

8-1-2012

Cold War episode: detente and US relations with Pakistan during the 1971 South Asia crisis

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

A COLD WAR EPISODE: DÉTENTE AND U.S. RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN
DURING THE 1971 SOUTH ASIA CRISIS

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

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August, 2012

ABSTRACT

Becker, Ralph A. *A COLD WAR EPISODE: DÉTENTE AND U.S. RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN DURING THE 1971 SOUTH ASIA CRISIS*. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, University of Northern Colorado, 2012.

The Cold War defined a state of conflict between the U.S., China, and the Soviet Union during the nuclear age that followed World War II. During the Cold War the United States practiced a foreign policy that was episodic in nature as the great nations recruited the developing countries of the Third World to carry on their ideological struggles. This policy meant that the U.S. would aggressively intervene during periods of war in developing countries in order to prevent the spread of communism. Yet, after the episode ended, the U.S. would quickly vacate the region and move on to other areas to fight its Cold War battles and counter communist advances throughout the Third World.

The détente initiative of President Richard M. Nixon demonstrates this episodic tendency in U.S. foreign policy. Détente provided the U.S., China, and the Soviet Union with a platform to negotiate their differences, along with economic, political, and military inducements that were mutually beneficial to all parties. Détente began as Nixon established a diplomatic opening to China in 1971, with the assistance of Pakistan's President, Yahya Khan, to act as an intermediary between the U.S. and China.

The U.S. had not given much attention to Pakistan previously, but détente caused Nixon to focus his attention sharply on Pakistan. As plans were underway for Nixon to visit China, Pakistan became involved in a civil war. Yahya Khan initiated a violent

suppression of the Bengali people in East Pakistan which led to atrocities committed against his own people. Nixon remained silent on these issues in order to protect détente. Yahya's atrocities outraged in the international community, and India eventually intervened on behalf of the Bengali people, leading to war between Pakistan and India. This war started the South Asia Crisis.

This thesis argues that détente caused the South Asia Crisis, that the crisis threatened to destroy détente, and that détente itself brought an end to the crisis. The U.S. and China were allied with Pakistan, and the Soviet Union was allied with India. Nixon's failure to curb Yahya's atrocities led to Indian intervention. The ensuing crisis threatened to ruin détente as Nixon confronted a Soviet/Indian alliance that was determined to crush all of Pakistan. This essay argues that Nixon made the correct assessment of Indian/Soviet intentions during the South Asia Crisis. The regional conflict between India and Pakistan escalated into a potential Cold War conflict between the U.S., China, and the Soviet Union. Nixon confronted the Soviets and warned of U.S. intervention in the war on behalf of Pakistan, thereby risking détente. The Soviet Union desired to insure that détente remained intact based on its own interests in potential gains, and agreed to use its influence to restrain India and end the crisis.

The South Asia Crisis demonstrates the episodic nature of U.S. relations with the Third World during the Cold War. With détente secured, Nixon quickly turned his attention away from Pakistan. Once the U.S. was convinced that the Soviet-backed Indian military would not continue its military campaign against Pakistan, the U.S. quickly moved on to other Cold War concerns. This became a pattern of U.S. action during the Cold War, and the episodic nature of U.S./Pakistani relations continues today.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my three faculty advisors for their guidance and direction during this thesis project. To Dr. Aaron Haberman, my faculty chair, for his patience, clarity of focus, and persistence which enabled me to accomplish a final project that I can be proud of, and helped me to become a better writer and communicator. To Dr. Michael Welsh, whose love for his students is clear through his actions and encouragement, and who went through many red ink markers on my behalf in order to improve my writing and research. To Dr. Adam Fong, whose sharp intellect helped keep me on track, and for the excellent resource material he provided. To my friend, Tom Schemp, who helped me immensely with the final formatting of this project. To Mark Anderson, for his help with researching government documents. I also want to thank my wonderful wife, Sharon, for her prayers, assistance, support, and encouragement. She is the joy of my life, my inspiration, and my Sweetie. And finally, I also wish to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave to me an ability to accomplish something that I was not capable of accomplishing on my own. As I relied on him to show me the way, he guided my thoughts and ideas at times when I felt overwhelmed by the enormity of this project. He, along with my faculty advisors, enabled me to successfully complete a research project far beyond anything I ever thought possible, and they must receive equal credit for any successes contained herein, along with my gratitude and my humble, heartfelt thanks.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Episodic Nature of U.S. Relations with the Third World in General and Pakistan in Particular

The Cold War grew out of World War II tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union sought to expand their political ideologies throughout the post-war world. The developing nations of the world became indirectly involved in the Cold War through their associations with the United States, the Soviet Union, and Communist China. These developing nations, known as the Third World, often became allied with the major Cold War powers. Through these alliances the great nations of the post-war world promoted their political ideologies (communism or capitalism) and recruited Third World peoples to join them in accomplishing their objectives.

The primary question this thesis seeks to answer is how the Cold War shaped the way the United States approached the Third World. The Cold War caused the U.S. to address the Third World based on American concerns over communist expansion. The U.S. desired to contain communism as much as possible which led to a get-in and get-out strategy in the Third World that was based on addressing the multiple threats of communist expansion around the globe, and the wars associated with them. This resulted

in an episodic pattern of U.S. involvement in the Third World during the Cold War. The U.S. did not practice a policy of long-term investment in the Third World (except perhaps when significant American economic interests were involved). Essentially, American political involvement limited itself to a get-in and get-out approach. When American Cold War interests peaked in a country or a region, then America would be heavily involved there for a season, but when the episode of crisis or conflict passed, the United States would then move on to the next location of Soviet or Chinese global activity to act as a wall against communist advance.

