accused in the famous Agartala Conspiracy Case of 1966-68 have publicly claimed that the charge of conspiring with India was indeed true<sup>76</sup>. A significant section of nationalistic political leaders, intelligentsia in East Pakistan were not averse to seeking Indian assistance to secure freedom from what they saw 'neo-colonial rule' of West Pakistan<sup>77</sup>. The prospect of secession filled the minds of the decision-making elite in West Pakistan with fears of catastrophic consequences in the relative power of the country with respect to India and the world.

In 1970 East Pakistan had nearly 52% of the population of Pakistan and 43% of its GDP<sup>78</sup>. Loss of East Pakistan would not only deprive Pakistan of any strategic position in the East of India but also forever change the relative balance of power. Figure 2 shows that East Pakistan being very close to India's North-Eastern region, where India suffered biggest reversals in the India-China Border War of 1962, had special strategic importance to Pakistan in view of its growing alliance with China. Moreover, Pakistan would overnight change from the most populous Muslim majority

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<sup>74</sup> Sisson and Rose (1990) page 5

<sup>75</sup> Fair, Christine (2014) page 155

<sup>76</sup> <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2011/02/23/agartala-conspiracy-case-was-not-false>

<sup>77</sup> Zaheer (1994) page 98-99

<sup>78</sup> Madison, Angus (2003)

country in the world to the third most populous, also irrevocably changing its standing in the Muslim world as a major regional power.

This potentially catastrophic downgrading of relative power was foremost in the mind of the Pakistani Military Junta as it approached the 1970 Parliament and Constituent Assembly Election. The government used its intelligence services in East Pakistan in all kinds of shady ways to manipulate the elections so that Awami League do not obtain majority and parties favorable to central authority gain sizable presence in the assembly<sup>79</sup>. But, as section 2 describes above, the results were even worse than the government's worst imagined scenario. Awami League leaders with their commanding majority and widespread popular support became unyielding to the Six-point demand as the major program of the government to be. The National Security Executive of Pakistan firmly believed, not without sufficient grounds, that Awami League leaders were already preparing contingency plans for declaration and struggle for independence with active help from India<sup>80</sup>. As the deadline for power transfer kept being postponed amidst frantic negotiations, the Pakistani Military government was faced with the inescapable choice of several policy options. Using Schweller's formulation of balancing and Waltz's definition of internal balancing, we can specify the policy options in terms of balancing efforts.

Considering the groundswell of nationalism in East Pakistan, widespread demand for autonomy and India's not so covert support for nationalists, the proper internal balancing policy for the Pakistan government should have been reaching an agreement with Awami League with accommodations of Six-point demands and provision of special financial incentive to East Pakistan to redress the economic disparity and curb secessionist sentiment. Economists and political leaders have been demanding such financial program but West Pakistan leaders refused on the ground that the West Pakistan economy will be severely compromised by such a program<sup>81</sup>. It should be noted that democratic governments all over the world have been using structurally integrated financial program to check secessionist tendency in reluctantly integrated regions for a long time<sup>82</sup>. The under-balancing option would be handing over power to the elected majority party without any program for shoring up unity of the two halves. As mentioned before, there were

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<sup>79</sup> Shah, Aqil (2014) page 108

<sup>80</sup> Zaheer (1994) page 164

<sup>81</sup> Zaheer (1994) page 129

<sup>82</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/scotland/1580787/How-the-Barnett-formula-works.html>

widespread belief that the two halves are on in a seemingly inexorable path to separation; the path made much easier by the divided nature of politics as demonstrated the 1970 elections. Lastly, the overbalancing option would be a nullification of the election and a military crackdown in East Pakistan to stamp out nationalism and secessionism among the people for the foreseeable time horizon. Let us now examine how intervening variables refracted Pakistan's FPE's perception of structural change and narrowed its choice of policy options by making one far more likely than others.

## 6.2. PAKISTAN'S INTERVENING VARIABLES

Pakistan Military took over government of the country and ruled uninterrupted until end of 1971. Not only in governance, the Army so dominated the society of the country that Pakistan has been often compared with Prussia, an army with a state rather than a state with an army<sup>83</sup>. Table 2 shows Military Expenditure as percentage of Gross National Product of India, Pakistan compared with Africa and Latin America regions for the time period 1963-70. While Pakistan's expenditure of resources on military do not seem to be much higher than India, we should keep in mind that India was balancing against China also, a more powerful country with whom India fought a losing war in 1962. But Pakistan Army's mobilization of state for own organizational purposes went far beyond just military expenditure.

	India	Pakistan	Africa	Latin America
1963	3.74	3.19	1.83	1.78
1964	3.53	3.10	2.13	2.03
1965	3.70	6.03	2.15	1.88
1966	3.32	4.44	2.27	1.97
1967	3.02	3.73	2.49	2.01
1968	3.13	3.90	2.60	1.95
1969	3.02	3.75	2.93	1.86
1970	3.05	3.77	2.74	1.98

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<sup>83</sup> Cohen (1984) page 135.

Table 2: Military Expenditure as % of GNP 1963-70. [Source: World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, US Dept of State]<sup>84</sup>

Ayesha Siddiqa wrote in her groundbreaking analysis of Pakistan military's dominating reach into politics, economy and society wrote that, "The indigenous breed of military officers that took over the higher command of the three services of the armed forces around 1951 aimed at consolidating political power through increasing their influence in decision making and establishing the organization's financial autonomy. The need to bring affluence to individual personnel was done through Milbus (business and economic activity commanded by military). This enhanced the organization's ability to manipulate the national resources at a systematic level... In Pakistan there was an added factor of lax political control of the organization, which nurtured political ambitions among the top echelons of the army. The Indian political leadership, on the other hand, took measures to establish the dominance of the political class and civil bureaucracy. In consequence, the Pakistan Army pushed itself into direct control of governance through sidelining the weak political class."<sup>85</sup> Even after the pro-democracy movements of late 1960's and the Election of 1970, the Army could not envision civilian control over the organization.

The Army not only directly and indirectly shaped domestic and foreign policy, it also had and still continue to have dominating role in devising national educational curricula, textbooks, public and private media<sup>86</sup>. According to Fair (2014) it is reasonable to simplify Pakistan's strategic culture to that of the army". The Army's total control over policy and politics was amply demonstrated in its decision-making over 1965 war when the military government not only initiated the war but also managed public discourse of the war through tight control of media<sup>87</sup>. If, as according to Helmut von Treitschke, the real test of a state's power status was its ability to decide on its own whether it would engage in warfare, then we can certainly say that the military regime of Pakistan in 1971 had state power and autonomy. According to the formulation of State

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<sup>84</sup> <http://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/rpt/wmeat/c50834.htm>

<sup>85</sup> Siddiqa, Ayesha (2007) page 19

<sup>86</sup> Fair, Christine (2014) page 30

<sup>87</sup> Ahmed (2013) page 135-155



Power by Zakaria, states with higher state power and autonomy are more likely to adopt ambitious foreign policies<sup>88</sup>.

Ideology or ideologies that the ruling elite deliberately promote in the state and society are very influential in shaping both the way FPE perceive structural threats and the way it becomes constrained in policy adoption. Arguably few states in modern era had more consistently adopted major security policies from ideological compulsions than Pakistan. The impelling ideology of the Pakistani ruling elite during this crisis can be analyzed through its three principle and interactive components; Pakistan as a standard bearer of Islam, supremacism vis-à-vis East Pakistan Bengalis and Hindus, and operational ideology of the Army.

Although popularly Islamization of Pakistan state is associated with President General Zia-ul-Huq's regime (1978-88), the process began much earlier. After Pakistan was carved out as a state for Muslims in 1947, the leadership in West Pakistan used the communal basis of identity as a means to unify a geographically and ethnically diverse country<sup>89</sup>. But the secular traditions inherited from British rule largely remained intact in both politics and armed forces during the 1950s; although they were increasingly under assault from conservative quarters. During the Ayub Khan regime (1958-1969), Islam began to be emphasized as a state ideology both for legitimization of a military regime and strengthen national cohesion. Ayub Khan's voluminous writings in local and foreign media made it clear that the regime regarded "Pan-Islamic aspirations and fear of Hindu and Indian domination" as key elements of ideology of Pakistan and Pakistani nationalism<sup>90</sup>.

The government mobilized national institutions like school curricula, print and electronic media to socialize citizens to the ideology and also restrict heterodoxy. The Army as the custodian of Islamic identity of Pakistan was a core element of this ideology. "Pakistan began the process of official myth-creation in earnest. A large central-bureaucracy was created to manufacture an ideology for Pakistan, one that glorified the army as the state's key institution"<sup>91</sup>. Islamic ideology and identity was also extensively recruited for greater military cohesion and effectiveness of the

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<sup>88</sup> Taliaferro (2006)

<sup>89</sup> Fair, Christine (2014) page 86

<sup>90</sup> Haqqani (2005) page 42

<sup>91</sup> Cohen (2004) page 67

army; from soldiers in the regular ranks to the officers in Staff College, indoctrination involved inculcation of a fighting for Islam spirit and portrayal of enemies of Pakistan as enemies of Islam<sup>92</sup>.

Islamic identity was also integral in the second key element of the ideological make-up of Pakistani ruling elite, supremacism towards Hindus in India and Bengalis in East Pakistan. The military regime, social and cultural leaders of West Pakistan consistently conflated India as a Hindu nation and essentialized Hindu mentality and Hindu characteristics inferiorly with respect to Muslim Pakistan<sup>93</sup>. India was regarded as a Paper Tiger that could not stand up to the religiously and morally motivated Pakistani armed forces. In particular, the lavish modern weapons and mechanization program that Pakistan Army went through from 1955 to 1965 by courtesy of USA, created a myth of superiority both among elites and general people<sup>94</sup>. The recurring trope of “one Pakistani soldier was equal to five, ten, or more Indians” was not just propaganda but an implicit belief in West Pakistan. State-supported propaganda effort on Pakistan’s superiority was particularly intensified after the 1965 war, when the battlefield results did not match up to lofty Pakistani expectations. According to Cohen (1984, 69), “this PR apparatus was aimed at the outside world-particularly at the Americans- but it also influenced the military’s judgement of its own competence and raised civilian expectations to excessive heights”.

Behind such braggadocio, Pakistan’s ruling elite always harbored apprehension and anxiety that their much larger neighbor never accepted partition of 1947 as fait accompli and are relentless in destruction of the state of Pakistan which Indians regard as historic part of India itself<sup>95</sup>. This anxiety directly contributed towards mistrust and supremacism towards their co-nationals and coreligionists in East Pakistan. As shown in section 2, immediately after partition of 1947, West Pakistan was almost exclusively Muslim (97%) while a very sizable minority remained in East Pakistan (22% Hindu). From the very beginning, West Pakistani ruling elite saw nationalism in East Pakistan and its demand for autonomy as poorly disguised manipulations by “wily Hindus” who were orchestrating behind the scenes in East Pakistan or from India itself<sup>96</sup>. Pakistani elites also viewed that Hindus in East Pakistan, who were generally overrepresented in all strata of education, deliberately molding the ideals of Bengali Muslims away from Islam and

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<sup>92</sup> Fair, Christine (2013) page 100

<sup>93</sup> Fair, Christine (2013) page 159-163

<sup>94</sup> Cohen (1984) page 64.

<sup>95</sup> Sisson and Rose (1990) page 44

<sup>96</sup> Sisson and Rose (1990) page 37

towards secularism and syncretism. What people in East Pakistan regarded as legitimate and fundamental political demand, was viewed in West Pakistan as direct threat to the core ideology of Pakistan.

The syncretic nature of Bengali culture and ethnicity induced particularly unpleasant racism not only among ruling elites but also among religious leaders in West Pakistan who frequently urged the need to ‘purify’ East Pakistan from Hindu recrudescence<sup>97</sup>. As numerous accounts show, racism towards culturally and physically different Bengalis was not even covert but open and frequently expressed. An expression of a West Pakistani army officer during the post-election crisis of 1970 and quoted in a memoir of a fellow officer capture the widespread view very well, “Don’t worry ...we will not allow these black bastard to rule over us”<sup>98</sup>. Such sentiments were widely shared among the general people as well as the ruling elite in West Pakistan. The supremacism also led the ruling elite in dismissing military resistance capability of Bengalis. President Yahya thought that a “whiff of grapeshot” and re-imposition of martial law would be enough to quell any disturbance from disgruntled East Pakistanis<sup>99</sup>. As Cohen (1984, 135) put it, in absence of civilian institutional check and balance in a military regime, “folklore of the officers’ mess becomes state policy”.

These deep and ingrained beliefs about domestic and regional issues created a strategic culture in Pakistan Army that was more ideologically driven than security. Fair (2013, 7) recounts how an action-oriented revisionism pervades the Pakistani military elite. “For Pakistan’s men on horseback, not winning, even repeatedly, is not the same thing as losing. But simply giving up and accepting the status quo and India’s supremacy, is, by definition, defeat. .... Pakistan’s generals would always prefer to take a calculated risk and be defeated than doing nothing at all”. This strategic culture was true of 1971 as is now and this culture served as the lens through which the military elite perceived its security environment and formulated policies to meet challenges. As numerous studies of war and conflict in modern era have shown, hyper-nationalistic states with military dominated elites are very predisposed to overbalancing through military means; thus we

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<sup>97</sup> Haqqani (2005) page 62

<sup>98</sup> Siddiq, Ayesha (2007) page 77.

<sup>99</sup> Zaheer (1994) page 141

can understand how the ideological nature of Pakistan's ruling elite constrained it towards adopting certain policy in East Pakistan in 1971.

As we examine the Elite-Society relationship in Pakistan in early 1971, we can clearly identify the few important factions. First there was the foreign policy executive in the military regime. The other factions include the West Pakistan political leadership, the economic and business elite that was mostly concentrated in West Pakistan, West Pakistan society, East Pakistan political leadership and East Pakistan society.

During the post-election crisis, the West Pakistan political establishment was effectively represented by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, whose Pakistan People's Party won 82 of 138 seats in the West. Bhutto was a minister during the previous Ayub Khan regime and had cultivated extensive relations with military generals. Bhutto was even more adamant than the military regime in refusal to hand over power to the Awami League, which won 160 seats, because he felt he will be a powerless minority party in such a government. He argued immediately after election that "a majority alone doesn't count in national politics"<sup>100</sup>. During the post-election crisis Bhutto closely consulted with the regime and continuously urged not to accept the demands made by Awami League. Immediately after the military crackdown in March he exclaimed, "By the grace of God Pakistan has at last been saved!"<sup>101</sup>.