After the communist takeover of China in 1949, the United States broke off all diplomatic ties with the country. Two decades later, President Richard M. Nixon desired to change this policy through an initiative known as *détente*. Its goals were to improve diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and China, to negotiate reductions in nuclear armaments, and to reduce Cold War tensions as much as possible. *Détente* could not bring peace to the world, but it could enable Cold War adversaries to address their issues in a new context that involved less tension between them. As was true in each Cold War episode, the Americans, the Soviets, and the Chinese would continue to promote their individual ideologies in spite of *détente*. Nixon understood this was the nature of global Cold War politics and he accepted this as reality. He was willing to accept the Soviets and the Chinese as they were, without attempting to change them. *Détente* sought restraint rather than confrontation and provided the means for dialogue among Cold War enemies with the understanding that each party had a clear agenda it consistently pursued. Nixon was willing to work in this context with the Soviet Union and China without insisting each country modify its agenda. Instead, *détente* would find ways to

accommodate mutually shared interests, to negotiate on interests that were unrealistic or inflammatory, and to attempt to make the post-war world less volatile.

Tension between the Soviet Union and Communist China was a situation Nixon wanted to take advantage of. Nixon's combined visits to both Chinese Party Chairman Mao Tse-tung and Soviet General Secretary Leonid I. Brezhnev in their respective countries in early 1972 were crucial to détente. Nixon understood that his visit to China would soften Soviet stubbornness when it came to arms negotiations. Building diplomatic bridges to both countries simultaneously would provide the necessary leverage for dialogue to begin between all three superpowers. This would enable the beginning of détente to take place. Nixon understood that the link to China was the key to détente with the Russians. American relations with the Soviets could be greatly influenced by American relations with the Chinese. Nixon knew that he could capitalize politically on Chinese and Soviet suspicions toward one another due to his visits as they wondered what secret negotiations might be taking place.¹

Nixon's first step in beginning his détente initiative was to establish a diplomatic opening with the Chinese after two decades of diplomatic silence between the U.S. and China. To do this he needed an intermediary in order to gain the trust of the Chinese. This opportunity presented itself through Pakistan. Pakistan's President, Yahya Khan, provided the best channel for Nixon to establish détente with the Chinese due to Pakistan's alliances with both the U.S. and China, but Yahya was attempting to restore order to a politically volatile situation inside Pakistan that threatened the stability of the

¹ Stephen Ambrose, "1971-1975: Approaching the Apocalypse," *The Century: America's Time, with Peter Jennings, Volume 5*, ABC News-History Channel, (California: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, Inc. D5265, 1999).

country. The political problems of Pakistan had already caused the previous president, Ayub Khan, to step down in March, 1969. The political situation evolved into a civil war in the eastern wing of a geographically and politically divided Pakistan that would threaten Nixon's plans. Pakistan's civil war would send a flood of refugees into neighboring India, which caused India to intervene, resulting in the South Asia Crisis.

This essay argues that détente caused the South Asia Crisis, that the crisis itself nearly destroyed détente, and that ultimately détente was the reason the crisis ended. For a brief four week period in the late fall of 1971, détente triggered an Indian invasion of East Pakistan, but also enabled Nixon to end the crisis in less than a month. The South Asia Crisis had the potential to completely end détente and in a worst case scenario it could have triggered a world war based on the various alliances involved. For a few weeks in November and December of 1971, America, the Soviet Union, and Communist China had their eyes fixed on South Asia in a Cold War episode involving all three nuclear superpowers. As the Soviets gave abundant military support to India, the U.S. wrestled with how to help Pakistan during a regional war that contained global implications.

Nixon's détente initiative caused the South Asia Crisis. When the civil war between East and West Pakistan developed, Nixon came under domestic pressure to intervene and help the East Pakistani refugees. Anything Nixon did in a public platform that was critical of Pakistan could threaten détente, so he remained silent.² Nixon was also determined to avoid involvement in another Asian civil war. In order to preserve his diplomatic channel to Peking, Nixon provided U.S. aid for Pakistani refugees, but maintained his silence over atrocities that were being committed by the leadership of

² Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 336.

Pakistan during the civil war. India asked Nixon to use his influence with Pakistan to curb the violence being perpetrated upon the Bengali people by Yahya's rampaging military, but Nixon refused in order to protect détente. India then began to equip and train the Bengali resistance, and ultimately went to war on their behalf.³

The South Asia Crisis threatened to end détente as it developed into a significant Cold War confrontation between the great powers. The South Asia Crisis took place while détente was still in its formative stages. Détente remained fragile and American international relationships with China and the Soviet Union were tentative throughout Pakistan's civil war and its subsequent war with India. Initially, Nixon desired to protect détente by avoiding public comment on Yahya's atrocities in East Pakistan, but Indian intervention escalated the conflict. Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry A. Kissinger, then made a veiled threat to India of a U.S., China, and Pakistani alliance against India should it decide to invade East Pakistan to help the Bengali resistance. This was done to pressure India into peace negotiations in order to protect détente and restrain any aggressive intentions, but India immediately entered into an alliance with the Soviet Union which threatened détente on a much broader scale. Tensions between the three major superpowers automatically increased when India initiated war with Pakistan. Due to the alliances involved, détente was placed in jeopardy as the U.S., Pakistan, and China opposed the Soviet Union and India.