The business leaders in West Pakistan, the middle class, the media also welcomed a crackdown on East Pakistan separatism. A West Pakistani elite group of businesses had commanding control in East Pakistan's industry. Six West Pakistani industrialists controlled over 40 percent of total assets, 32 percent of production in large manufacturing and 82 percent of Jute industry, which was the principal export of East Pakistan<sup>102</sup>. The business and professional class feared the worst about losses in assets and income from total economic autonomy of East Pakistan and therefore supported the military crackdown. The West Pakistan media also fully supported the military regime in abandoning political negotiations and indulged in nationalistic fervor through jingoistic banner headlines, editorials and inflammatory commentaries<sup>103</sup>. The only dissent within the administration came from top governmental and martial law administrators stationed in East

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<sup>100</sup> Sisson and Rose (1990) page 60

<sup>101</sup> Zaheer (1994) page 322

<sup>102</sup> Zaheer (1994) page 144

<sup>103</sup> Zaheer (1994) page 325

Pakistan, who, being more familiar with the widespread nationalist fervor in East Pakistan, professed that a military crackdown would be ill-advised<sup>104</sup>. Their objections were brushed aside. Neoclassical realism tells us that when all relevant domestic factions agree to a threat, FPE become relatively unconstrained in policy choice<sup>105</sup>.

Although all classes of Bengalis in East Pakistan were in a deluge of nationalistic fervor before and after the Election 1970, the demand for autonomy had much earlier origin. Since the early sixties, students and educated professionals in East Pakistan were imbued with socialism and nationalism<sup>106</sup>. Many of them concluded that an egalitarian society can only be achieved in a country independent from the West and thus regarded election and autonomy only steps towards independence. Many of the more radical members and leaders of political organizations pushed for unilateral declaration of independence when the military regime showed recalcitrance in accepting the Six-points and handing over power. In East Pakistan the month before the crackdown in march were filled with countrywide demonstration, non-cooperation, strikes and many bloody political violence. According to Sisson and Rose (1990, 91) while “the Awami League leadership was able to capitalize on the tension, although it was also to become a captive of it”.

### 6.3. PAKISTAN’S DECISION AND CONSEQUENCES

Let us now recapitulate Pakistan’s internal balancing dilemma in early 1971. We have a non-democratic, military regime that was being reluctantly compelled to transfer power to an elected civilian authority. The military regimes fostered a hyper-nationalistic state that not only regarded the neighboring power with deep suspicion and fear but also suspected that the newly elected political entity from a geographically separate region was colluding with the neighboring power for secession. Any secession would not only irreversibly change the relative power distribution in the region against Pakistan but also undermine the founding ideology of the state. The regime had generally wide social support in its policy decisions with respect to the elected party and the geographically distinct region where the party was based. According to Neoclassical Realism, major policy choices result from a “crosscutting inter-relationship between national

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<sup>104</sup> Sisson and Rose (1990) page 85

<sup>105</sup> Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro eds (2009) page 64

<sup>106</sup> Zaheer (1994) page 126

identity formation and reproduction, domestic political struggles for control of the state and external actors and conditions”<sup>107</sup>. NCR tells us that an FPE in place of Pakistan’s military regime in early 1971 would be highly likely to pursue an aggressive over-balancing policy to re-consolidate domestic power.

The Pakistani military regime decided on such a policy long before the March 25, 1971 crackdown in East Pakistan. On 11 December, 1970, just four days after the Assembly Elections, an operational directive for a plan code named ‘Operation Blitz’ was signed and issued by Lieutenant General Sahibzada Yaqub Khan, commander of the eastern command and martial law administrator of East Pakistan<sup>108</sup>. The plan called for the army to take control of the entire civil administration and to be given “complete freedom in exercise of .. powers” to restore law and order. General Yaqub suggested that the operation be carried out with:

“the greatest vigour and determination to create an unmistakable impact and remove any doubt regarding the type of martial law which is being imposed in contra-distinction to the deliberately watered-down martial law to which people have become conditioned. Shock action would therefore be imperative .. There would not be no hesitation in using force for effect.”<sup>109</sup>

As the protracted political negotiations went on from December to March, General Yaqub Khan, who had a reputation in the Pakistan Army as a thoughtful officer and brilliant strategist, began to have doubts about efficacy of a crackdown. In March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1971, he sent a telegram to the President that said, “Only solution to the present crisis is a purely political one... I am convinced there is no military solution which can make sense in the present situation. I am consequently unable to accept the responsibility for implementing a mission, namely military solution, which would mean civil war and large scale killing of civilians and would achieve no sane aim”<sup>110</sup>.

By then the regime in West Pakistan was set on a military solution. Lt. General Yaqub Khan was replaced by Lt. General Tikka Khan, who had the reputation of a ruthless follower of directives and earned the sobriquet of ‘Butcher of Baluchistan’ for his vigorous military action against West Pakistani tribesmen in the eponymous province in 1958<sup>111</sup>. All the frantic

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<sup>107</sup> Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro eds (2009) page 116

<sup>108</sup> Nawaz, Shuja (2008) page 264

<sup>109</sup> Nawaz, Shuja (2008) page 265

<sup>110</sup> Nawaz, Shuja (2008) page 266.

<sup>111</sup> Nawaz (2008) page 266

negotiations with Awami League leadership that were taking place in March, 1971 were a camouflage; troops were being secretly sent into East Pakistan from the west long before that. Historians also have hypothesized that Zulfikar Bhutto, whose obduracy in negotiations seemed to drag on the negotiations, was privy to the military plan and provided political cover by striving to demonstrate that the regime hit on a political impasse and had no other alternative<sup>112</sup>.

The implicit objective of the plan was nothing less than a “final solution” to the problem of Bengali nationalism<sup>113</sup>. Outwardly the immediate objectives were to de-capitate Awami League by arresting all mid and upper level leaders, neutralize radical students and intellectuals by killing and arrests in the East Pakistan capital Dhaka, and disarm Bengali police and army personnel to prevent potential mutiny. The second phase called for fanning out throughout the country and secure all cities and town. On the night of 25<sup>th</sup> March the crackdown began. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of Awami League was arrested but most of the upper leadership escaped to India. At least several thousand, students, general people, police personnel, educators, politicians were killed in Dhaka on that night alone<sup>114</sup>. But the disarming of Bengali army personnel did not go according to plan. Only 4000 of 17,000 Bengali officers and soldiers could be disarmed, most of the rest escaped with their weapons and began an armed insurgency against Pakistan Army almost immediately<sup>115</sup>. Independence from Pakistan was declared over airwaves several times on 26-27 March and Bangladesh’s bloody struggle for freedom began.

As the Pakistani Army moved from large cities to towns and villages throughout Bangladesh to secure the countryside, many thousands of general people were killed. While Bengalis of all shades were victims of murderous atrocities, a terrible pattern borne out of the ideology of Pakistan Army and state began to emerge. East Pakistan’s sizable Hindu minority were ‘doubly marked out for prosecution’<sup>116</sup>. The motive of this targeting was hardly political because Bengali Muslims were at the forefront of nationalist struggle for autonomy and they formed the core of resistance while Hindus were mostly poor, apolitical villagers. The US consul general in Dhaka sent a cable to Washington on 25<sup>th</sup> May that said, “evidence of a systematic persecution of the Hindu population is too detailed and too massive to be ignored. While the Western mind

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<sup>112</sup> Ahmed (2013) page 181

<sup>113</sup> Shah, Aqil (2014) page 111

<sup>114</sup> Bass, Gary (2013), page 75

<sup>115</sup> Zaheer (1994) page 169

<sup>116</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page 81

boggles at the enormity of a possible planned eviction of 10 million people, the fact remains that officers and men of the Army are behaving as if they had been given carte blanche to rid East Pakistan of these ‘subversives’.”<sup>117</sup> The US State Department publicly admitted in late June that it estimates at least two hundred thousand people have already died in East Pakistan<sup>118</sup> In military perspectives, the brutal tactics of terrorize, occupy and hold seem to be effective in the beginning. The lightly armed Bangladeshi rebel soldiers couldn’t provide sufficient resistance to units of Pakistani Army. By end of May, all major town, district headquarters were securely in hand of the Army and resistance appeared to be faltering<sup>119</sup>.

The crackdown and atrocities caused an enormous exodus of Bengalis to leave home and cross the border in to India. According to official Indian estimates, the total influx up to the middle of June was about 6 million, of which 5.3 million were Hindus, who only comprised 20% of East Pakistan’s population<sup>120</sup>. India, reeling under this huge wave of refugees, mounted an international diplomatic push to pressurize Pakistan into taking the refugees back and seek a political settlement with Awami League. But Pakistan government appeared to be adamant in refusal to readmit “traitorous” Hindu Bengalis and kept the targeted atrocities ongoing that was fueling refugee exodus itself<sup>121</sup>. The Pakistani regime was seeking not only political subjugation of Bengalis but also an irreversible demographic change. Indian diplomatic efforts to pressurize Pakistan also appeared to be ineffectual, with country after country officially taking up the position that the whole thing is Pakistan’s internal matter and Pakistan’s sovereignty and territorial integrity should not be violated.

In the post-colonial era there have been many separatist conflicts in the world where a province or an ethnically different people sought secession from the metropolitan center. Undemocratic, nationalistic regimes have often used heavy-handed military campaigns to stamp out secessionists and internally balance the country. Success or failure of these separatist wars often crucially dependent upon which side was materially and diplomatically supported by which outside powers. The fate of the new state of Bangladesh, supported by almost none but surrounding

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<sup>117</sup> Raghavan, Srinath (2014) page 52

<sup>118</sup> Bass, Gary (2013), page 148

<sup>119</sup> Zaheer (1994) page 170

<sup>120</sup> Bass, Gary (2013), page 121

<sup>121</sup> Sisson and Rose (1990) page 8147-148



India, now almost completely depended upon the nature of response by India to the Pakistani aggressive internal balancing.

## **7.0. THE INDIAN RESPONSE, MASTERFUL REALPOLITIK**

### **7.1. INIDA'S RADICALLY ALTERED SECURITY SCENARIO FOLLOWING PAKISTANI CRACKDOWN**

In the aftermath of the Pakistani crackdown in Bangladesh from March 1971, the Indian republic found itself in one of the worst security predicament of its 25-year history. The Indian government was caught by surprise at the extent of Pakistani response. The Indian intelligence service, Research and Analyst Wing (RAW) reported in March that it expected a political settlement by the military regime with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman<sup>122</sup>. India was looking forward to a democratic and less-antagonistic government in Pakistan that pledged to expand economic ties with India<sup>123</sup>. Instead there was not only a hostile military takeover of East Pakistan but also an unbearable economic burden of nearly 10 million refugees seeking safety in India. The demographic composition of the refugees was also a deep security concern. India itself had nearly seventy million Muslims in a population of more than a half billion; more than 80% of which was Hindu. India deeply feared sectarian violence engulfing the country if this genocidal prosecution against Hindus in East Pakistan was not addressed and therefore tried to keep the information about demographic composition of refugees classified for domestic media<sup>124</sup>.

The changed military balance in the east was particularly worrying for India. Until 1971, Pakistan concentrated its military power in the West and left East Pakistan largely demilitarized because the strategic doctrine called for concentration of force to face numerically far superior Indian forces. The defense of the East lies in the West was the conventional military mantra. But with the crackdown in the East, the regular Pakistani military force increased from about a brigade strength to more than 45,000 in March and still rapidly increasing<sup>125</sup>. More ominously for India was positioning of the troops in East Pakistan. A large part of Pakistani mechanized units was

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<sup>122</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page 45

<sup>123</sup> Sisson and Rose (1990) page 134

<sup>124</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page 121-122

<sup>125</sup> Nawaz (2008) page 267

concentrated on the North East corner and East of Bangladesh where India had only ‘neck’ of corridor territory connecting the North-East provinces with rest of mainland India<sup>126</sup>. Many Pakistani units were within a couple of hundred miles away from the furthest point of Chinese advance in the 1962 Sino-Indian War (Figure 2). A war with Pakistan and China together was the worst-case scenario for Indian political leaders and military strategists. Moreover, Pakistan Army units positioned near the western border of East Pakistan were very close to Indian provinces Nagaland and Mizoram where India was fighting its own separatist insurgencies. A militarized and hostile East Pakistan potentially could create a host of problems in the already fragile North-East India.

In the months after the crackdown in March, India actively looked for international help for rolling back Pakistani military onslaught against democracy in East Pakistan and returning of refugees. But in that diplomatic campaign India found itself almost alone. Humanitarian intervention through violation of state sovereignty only became part of conventional normative discourse on international policy in the 1990s following the end of the Cold War. Before that sovereignty was regarded as the foremost part of the normative structures that upheld international society<sup>127</sup>. Country after country told India that the crackdown is Pakistan’s internal affair and India must negotiate directly with Pakistan about refugees. Almost all Muslim-majority countries were firmly on the side of Pakistan. Jordan and Iran even helped USA in covert supply of combat aircraft to Pakistan<sup>128</sup>. Although West European government leaders expressed sympathy and moral support to India privately, they all took the official position that the atrocities and the consequences are Pakistan’s internal matter and urged India to negotiate with Pakistan directly. China, with its history of hostility with India was expectedly against all interference in East Pakistan. China’s own problem with secessionism in Tibet and Taiwan helped to harden its ideological support of Pakistan’s problem in the eastern province<sup>129</sup>.

The most curious geo-political aspect with respect to the 1971 conflict was the involvement of US presidential administration. At that time the Nixon administration was pursuing groundwork

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<sup>126</sup> Ganguli (2001) page 61

<sup>127</sup> Ayoob (2002)

<sup>128</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page xix

<sup>129</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page 134

for its most famous foreign policy coup, 'opening to China'<sup>130</sup>. By developing relations with China, President Nixon and his National Security Advisor during that time, Henry Kissinger, not only wanted to create a new global balance of power but also craft a managed exit from the quagmire of Vietnam. Because USA did not have any formal diplomatic relationship with China, it was using Pakistan as an intermediary to China since 1969. Moreover, Both Nixon and Kissinger had a personal rapport with Pakistan's president Yahya Khan while they regarded India's political leadership with distrust and suspicion<sup>131</sup>. Throughout 1971, the US administration not only tried to preclude Indian military action against both East and West Pakistan, but also supplied weapons and military equipment to Pakistan, even to the extent of breaking US laws<sup>132</sup>. The Nixon White-house tapes later revealed that Kissinger said to Nixon on 12<sup>th</sup> December, "we are the ones who have been operating against our public opinion, against our bureaucracy, at the very edge of legality". Kissinger and Nixon, were doing this while consistently receiving advice from the aides that violent crackdown on East Pakistan was very likely to fail and the separation of the two countries was almost inevitable<sup>133</sup>.

The bright spot in Indian efforts to seek international support came from Soviet Union. After Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister in 1966, India had been steadily abandoning Non-Aligned posture in international relations and moving closer to Soviet Union. Soviet Union became a principal supplier for Indian military and industrialization efforts in the late 1960's. During 1971, Indian diplomacy with Kremlin culminated in a Treaty of Friendship between India and Soviet Union in August 9, 1971. While much of the treaty terms were vague, importantly it had an article declaring that if either country was attacked, the other would help to remove such threats and "take appropriate measures to ensure peace and the security of their countries"<sup>134</sup>. The treaty gave India much needed assurance of deterrence from aggressive intervention of outside powers, namely China and USA, in the matters within South Asia.