The argument put forth here is that Nixon and Kissinger were correct in their assessment that India planned to crush all of Pakistan. The two men feared that an Indian

³ "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 195*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d195> (accessed January 25, 2012).

war with Pakistan could threaten not only East Pakistan but West Pakistan as well.

Nixon and Kissinger believed India planned to defeat Yahya's forces in East Pakistan and then continue into West Pakistan to crush all of Pakistan's fighting ability and permanently cripple the country. U.S. and Pakistani diplomats, as well as journalists and historians, have believed India merely wanted to insure the establishment of an independent Bangladesh, protect Pakistani refugees, and restore order in the region. This would be India's publicly declared position as well. Yet, Nixon and Kissinger were convinced that India wanted to crush all of Pakistan's military once war in the East was won. This would insure India's security and guarantee that Pakistan could never again raise a hand against it.⁴

Détente brought an end to the South Asia Crisis as Nixon confronted the Soviets. The Soviet Union was largely responsible for India's emboldened state of aggression against Pakistan during the South Asia Crisis. As the crisis escalated Nixon explained to the Russians that Soviet support for India against an American-allied Pakistan could threaten the relationship between America and the Soviet Union. During the South Asia Crisis, Nixon was forced to risk détente and the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks with the Soviets. Nixon was already scheduled to meet with Brezhnev in Moscow in the spring of 1972 when the Soviets blatantly armed India against Pakistan in the summer of 1971. Nixon could not restrain Soviet ambitions in South Asia until he threatened U.S. military intervention and warned that Soviet actions could endanger détente. Moscow desired to participate in detente for several reasons. The Soviet Union wanted to impede a possible

⁴ "Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 255*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d255> (accessed August 2, 2012).

Chinese/American agreement aimed against it.⁵ They also desired a means to limit American production and proliferation of nuclear technologies. The Soviets did not want to see Germany building a significant military once again, and “were intent on reaching agreements on troop levels in central Europe.”⁶ “Moscow also expected détente to lead to expanded U.S./Soviet trade, especially in grain sales, which it badly needed to feed its people and others in Eastern Europe.”⁷ After Nixon’s warning that détente was at risk, the Soviet Union agreed to use its influence to restrain India once East Pakistan was defeated. Continuing the war into West Pakistan would be avoided in order to protect Soviet interests in détente. In this way détente brought an end to the South Asia Crisis.

A number of U.S. and Pakistani officials believed that the South Asia Crisis was merely a regional conflict with little Cold War significance. India would assert that its invasion of East Pakistan held no motive beyond relieving the suffering of the Bengali people at the hands of Pakistan’s military, establishing an independent homeland for them, and stopping the flow of refugees into India. Subsequent historical scholarship has taken these claims at face value and has therefore not viewed the South Asia Crisis as a significant Cold War event. Major Cold War historical works often omit the South Asia Crisis or minimize it, choosing instead to focus on an alleged overreaction to events by Nixon and Kissinger. Yet, the view that India desired to seize East Pakistan and then crush West Pakistan’s military as well, leaving all of Pakistan crippled and helpless, remained the analysis of events according to Nixon and Kissinger. Nixon justifiably opposed India and its Soviet ally, creating a significant Cold War confrontation.

⁵ Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power*, 287.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

The episodic U.S. relationship with Pakistan throughout the Cold War, and the American get-in and get-out approach to the Third World caused Nixon and Kissinger to seriously underestimate the level of hostility between Pakistan and India. Nixon and Kissinger held a clear picture of themselves as prestigious global statesmen, able to overcome Cold War obstacles, and establish a new foreign policy that would guarantee their place in history. Yet, the South Asia Crisis would prove to be a serious challenge to their abilities as statesmen, and it regularly threatened to overturn their détente initiative. Pakistan and India fought a war in 1947 after the partition of India by the British. The two countries again went to war in 1965, causing a U.S. military embargo of both nations. In 1971 there would be a third India/Pakistan war, and even though Nixon understood the history of South Asia, he did not understand the depth of the animosity between Pakistan and India or the hostility that it could provoke.

This thesis makes important contributions toward understanding the often episodic and temporary role that Third World countries played in the larger Cold War struggles. The Western democracies of North America and Europe (First World) were perpetually engaged in an ideological struggle against the Soviet Union and Communist China (Second World) throughout the Cold War. The Third World was the term given to the unaligned developing countries around the globe that were often the poorest among nations. Older historical works did not devote a great deal of attention to the Third World when dealing with Cold War history. The writings of John Lewis Gaddis and William Appleman Williams illustrate this. Gaddis and Williams discuss the causes of the Cold War and their arguments demonstrate contrasts between the U.S. and the Soviet Union without spending much time as to how the Third World related to larger Cold War

struggles. Their works were designed to define the origins of the Cold War and to outline the contrasts in ideologies between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

There existed a debate between Gaddis and Williams as to the origins and causes of the Cold War, but their discussion of the Third World was minimal. In his book, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (1997), Gaddis argued that Stalin and his authoritarian regime caused the Cold War.⁸ According to Gaddis it was the expansionist agenda and unstable personalities of men like Stalin and Khrushchev that drove the Cold War and gave rise to America's policy of containment. Gaddis believed that once Stalin's rule was secure and it was clear that the Soviet Union would survive World War II, "there was going to be a Cold War whatever the west did," and it was "authoritarianism in general, and Stalin in particular" that caused it.⁹ Gaddis focused on the expansionist goals of the Soviet Union, and assumed that America had no such ideology.

On the other hand, Williams, in *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959), argued that the U.S. also had an expansionist agenda during the Cold War based on a global "Open Door" economic policy. Williams mentioned the Third World only as it related to U.S. economic development and potential U.S. exploitation. The Open Door Policy of the United States "was based on an economic definition of the world"¹⁰ designed to expand American markets and promote Western ideology. Williams said that, "When an advanced industrial nation plays...a controlling role in the development of a weaker economy, then the policy of the more powerful country can ...be described

⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 292-294.

⁹ Ibid., 294.

¹⁰ William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 229.

as imperial.”¹¹ Williams argued that the Soviets wanted to contain American imperialism just as the U.S. desired to contain communism. According to Williams, the expansionist policies of the U.S. contributed to the Cold War as much as Soviet expansionist policies. America did not practice colonialism the way Europe did before World War I, but, the U.S. held to an ideology which insisted “that other people cannot really solve their problems and improve their lives unless they go about it in the same way as the United States.”¹² Williams argued that this imposed a subtle imperialistic tendency in that even though America did not hold a governing influence over a developing country, it often held an ideological influence that remained in the fabric of the culture. The U.S. had traditionally demonstrated generous humanitarianism in its foreign policy, but the policy was often undercut by the U.S. trying to make other cultures into the likeness of Americans, thereby hindering the right of self-determination in other nations.¹³

Gaddis and Williams do not discuss the Third World to any great degree. Pakistan is rarely mentioned in *We Now Know* because it was considered largely irrelevant to Gaddis as a Cold War participant. Gaddis mentions the plan of U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles (1953-1959) to bind Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan firmly to the West, and thereby create a “geostrategic Great Wall” to keep the Soviet Union and China “from projecting their influence.”¹⁴ In this way the U.S. would be able to contain communist expansion into the Middle East, and limit the threats to freedom posed by the Soviet Union and the Red Chinese. Apart from this, Pakistan is not discussed. Williams does not mention Pakistan or the South Asia Crisis because *The*

¹¹ Ibid., 55.

¹² Ibid., 13.

¹³ Ibid., 88.

¹⁴ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 169.

Tragedy of American Diplomacy predated the crisis, and he sought to outline the causes of the Cold War more than its relation to the Third World.

After the turn of the century, Cold War historians began to focus much more closely on the role of the Third World in the Cold War. In *The Global Cold War* (2005), author Odd Arne Westad describes the Cold War as “aggressive containment without a state of war” between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.¹⁵ He concentrates on the Third World as becoming a central stage during the Cold War, but unlike European colonialism, “Moscow’s and Washington’s objectives were not exploitation or subjugation, but control and improvement.”¹⁶ Like the U.S., the Soviets believed theirs was a global mission to relieve injustice and oppression. Based largely on Bolshevik successes in 1917, “the Soviet elite firmly believed that socialism would replace capitalism as the main international system within a generation.”¹⁷ Westad “argues that the United States and the Soviet Union were driven to intervene in the Third World by the ideologies inherent in their politics,”¹⁸ and that “Washington and Moscow needed to change the world in order to prove the universal applicability of their ideologies.”¹⁹ The Stalinist belief that the world was at the brink of a new age in which communism and socialism would replace all other economic realities caused the U.S.S.R. to develop an aggressive foreign policy to facilitate this perceived inevitability. The Bolsheviks set up the Communist International, or Comintern, as a world-wide organization headquartered

¹⁵ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

in Moscow, to help foster these “inevitable” revolutions that would bring down the oppressive regimes of capitalism.²⁰

This ideology propelled the Soviet Union to intervene in South Asia. Like Williams, Westad revealed that the competing ideologies of capitalism and communism provoked expansionist agendas in order to validate the conviction of each that they possessed the political solution to the needs of the Third World. It was consistent with Soviet ideology to come to the aid of the oppressed and poverty-stricken Bengali people of East Pakistan by assisting India as it opposed the oppressive regime of Pakistan’s Yahya Khan. In fact, it was an ideological necessity for the Soviets to intervene. Believing that armed resistance brought freedom and justice to oppressed peoples, the Soviets invested massive amounts of military hardware in support of India as it fought the oppression and brutality toward the Bengali people in East Pakistan. The Soviet Union intervened in the South Asia Crisis to accomplish its Cold War objectives using the Third World to provide the platform.

Westad discussed one of the primary political movements that caused the great nations of the Cold War to give greater notice to the Third World. The 1955 Asian-African conference in Bandung, Indonesia, was a Third World movement initiated “by the leaders of five Asian states: Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Burma, and Sri Lanka.”²¹ The Bandung conference demonstrated a show of solidarity among Third World leaders, who then called upon the Western powers to exercise restraint and responsibility. The fact that the West had fought two world wars and now possessed massive nuclear armaments was worrisome to the Third World. Bandung also encouraged an attitude of

²⁰ Ibid., 49.

²¹ Ibid., 99.

nonalignment in the Third World when it came to reliance on the superpower nations.