While India did not receive much outside help in rolling back the Pakistani crackdown, the very norm of non-interference in international society in what they saw as a regional issue created

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<sup>130</sup> Raghavan (2013) page 85-87

<sup>131</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page 11-12

<sup>132</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page 294-296

<sup>133</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page 29-31

<sup>134</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page 220

a historic opportunity for India. The strategic situation in 1971 for India was brilliantly encapsulated by an Indian Foreign Secretary much later in a 1995 book. “The two wings of Pakistan with an intervening stretch of a thousand miles of Indian Republic was a geographical and political incongruity. India was also getting tired of having to confront and possibly fight Pakistan on two fronts whenever a conflict situation arose, specially so when the eastern front would strategically attract a China-Pakistan nexus. So, if the people of East Pakistan, because of their socio-ethnic and linguistic considerations and in the face of obstinate negation of their aspirations, wished secession from Pakistan and independence, India had no objections. If Indian endorsement and support resulted in this new entity being friendly to India, it was all to the good”<sup>135</sup>.

While this later assessment seemed to putting Indian interest in the conflict almost as a welcome byproduct, barely a week after the March 25 crackdown a brutally frank argument for war was put forward by K. Subrahmanyam, India’s foremost strategic thinker at that time<sup>136</sup>. He proposed that India use the ‘historic opportunity’ to bid for hegemony in South Asia by escalation into all-out war. He reasoned that the Bangladeshi guerillas wouldn’t be able to defeat Pakistani army on their own, even with full Indian support. The Indian Army would be able to defeat Pakistan in both fronts, capturing East Pakistan while aggressively defending against the West. If India can use the ‘genocide’ in East Pakistan as a casus belli, China, let alone USA would not really intervene to rescue Pakistan. Subrahmanyam’s argument was not unopposed; several other important military thinkers and politicians urged caution because separation of East Pakistan could fuel separatism within India’s diverse and vast polity itself<sup>137</sup>.

The following table show the military balance between India and Pakistan in 1971. We can see that India had an overwhelming advantage over Pakistan. But the most important factor in this balance was China. China of course had far greater military power than India and if China intervened in favor of Pakistan in any time during the conflict, India would be in a very precarious situation. On the other hand, if intervention was postponed until the winter months, heavy snow on the Himalayan mountain passes would make a Chinese attack from the north very unlikely<sup>138</sup>.

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<sup>135</sup> J.N. Dixit, quoted in Ganguli (2001) page 62

<sup>136</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page 92-93

<sup>137</sup> Sisson and Rose (1993) page 150

<sup>138</sup> Gary, Bass (2013) page 94

	India	Pakistan
Total Armed Forces	980,000	392,000
Main Battle Tanks	900	350
Artillery Guns	3,000	1,100
Combat Aircraft	625	285

Table 3: Military Balance India-Pakistan 1971 (Source: Military Balance 1971-72, IISS)

Let us now assess Indian policy options in terms of Neoclassical Realist theory that we developed in section 5. For India appropriate balancing would have been seeking independence of Bangladesh without being perceived as aggressor in the international community. The legitimacy of intervention depended on highlighting the genocidal conduct of Pakistan, plight of nearly 10 million refugees and determined armed struggle of Bangladeshi freedom fighters for independence. Opinion of the general people in the world, in particularly the western democracies, was massively in favor of Bangladeshi people and growing with each passing week. India should only directly intervene militarily when not only an easy victory is certain but also likelihood of outside intervention is considerably lessened. Most importantly, India should not be perceived to be seeking territorial gain itself at expense of Pakistan or Bangladesh.

The under-balancing policy would have been to accept Pakistani military takeover of East Pakistan and exodus of mostly Hindu refugees as a fait accompli. Another way India could have under-balanced was relying only on military support of Bangladeshi resistance; which was widely deemed by experts to be insufficient for forcing a decision within foreseeable time horizon. The overbalancing policy for India would have been to militarily intervene prematurely without sufficient conditions of clear victory or development of legitimacy. Not only India would have perceived as an aggressor but also there were higher likelihood of outside intervention in favor of Pakistan in that scenario. Moreover, relations with most Muslim countries would have become poisoned for a long time.

Let us now examine how India’s domestic variables constrained the policy choice of Indian Foreign Policy Executive.

## 7.2. INDIA’S INTERVENING VARIABLES

Ever since its independence in 1947, India has been often called the world’s ‘biggest and boldest experiment in democracy’<sup>139</sup>. One-sixth of world’s population living within a country one-third size of USA, India has been famous for its incredible diversity in ethnicity, language, religion as well as infamous for widespread, appalling poverty. The politics reflected the rambunctious diversity with democracy challenged by extreme left and right organizations, separatism in many regions and frequent tensions between central government and powerful state governments. Although these endemic factors suggest that Indian state power was greatly constrained in freedom to choose and execute national security policy, there were other factors that affected freedom of FPE in different ways.

Although India had been a democracy since 1947, the Indian National Congress (INC), the party that led the independence movement during British colonial rule, was at the seat of power at the center continuously until 1978 through election victories. Fortuitously, the INC led by Indira Gandhi won a landslide general election victory in March 1971, the very month of Pakistani crackdown in the East, winning 352 out of 518 parliamentary seats. The second largest party had only 25 seats<sup>140</sup>. India Foreign Policy Executive was characterized by dominance of politics over military since the inception. The political system of security decision-making closely followed the British parliamentary system, with a Defense Committee of the Cabinet at the apex<sup>141</sup>. Although the committee consulted military leadership in national security matters, the decision-making rested on the cabinet, in particularly on the Prime Minister. During eras of strong Prime Ministers, their own office, the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) had great influence in decision-making.

While India had a large and strong military, the country was economically underdeveloped and mired in poverty. The following table show country comparison in population and income level of India, Pakistan and Brazil in 1971.

	Population million	Gross National Income per Capita US\$	Life Expectancy at Birth years

<sup>139</sup> Geoffrey, C. Ward, National Geographic Magazine May 1997 Issue

<sup>140</sup> Raghavan (2013) page 55

<sup>141</sup> Thomas, Raju (1986) page 110-130

India	554	120	47.2
West Pakistan	58	180	52.9
Brazil	96	440	58.2

Table 4: Population, Income and poverty comparison in India, Pakistan and Brazil in 1971 (<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/>)

Indian development and poverty alleviation programs were heavily dependent on foreign assistance. Much of the aid came from USA; annually about \$200 million aid, \$220 million development loan and \$65 million worth of food aid<sup>142</sup>. This was substantial as the total overseas development aid and assistance to India was about \$900 million in 1970-71. The Nixon administration threatened to shut down or significantly cut the aid amount if India went to war with Pakistan. The more pressing economic concern was the huge cost of sheltering refugees from East Pakistan. In the third week of September, Indian government assessed that it would require \$576 million to take care of 8 million refugees for six-month only. By that time relief assistance pledged by foreign governments amounted to \$ 154 million only; barely \$ 21 million of which were actually received by that time<sup>143</sup>. Analyzing projected cost of harboring refugees if no political solution to the crisis were reached within foreseeable future, several Indian experts counseled that a short-war to resolve the crisis will be much less expensive in economic terms than sheltering refugees for a long time<sup>144</sup>.

India was a poor country beset with many economic problems in 1971 but it had a relatively strong military and the political power of the FPE was high. Within the constraints set by international system, it had considerable freedom of action in pursuing a robust security policy. Whether the FPE would correctly balance, overbalance or under-balance against the security threat, greatly depended on the ideological makeup of the FPE.