Westad said, “Lecturing the superpowers on the conduct of international relations was a powerful sign that the Third World was coming of age.”²² Westad quotes Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, as saying, “the scene of the battle between the free world and the Communist world was shifting,”²³ due to the fact that the Third World countries had gained the ability to act in unison. By the late 1950s, the U.S., the Soviet Union, and the Communist Chinese grew increasingly interested in the developing countries of the Third World as legitimate Cold War allies.

The Third World provided the stage for the U.S., the Soviet Union, and Communist China to wage their Cold War battles using conventional weapons. According to Jeremi Suri in *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (2003), the U.S. and the Soviets had concluded a Limited Test Ban Treaty in the 1960s and had come to a place of coexistence, but coexistence was not the same as cooperation.²⁴ Washington and Moscow “frequently employed proxies to avoid the risk of direct confrontation.”²⁵ Each superpower “supported local wars...along capitalist and communist lines” among the various states of the Third World.²⁶ These interventions became prevalent during the Cold War. Suri explained that “Cold War competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union continued, but in places unlikely to trigger nuclear armageddon.”²⁷

²² Ibid., 107.

²³ Ibid., 103.

²⁴ Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), 245.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Détente did not have the ability to change the foundational opposition that existed between capitalism and communism during the Cold War. Détente was a visionary plan by Richard Nixon to provide practical solutions to complicated problems between nations with vastly different interests. The Soviets, the Americans, and the Communist Chinese worked within a fragile framework of cooperation during détente, but each superpower still intently pursued its own Cold War objectives. The basis for détente cooperation was rooted in self-interest as the three great Cold War nations negotiated based on their own interests. In *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (2007), Suri wrote that through détente the U.S. accepted “the permanence of its adversaries,” and used “its power for competitive leverage.”²⁸ Suri points out that in the Third World the U.S. attached American foreign policy “to a set of brutal dictators who could wield regional force in ways that served U.S. international interests, often with grave human costs for their societies.”²⁹ Suri does not comment on this, but Yahya Khan’s military regime in Pakistan was one of these Third World dictatorial regimes embraced by the U.S. in order to advance American Cold War interests.

Nixon accepted the reality that none of the great nations could change the political philosophies of the other. Détente did not require such changes to be effective. It offered a means of accommodating the interests of the various Cold War powers, and also provided a means of defusing domestic political problems. Suri argues that détente “had a social origin” and became “a convergent response to disorder among the great powers.”³⁰ Suri shows that major cities around the world experienced student protests or

²⁸ Jeremi Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 247.

²⁹ Ibid., 241.

³⁰ Suri, *Power and Protest*, 2.

other significant political protests from within. Suri argues that “a burst of violent energy convulsed every major society” during this period, and the Beatles’ song “Revolution” became a mantra among youth protestors.³¹ Suri believes that “détente was...a direct reaction to the “global disruption” of 1968...and “policymakers cooperated to protect their authority against a wide range of internal challengers.”³² Détente “offered communist leaders...that did not possess a popular base at home” a way “to bolster their domestic standing.”³³ Summit meetings “made government officials look strong and powerful” and could be used “to condemn their internal critics for threatening international peace and the dignity of the state.”³⁴ The baby boomers of the 1940s became the student protesters of the 1960s on a global scale, and Suri argued that the student protest movements of 1968 helped give rise to détente.

Robert Dallek takes the argument of Third World importance to the Cold War to the next level. Westad demonstrated the ideological necessity for the U.S. and the Soviet Union to intervene in the Third World. Suri pointed out that the détente era accepted the reality that Cold War adversaries were permanent, and rather than trying to defeat them, Kissinger desired to use power to gain leverage and negotiate wherever possible. Suri also revealed the global social unrest that contributed to the success of détente. In *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (2007), Dallek reveals the tensions that existed between Nixon and Kissinger as both men sought to become the preeminent statesman of their day. Regarding the Third World, Dallek concentrates primarily on Vietnam and the Middle East during the Nixon presidency, but he also focuses intently on the South Asia

³¹ Ibid., 211.

³² Ibid., 213.

³³ Ibid., 5.

³⁴ Ibid.

Crisis. His treatment of the subject is brief, but it demonstrates a significant viewpoint among historians as to how Nixon handled the South Asia Crisis. Dallek did not believe that the South Asia Crisis was a legitimate confrontation between Cold War rivals, until Nixon and Kissinger made it so.

Dallek believed that Richard Nixon's tilt toward Pakistan during the South Asia Crisis was a foreign policy blunder.³⁵ He was convinced that Nixon and Kissinger overreacted by viewing the South Asia Crisis as an extension of the Cold War conflict rather than just a regional war between Pakistan and India.³⁶ Dallek argues that because Nixon and Kissinger misread the situation, they began a reckless discussion of a possible war with the Soviet Union.³⁷ The records do show that discussion did take place between Nixon and Kissinger regarding the possibility of War with the Soviets, but Dallek offers no analysis as to why the two men might have had good reason to discuss this.

Dallek reveals that Kissinger's fear of a Cold War confrontation in South Asia between the Americans, the Soviets, and the Chinese, intensified after his secret trip to China via Pakistan in July of 1971. Dallek embraces the view that India's motives for intervention in East Pakistan were noble and that Nixon and Kissinger overreacted. Pakistan's civil war between east and west was escalating. Dallek records that Kissinger returned from his visit to China with a "premonition of disaster" regarding South Asia, expecting India to intervene by attacking Pakistan after the summer rains.³⁸ Kissinger "feared that China might then intervene on Pakistan's behalf, which would move

³⁵ Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power*, 621.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 337.