We can characterize the ideology of the Indian political elites who were crucial in policy formulation and implementation in 1971 in two mainstays, nationalism and realism. Of the two, Indian nationalism was a core ideology going far back into the days of independence struggle against the British, while realism-turn was a relatively new transformation in the policy-making

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<sup>142</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page 242

<sup>143</sup> Raghavan (2013) page 206 -207

<sup>144</sup> Ganguli (2001) page 51

elite. The partition of 1947 and creation of Pakistan was a direct affront to Indian nationalism, which held that the contiguous and integrated Indian Subcontinent is home of all its people<sup>145</sup>. Two nations theory, the basis of Pakistan and which posited that Hindus and Muslims should have separate homeland, was a deep anathema to the Indian nationalists. Thus break-up of two halves of Pakistan, which only had Islam in common, was an appealing prospect to Indian nationalists long before 1971 because it directly undermined that religion is legitimate base of nationhood. Many Indian nationalists firmly believed that first the British and then the Americans were propping up Pakistan in the subcontinent as the continuation of the old ‘divide and rule’ policy<sup>146</sup>. Indian policy-makers have been using their intelligence services to develop relations with Bengali nationalists in East Pakistan and encouraging separatism long before 1971 with a view of undermining, what they perceived as the weakest link in the artificial construct of Pakistan<sup>147</sup>.

Although India had a self-conscious beginning as a secular democracy, Hindu values, concepts and symbols pervaded the elite culture because of large Hindu majority in the population and even larger Hindu predominance in various elite categories<sup>148</sup>. As the legacy of several hundred years of Muslim imperial rule of India remained a bitterly contested legacy, one cannot easily dismiss that subsurface strands of reciprocation of war and conquest lay hidden in the mind of elites.

The second important aspect of elite ideology for foreign and security policy was a turn to realism in the aftermath of War of 1962 and War of 1965. After independence in 1947, Indian foreign and security policy was dominated by the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who was in power till his death in 1964. Nehru’s foreign and security policy was characterized as idealistic and was built on several pillars of principles. They were opposition to colonialism and imperialism; non-Alignment and pan-Asianism; negotiation between powers; nuclear disarmament and peaceful co-existence<sup>149</sup>. It is debatable that to what extent these principles were really adhered to during Nehruvian era but most historians agree that policy and diplomacy in this period showed a misguided idealism. The aftermath of shock of the wars of 1962 and 1965 and ascension in

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<sup>145</sup> Sisson and Rose (1990) page 36-37

<sup>146</sup> Cohen (1984) page 98-99

<sup>147</sup> Raman (2012) Chapter 2

<sup>148</sup> Sisson and Rose (1990) page 36

<sup>149</sup> Bajpai, Basit and Krishnappa eds (2014) introduction



Premiership of Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi in 1966 are regarded as beginning of a period of 'hard realism' in Indian politics that lasted till mid 1980's<sup>150</sup>.

Although the 1971 War itself is regarded as the crowning episode of the 'hard realist' era in Indian policy-making, the turn to realism happened earlier. Among other policies, the realism-turn entailed abandoning non-aligned posture all but in name only and rapid development of military capability. India's closer relations with Soviet Union in the 1960s resulted in her becoming India's principle source of heavy military weapons. From 1964 to 1972, India obtained 450 T 54/T-55 tanks, 4 F-class Submarines, 5 Petya-Class Frigates, 8 squadrons of Mig -21, 7 squadrons of Su-7 and many other weapons<sup>151</sup>. While Nehru did not position necessary Indian armed forces in defense against China because he believed that arms race against a big-power is counter-productive and security between powers could be obtained through diplomacy rather than raising of armies, the new security policy doped a doctrine of 'sufficient defense' that called for maintaining superior military capability against Pakistan and a minimum border defense capability against China for some time until superpower intervention can forestall further Chinese advance<sup>152</sup>.

While nationalism in India's elite made it more likely that India will not hesitate to exploit the 'historic opportunity' through military means, the realism in Indian FPE, India's democratic political structure, consultative political-military relationship and the military balance with respect to China and Pakistan were likely to cause prudence and pragmatism in devising policy.

India was being beset with many ethnic separatist and political extremist movements in 1971 and the problem was particularly acute in the areas surrounding East Pakistan. Most worrisome of those extremist movements for India was leftist insurgency by Communist Party Marxist-Leninist (CPML) in the Indian states bordering west of East Pakistan. Those Indian states not only had linguistic and ethnic ties with people in East Pakistan but extreme-left movements in both countries maintained close contact and support through a long and very porous border<sup>153</sup>. The influx of huge number of refugees and ongoing armed insurgency had the potential to greatly exacerbate secessionist and extremist movements, particularly if the crisis went on for far too long.

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<sup>150</sup> Malone (2011) page 47

<sup>151</sup> Chari, P. R. (1979)

<sup>152</sup> Thomas, Raju (1986) page 16-18

<sup>153</sup> Sisson and Rose (1990) page 179-180

India's own secessionist movements created a problem of legitimacy for military intervention in East Pakistan. It was hypocritical to argue for rights of self-determination of East Pakistanis when India itself was using military and internal security forces to stamp out secessionists in Kashmir, Mizoram and many other places. India line of argument against this accusation was two-pronged; India highlighted the racial and genocidal aspect of Pakistani crackdown that made Pakistan's internal affair India's internal affair as well though the exodus of nearly ten million refugees. Secondly, India emphasized the democratic nature of its polity, where political organizations were free to pursue their legitimate political grievance through contested elections<sup>154</sup>.

Indian media and society were not only largely in support of military intervention to roll back the Pakistani crackdown and aid Bangladesh to gain independence, they were also more belligerent about intervention. India, as large and vibrant democracy, had a very boisterous press and the press took up causes of 'heroic' resistance of the Bengali people and the suffering of refugees with much gusto<sup>155</sup>. They kept urging government to take quick and decisive action through banner headlines and fiery editorials. Political parties other than the ruling INC also were very vehement and vocal in their support of intervention. Indira Gandhi's main political opponent, the leftist leader Jayaprakash Narayan, consistently urged for recognition of Bangladesh as a sovereign nation and full support for its independence<sup>156</sup>.

### 7.3. INDIA'S DECISION AND CONSEQUENCES

The Indian FPE took an early decision to eventually go into war. Within days following the Pakistani crackdown, the Indian Cabinet Committee of the parliament met with the chiefs of staff of the three forces to discuss military options<sup>157</sup>. The chief of Army Staff, General Manekshaw pointed out several difficulties for immediate military action. Firstly, several divisions of the Army were tied down in fighting insurgency and political extremists in different regions. Disengaging and repositioning them would take some time. Secondly, the Air Force needed time

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<sup>154</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page 123-124.

<sup>155</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page 195

<sup>156</sup> Raghavan (2013) page 65

<sup>157</sup> Ganguli (2001) page 63

to restoration and upgrading of Airbases around East Pakistan to prepare them for launching airstrikes. Thirdly, the rainy Monsoon season will soon arrive in June, at that time the flat and riverine land of East Pakistan essentially becomes a vast waterbody, making military movements virtually impossible for 3-4 months. Lastly, the Generals pointed out that by November, not only the land will dry out enough for movement of tanks and heavy vehicles, snowfall in Himalayas will also lessen threat of Chinese military incursion from the north very considerably.

The Indian political leadership took the counsel of the generals and decided to postpone conventional military intervention until November 15<sup>158</sup>. Meanwhile India decided to militarily support the Bangladeshi rebels, known as ‘Muktibahini’-Freedom Force, militarily to keep the resistance ongoing and weaken the interior lines of Pakistani Army within East Pakistan. Also India decided on a diplomatic and public relations campaign about plight of refugees and Bengali aspirations of self-determination, throughout the world for drawing international support and sway world public opinion. While endorsement from foreign governments was disappointing, support from the people of the world was an altogether different matter. The high point of that public support was the famous “Concert for Bangladesh” in New York’s Madison Square Garden on August 1, 1971<sup>159</sup>. Arranged by Beatles musician George Harrison and participated by famous artists like Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Eric Clapton and many others, Concert for Bangladesh was the first global popular-music event held for a humanitarian cause and generated huge interest and sympathy for cause of Bangladesh in the global community.

Meanwhile the Bengali resistance was facing difficulties in presenting significant challenge to the Pakistani Army. India did not initially supply and armed the guerrillas with enough heavier weapons and equipment because captured Indian weapons and equipment would be used by Pakistan in propaganda to highlight Indian interference to the world<sup>160</sup>. After the lightly armed guerillas failed to meet expectations, India decided to increase the pace of training new guerrillas, integrate Indian Army with training and command and provide them with heavier weapons. By end of November, nearly 100,000 guerillas had been trained<sup>161</sup>.

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<sup>158</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page 262

<sup>159</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) 212-213

<sup>160</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page 184

<sup>161</sup> Raghavan (2013) page 210- 211

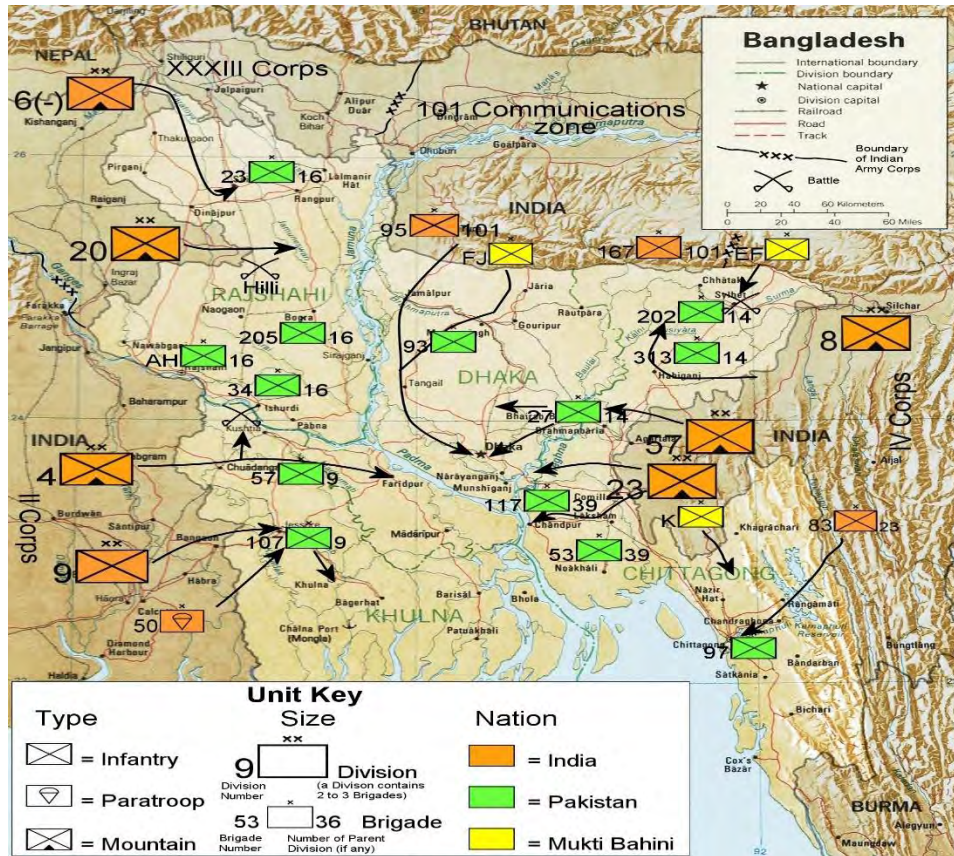


Figure 5: Pakistani and Indian Army units in the Eastern Front during December, 1971

By November India had 3 Corps of 8 Army Divisions positioned surrounding East, North and West of Bangladesh<sup>162</sup>. Indian regular Army had more than 2:1 superiority in men over Pakistani Army in the East, more than 100000 Mukti Bahini only made the inferiority of Pakistani forces more lopsided. After 21<sup>st</sup> November, Indian Army units launched incursions into East Pakistan and held on strategic areas around principal Pakistani defensive positions<sup>163</sup>. There were some pitched battles but no all-out war. India did not launch deep strikes within East Pakistan. From the very early days of military planning, India hoped to goad Pakistan ‘into drawing first’ and thereby mitigate the stigma of aggressor<sup>164</sup>.

Meanwhile the people, media and the Army officers in the West Pakistan were seething with patriotic fervor against India and demanding all out military action<sup>165</sup>. Pakistan Army’s

<sup>162</sup> Nawaz (2008) page 290-291

<sup>163</sup> Sisson and Rose (1990) page 213

<sup>164</sup> Zaheer (1994) page 303

<sup>165</sup> Zaheer (1994) page 359

decades long policy of nurturing a militaristic, hyper-nationalism caught-up with them. Pakistan decided to attack India in the West even though there were little hope of influencing events in the East. General Yahya confessed after the war that the army could not have tolerated the ignominy of losing East Pakistan without an all-out war with India<sup>166</sup>. Pakistan launched air-strikes against Indian positions in the West on 4<sup>th</sup> December and opened up Western Front in the hope of gaining some territory to bargain for the Army in the East. But Indian Army easily defended the western front and launched an invasion of East Pakistan from all three sides. Although some Pakistan units in the border areas fought very well to frustrate plans of several large Indian units<sup>167</sup>, the outcome was never in doubt. Many Indian mechanized units bypassed Pakistani strongpoints and headed straight towards the capital Dhaka at the center of the country. On 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1971, General Niazi, the Pakistani commander in East surrendered to the joint India-Bangladesh command.

## **8.0. HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS REVISITED**

According to Pakistan scholar Anatole Lieven, the catastrophe of 1971 was the “terrible circumstances” through which Bangladesh came about, not the fact that it happened. He believes that the separation was all but inevitable<sup>168</sup>. This judgement is not just representative of a significant number of South Asian scholars but also reflects opinion of many observers of India-Pakistan long before the eventful year of 1971. This study also shows that the structural context leading up to 1971, and the nature of the state of Indian and Pakistan, made both the events of 1971 and their eventual outcome highly predisposed. In spite of preponderance of historical evidences supporting a high degree of determinacy, the historical account of 1971 in popular discourse of the three countries is still dominated by contingent factors and decisions made by main actors.

Defeat in the 1971 War and the separation of East Pakistan is the most traumatic event in Pakistan’s history and legacy of that period still reverberates in Pakistan’s politics and society. While a small fraction of Pakistan’s intelligentsia now acknowledge that the roots of separation lay in the flawed centralized-nature of the state from its very inception, the rest of the country

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<sup>166</sup> Zaheer (1994) page 360

<sup>167</sup> Sisson and Rose (1990) page 215

<sup>168</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) paraphrased in page 329-330

remains mired in either a ‘fog of amnesia’ or in bitter recrimination of Pakistani military and political leadership during 1971<sup>169</sup>. And above all they blame Indian machination and design. According to Sumit Ganguli, “the structural dimensions of Pakistan’s deeply-flawed priorities, choices, and policies in contributing to the East Pakistan crisis and the emergence of Bangladesh are left unexamined in most Pakistani analyses. Instead, the collapse of Pakistani polity is simply blamed on the professional laxity and flawed personalities of particular individuals- and, of course, Indian and, more specifically, ‘Hindu’ perfidy”<sup>170</sup>.