Moscow “to teach Peking a lesson.””³⁹ Nixon and Kissinger believed that a war limited to Pakistan and India would be “of limited consequence,” but feared that a broader conflict would “jeopardize the China initiative and provoke...dangerous tensions with Moscow.”⁴⁰ Dallek understands Kissinger’s fear that war between India and Pakistan could cause a superpower showdown, but does not see it as a legitimate.

When analyzing the South Asia Crisis, Dallek agrees with the assessment of William Bundy, a former U.S. assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Bundy’s view was that “Nixon and Kissinger’s policy on the Indo-Pakistan war was replete with error, misjudgment, emotionalism, and unnecessary risk taking.”⁴¹ Dallek believes Nixon’s highest priority during the crisis was protecting the 1972 summit meetings in Peking and Moscow.⁴² Losing the summit meetings would destroy the Nixon strategy of playing China and the Soviet Union off each other, and would be considered a foreign policy failure that could jeopardize a second Nixon term in office as president.⁴³

While Dallek is probably correct in his assessment of Nixon’s priorities, this thesis takes his argument further. Nixon desired to protect détente during the South Asia Crisis, but he risked détente in its entirety in order to maintain the Cold War balance of power with the Soviet Union. The Vietnam War had created an impression of American weakness that the Soviets sought to exploit in 1971, and Nixon was determined to shatter any appearance of American weakness, even if it meant losing détente and the summit meetings in Peking and Moscow. Nixon understood that if the Soviets felt they were negotiating with a weakened America, the summit meeting in Moscow would be fruitless.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 348-349.

⁴² Ibid., 349.

⁴³ Ibid.

Nixon had to negotiate from a position of strength for détente to succeed. His actions during the South Asia Crisis were meant to reinforce the image of a strong America. According to Dallek, during the South Asia Crisis the Soviet Union wanted to counter what they believed to be “a U.S. anti-Soviet offensive” in “collaboration with China and Pakistan.”⁴⁴ This thesis argues that the Soviet Union not only desired to counter a perceived U.S. offensive in Asia due to Kissinger’s détente visit with the Chinese, but the Soviets desired to enable India to crush Pakistan completely. This would enable Moscow to gain Soviet/Indian supremacy in South Asia should the U.S. and China prove to be timid. Nixon and Kissinger held this view, and this essay argues that theirs was a valid and credible interpretation of events.

Like Dallek, Dennis Kux in *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies* (2001), believed that Nixon and Kissinger took a simple regional conflict and blew it into an international Cold War confrontation. Kux had served in the State Department as a South Asia Specialist, and he had dealt with India and Pakistan for more than two decades.⁴⁵ Kux believed that Nixon and Kissinger were wrong in their assessment of India’s ambitions. He said that “the White House’s flawed reading of India’s intentions toward West Pakistan almost succeeded in transforming a regional war into a great-power showdown.”⁴⁶ According to Kux, “senior Pakistani officials...did not share the Nixon-Kissinger view that India intended to crush West Pakistan after its

⁴⁴ Ibid., 338.

⁴⁵ “A Special Essay by Dennis Kux,” *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies*, Reviews, Johns Hopkins University Press, http://dev01.press.jhu.edu/books/supplemental/2886_4.html (accessed on April 16, 2012).

⁴⁶ Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies*. (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 206.

victory in the East.”⁴⁷ Kux explained that, “they believed that India’s ambitions were limited to the establishment of Bangladesh and the humiliation of Pakistan.”⁴⁸ Kux’s assessment of the situation in South Asia in 1971 was based on his expertise and experience in the region. His view remained the consensus of the majority during the crisis and in its aftermath.

Westad and Suri explain the relation and relevance of the Third World to the history of the Cold War. Dallek expands on Third World history during the Cold War by giving a detailed account of the Nixon and Kissinger viewpoint during the South Asia Crisis. Dallek and Kux agree that Nixon and Kissinger were wrong in their assessment of the dangers posed by the South Asia Crisis. Dallek and Kux believe that India did not plan to invade West Pakistan, and that the South Asia Crisis was purely a regional conflict. Yet, the Chinese Premier, Chou En-lai, an Asian leader with a global reputation for his political and diplomatic insights, agreed with Nixon and Kissinger’s assessment of India’s intentions.⁴⁹

Historical works containing a Cold War synthesis seldom include the South Asia Crisis to any significant degree. This would be largely based on the prevalent opinion that India had no ambitions beyond helping the Bengali people of East Pakistan to establish their independence. If the South Asia Crisis was simply a regional conflict between India and Pakistan, then it would carry few Cold War implications, and would seldom be relevant to Cold War historians. The actual South Asia Crisis (war between India and Pakistan) was also extremely short in its duration. It lasted only from November 22, 1971 to December 16. The brevity of the conflict and the belief that it was

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1979), 913.

only a regional war confined to South Asia accounts for its rare appearances in historical writings on Cold War history. Yet, if the South Asia Crisis was actually a Cold War confrontation between the Soviet Union and India on one side, with China, the U.S. and Pakistan on the other, as Nixon and Kissinger believed, then it carried major Cold War significance.