While in India, victory in the 1971 war and vivisection of Pakistan has long been regarded as one of the triumphal high points of the republic since 1947, the realism and opportunism behind Indian decision-making before and during 1971 has been consistently understated in public discourse. Instead the humanitarian dimension of Indian intervention, and villainy and foolhardiness of Pakistani leaders has been emphasized. One reason is that although realism has been the dominant ideology of Indian foreign policy elite from the mid-1960s onward, public conversation on current affairs and Indian policy never got out of the shadow of the two giants of Indian polity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Gandhi and Nehru<sup>171</sup>. Gandhi’s articulation of philosophy of non-violence and moralism in national life, and Nehru’s avowed ideal of progressive multilateral engagement in the international arena, held sway over the rhetoric of popular discourse on Indian foreign policy and recent history. But from the 1990s onwards, as ethno-nationalists became a significant presence in Indian national politics, assertive realism has become increasingly popular perspective in articulation of Indian history and foreign policy objectives.

The events of 1971 created deep cleavages in all sections of the polity of Bangladesh, the country most affected by the war and the outcome. The role and contribution of individuals and groups before and during the war became contentious sources of conflict among politicians, bureaucrats, military officers, even in civil society after the war. These conflicts have been crucial in many of the critical political changes of Bangladesh till the present day.

I contend that narrative-style of history writing that has predominated popular account of the 1971 conflict, is partly responsible for sustaining the perception of historical contingency and

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<sup>169</sup> Bass, Gary (2013) page 229-231

<sup>170</sup> Ganguli (2001) page 73

<sup>171</sup> Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy (2015) page 14-16

actor responsibility surrounding the events of 1971. Narratives are stories told about something that happened. A narrative explanation presents an account of linkage among discrete events as a process that has led to an outcome narrator is seeking to explain<sup>172</sup>. Narrative accounts are different than positivist approaches of Social Sciences in that they do not invoke universal hypotheses and general laws to explain human social phenomena. The ‘Narrative Turn’ in social sciences began in the 1970s and 1980s partly as reaction to the overt pretention of scientific explanation of positivist approaches. The logic of narratives is different from scientific rationality in that it does not depend on general laws to explain complex social phenomena. According to Polkinghorne narrative construction correspond to a "narrative rationality," which "understands synoptically the meaning of a whole, seeing it as a dialectic integration of its parts"<sup>173</sup>. The validity of historical narratives depends on whether things "have actually happened in the way reported in the sentences of the narratives” and synoptic coherence among the statements, i.e., a configuration in a plot structure (Polkinghorne, 1988, p.62- 63).

The goal of weaving together one coherent story or plot structure in a narrative explanation, often compel narrators to incorporate inconsistent information that violate ‘narrative rationality’. Historical narratives significantly depend on memoires, autobiographies, interviews, etc. to reconstruct past events into a story that corresponds to human experience. Historical actors who are also the interviewee in these narration, most often come to understand and give meaning to past event retrospectively<sup>174</sup>. Apart from personal and ideological interests of actors in reshaping understanding of the past events, memory itself is selective and play complex psychological tricks in recollections and reconstructions. We can see the pitfalls of depending on memoires and interviews to construct a narrative plot of historical events while neglecting critical role of structural conditions, in Sisson and Rose’s famous study of the 1971 conflict, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (University of California Press, 1991).

Sisson and Rose’s main thesis is that while the 1971 political crisis and conflict precipitated in fully conventional war between India and Pakistan, the outbreak of war was not envisioned by decision-making elite in the two countries but resulted from sum of individual decisions that trapped the countries into a spiral of escalation to war. Sisson and Rose’s study implicitly draws

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<sup>172</sup> Roth (1988)

<sup>173</sup> Polkinghorne (1988) page 35

<sup>174</sup> Polkinghorne (1995)

on conflict theory ‘that deals with crisis behavior and relationship between (mis)perceptions and war’<sup>175</sup>. According to Sisson and Rose, “the Bangladesh war was neither expected nor judged necessary by any of the major players before early fall of 1971”<sup>176</sup>. This directly goes against the proposition in this study that structural context and domestic factors compelled Indian decision-makers, rationally and deliberately plot for war since the very beginning of the Pakistani military crackdown in March, 1971.

Much of the rich detail and thick description in Sisson and Rose’s work is derived from interviews with a long list of officials who worked in upper echelons of government in India and Pakistan in 1971. While editing and interpreting primary evidences in form of interview records and other testimonies, the authors must have been aware that many of the key information thus obtained are inconsistent, even factually wrong; it is apparent that many interviewees furthered information that are not only self-serving but also conform to a narrative that supports a political position about the origin and prosecution of war. In spite of that, they knitted the strands of information together for a ‘consistent’ narrative to support their hypothesis about the war.

Sisson and Rose undermined of their own hypothesis about the war by the frank admission that “it is unlikely that the policies pursued by either side in 1971 would have differed very much without these mutual misperceptions since many other important factors influenced their decisions at that time”<sup>177</sup>. Even more damagingly they evaluate that the Indian core decision-makers “did not face pressure for precipitate action from within the bureaucracy, including the military. On the Indian side the decision to go to war was deliberate, not taken under duress, or with a sense that immediate action was needed to stave off disaster”. This is a direct support for a ‘hard realist’ theory of rational and deliberate decisions for war to change structural security context. Itty Abraham comments of Sisson and Rose’s work by, “in the end, the author’s inability to excise successfully all the contradictory strains they must have felt in the processing of these interviews points to the difficulty of producing a single narrative based on multiple interviews, yet the meta-narrative demanded that there be not only one story, but only one reason for the outcome”<sup>178</sup>.

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<sup>175</sup> Abraham, Itty (1995)

<sup>176</sup> Sisson and Rose (1991) page 4

<sup>177</sup> Abraham, Itty (1995)

<sup>178</sup> Abraham, Itty (1995)



### **Appendix 1: A Brief Timeline of Events**

1947	Independence of India and Pakistan from British Colonial Rule.
1948	First India-Pakistan War over Kashmir
1952	Bloody Protest Movement in East Pakistan for Language Rights
1956	First Constitution passed
1958	Military takeover of government. General Ayub Khan becomes president and military-backed rules lasts till 1971.
1962	India-China Border War
1965	Second India-Pakistan War over Kashmir
1966	Awami League launch six-points for democracy and autonomy of East-Pakistan
1968	Movement for democracy all over Pakistan
1969	General Yahya Khan replace Ayub Khan as the new President of military regime
1970	Election for Parliament, Awami League emerge with commanding majority
1971	Army launches brutal crackdown, India help separatists. Eight months after crackdown, India-Pakistan third war, Bangladesh becomes independent

### **Appendix 2: The Six-Point Programme<sup>179</sup>**

1. Pakistan would have a federal structure of government based on spirit of the Lahore Resolution of 1940, with a parliament elected on the basis of universal adult franchise;
2. The central government would have authority only in defense and foreign affairs and all other subjects would be handled by the federating units of the state of Pakistan;
3. There would be two freely convertible currencies for the two wings of Pakistan or two separate reserve banks for the two regions of the country;

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<sup>179</sup> <http://archive.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=237295>

4. The power of taxation and revenue collection would be vested in the federating units;
5. There would be two separate accounts for foreign exchange reserves for the two wings of Pakistan;
6. East Pakistan would have a separate militia or paramilitary force as a measure of its security.

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