India claimed that it had no territorial ambitions as far as Pakistan was concerned in the aftermath of the South Asia Crisis. Dallek and Kux take India's claim at face value and criticize Nixon and Kissinger for being too paranoid. The Indians were certainly concerned for the Bengali people, and they needed to stem the flow of refugees for the sake of India itself, but the records of Nixon and Kissinger indicate that this was not the primary motivation for their actions. Nixon reasoned that with Soviet backing and the opinion of the international community in its favor during the crisis, India would never again have such an opportunity to defeat its long-standing enemy. He believed the temptation for India to remove the threat of Pakistan once and for all was too great an opportunity for India to ignore. Total Pakistani defeat would enable India to establish long-term security for itself and it would become the preeminent country in South Asia. Kissinger said his intelligence reports confirmed that India's goal was to defeat all of Pakistan, not just the eastern wing. Kissinger warned that India planned to move their forces to the West once war in the East ended, and then smash Pakistan's land and air forces and annex Pakistan's portion of a disputed land called Kashmir.⁵⁰

One of the significant weaknesses of détente was that in order for it to be effective the global balance of power had to be maintained. If one of the Cold War nations found

⁵⁰ "Editorial Note," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971*, Document 251, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d251> (accessed February 12, 2012).

that its power was diminished then the weakened state would have significantly less leverage in détente negotiations. The United States could not allow itself to be seen as occupying a weaker position than the Soviet Union regarding the global balance of power. To do so would imply that détente was a political necessity that Nixon had invented due to a weakened America. During the Cold War the Soviet Union would be searching for indications of American weakness based on the debilitating consequences of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and would exploit any perceived weakness to its own advantage. As the South Asia Crisis emerged it was crucial for Nixon to project the image of a powerful America, undiminished by Vietnam, if détente was to succeed.

Pakistan in 1971 became the stage on which the Soviet Union and the U.S. would enter into yet another Cold War episode in the Third World which heralded global disaster should push come to shove. Nixon said, "If India and the Soviet Union succeed in destroying Pakistan as a military and political entity," they will be encouraged "to use the same tactics elsewhere."⁵¹ Chinese involvement in the South Asia Crisis would be limited, but failure by the U.S. to confront Soviet aggression in South Asia could endanger all U.S. allies, particularly since the Vietnam War persisted. Nixon was forced to take a tough stance in South Asia, and gambled that Soviet interests in détente would temporarily curb their ambitions. Détente had caused the crisis and the crisis nearly ended détente, but as the crisis reached its most crucial point, Nixon confronted the Soviets and risked détente in order to insure the Cold War balance of power and the survival of Pakistan. To the Soviet Union, the total defeat of Pakistan was considered a lesser priority than potential gains with the Americans through détente negotiations. The Soviets agreed to use their influence to restrain Indian ambition in order to protect their

⁵¹ Kux, *United States and Pakistan*, 203.

détente interests. Nixon correctly assessed the Indian/Soviet alliance as a Cold War power play by the Soviet Union. While India focused only on its ancient bitterness toward Pakistan during the war, the Soviet Union sought to humiliate the U.S. and China on a global scale should they fail to assist Pakistan as it faced complete destruction as a sovereign nation. Once the South Asia Crisis concluded, the United States rapidly moved on to intervene in other Cold War episodes taking place in other parts of the Third World.

CHAPTER II

DÉTENTE CAUSES THE SOUTH ASIA CRISIS

Nixon's Failure to Adequately Address Atrocities by Pakistan During Its Civil War Resulted in Intervention by India

It was Richard Nixon's desire to begin détente and build diplomatic relations with China that turned U.S. focus toward Pakistan. Nixon needed an intermediary to facilitate an opening to China. Pakistan held an alliance with China that had been in place for nearly a decade. This alliance had angered the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson, but provided a golden opportunity for Nixon to build his bridge to China as the first step in détente. President Yahya Khan of Pakistan had relationships with the major leaders of both the United States and China and could provide Nixon with the channel he needed. Yahya was recruited by Nixon to fill this role after the U.S. President had determined he was the best option. It was for this reason Nixon opened a new episode in U.S. Pakistani relations during his first term in office.

As détente began, a catastrophic cyclone hit East Pakistan and caused a political crisis which in turn triggered a civil war. Pakistan's conflict over the secession of East Pakistan escalated into civil war due to Yahya's brutality against his own people as he tried to suppress a political rebellion using violence. To establish détente in this early stage Nixon carefully avoided any action that could jeopardize his relationship with

Yahya Khan. Nixon needed to remain on good terms with Yahya in spite of a U.S. Congress that was firmly opposed to Yahya's actions. The Pakistani President turned international opinion against himself as his brutality became atrocity which sent a flood of refugees into India. Nixon believed his public silence was necessary regarding the internal affairs of Pakistan in order to protect détente, even as the wrath of the international community descended upon the Yahya Khan.

America's silence over Yahya's actions implied collusion that sparked international outrage. Nixon's own diplomats in East Pakistan, unaware of Nixon's détente strategies, turned against him. Nixon desired to protect his detente initiative by maintaining a neutral position, but the U.S. Congress and the U.S. news media favored India. Nixon also could see the potential for a repeat of Vietnam in South Asia, which reinforced his belief in neutrality. Kissinger said that if the U.S. "were to support the insurgents in East Pakistan" it would turn West Pakistan against the United States.⁵² Nixon agreed and said, "If we get in the middle of that thing it would be a hell of a mistake."⁵³ Nixon's policy was that Pakistan could handle its own affairs without the assistance of the international community. He did nothing of consequence to prevent the brutality of Yahya Khan against his own people for two reasons: first he wanted to protect détente, and second, he did not want another Vietnam.

The refugee situation became an unmanageable situation for India, and Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, decided to covertly oppose the military forces of Yahya Khan. When détente caused the Nixon White House to avoid its moral obligations

⁵² "Editorial Note" *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 25*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d25> (accessed November 1, 2011).

⁵³ Ibid.

to the brutalized Bengali people of East Pakistan, India began to mobilize in support of the East Pakistani resistance. India aided the Bengali guerilla fighters politically and militarily. Gandhi also harbored Bengali diplomats, and prevented the return of refugees to Pakistan to keep them out of harm's way. Gandhi then wrote to ask Nixon to use American influence in order to pressure Yahya Khan to rein in his rampaging military, but Nixon felt he could not do this. Nixon needed the help of Yahya Khan to begin detente, and that took precedence. Nixon's apparent indifference to Gandhi's requests encouraged India to intervene. Détente had caused Nixon's silence, and Nixon's silence would trigger war between India and Pakistan.

This chapter will reveal that détente was responsible for the South Asia Crisis of 1971. Détente aggravated U.S. relations with India in two distinct ways that would lead to war between Pakistan and India. First, Nixon's secrecy on détente and his silence on Yahya's atrocities led to India's increased determination to intervene on behalf of the Bengali militia, and brought intense criticism by his own U.S. diplomats. Second, Nixon hardened Indian resolve to intervene on behalf of the Bengali resistance using its own military forces when he failed to respond adequately to Gandhi's appeal. Nixon's public silence regarding Yahya's atrocities implied U.S. collusion with Pakistan, which prompted Indian collusion with the Bengali resistance. Détente motivated Nixon's actions, which motivated India's responses, and caused the South Asia Crisis.

The U.S. did not understand the depth of the historical conflict between Pakistan and India due to the episodic nature of American relations with Pakistan. The U.S. was preoccupied by its view of communism as the great global threat, and never completely understood that Pakistan feared India much more than it feared communism. The U.S.

maintained a “get in and get out” policy in Pakistan during the Cold War. When Pakistan played a role in American Cold War objectives, the U.S. became involved in Pakistan, and then withdrew when those objectives were accomplished. The lack of understanding regarding Pakistan’s historical bitterness toward India was caused by these Cold War episodes. During the early years of the Nixon administration, Pakistan was viewed as a potential ally against communist aggression. There was no serious recognition by the U.S. that most Pakistani people considered the real security threat to be India.⁵⁴ Failure by the U.S. to develop a genuine desire to understand the region, and to assist Pakistan politically in an ongoing manner, led to a shallow diplomatic understanding of the region. Nixon would be blindsided by a war between Pakistan and India in 1971 that erupted quickly and defied all diplomatic efforts to find a peaceful solution.

One cannot grasp the full scope of Pakistan’s political history without taking into account the historical animosity between Pakistan and India. Pakistan and modern India came into existence simultaneously in 1947 when the British gave governmental authority back to the native people of South Asia. In its formative years “Pakistan was an idea, not a state. The original idea of a Pakistani state revolved around creating a homeland for Indian Muslims where they would not be dominated by the Indian Hindu majority.”⁵⁵ In reality, Pakistanis are *Indian Muslims* still focused on their ancient conflict with *Indian Hindus*. This deep-rooted connection to India is the basis for an understanding of Pakistan. Even the members of the lowest classes in Indian Hindu culture “believed themselves part of a system superior to Muslims.”⁵⁶ Such attitudes

⁵⁴ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 845.

⁵⁵ Lisa Reynolds Wolfe, “Cold War Timeline: Pakistan,” <http://www.coldwarstudies.com/2011/05/02/cold-war-timeline-pakistan/> (accessed October 26, 2011).

⁵⁶ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 845.

provoked resentment among the Muslims of Pakistan where India was concerned.⁵⁷ The British evacuation of India left a power vacuum in the country, and violence between Pakistan's Muslims and India's Hindus developed immediately because there was no longer a colonial adversary to unite them. This ongoing conflict caused President Johnson to say "that what we did for many countries was repaid by their involving us in their own ancient feuds."⁵⁸

The dispute over Kashmir has been a source of constant friction between India and Pakistan as both have laid claim to possession. Kashmir is among the most desirable of all lands in South Asia. The agreeable climate provides relief from the brutal summer temperatures of the plains of northern India.⁵⁹ The Vale of Kashmir provides a comfortable and prosperous location, along with its lakes, and the Himalayan Mountains as a picturesque backdrop.⁶⁰ In 1947, Kashmir contained an 80% Muslim majority, but was ruled by a Hindu maharajah.⁶¹ The ruler of Kashmir did not align himself with either Pakistan or India during the time of their partition by the British,⁶² and even while he lived, there was turmoil inside Kashmir related to alignment with India or Pakistan. Arbitration within the United Nations took place in 1948, but its resolutions satisfied neither India nor Pakistan. The region of Kashmir has been an unresolved source of tension and conflict between the two countries ever since.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ "Memorandum of Conversation (no. 65)," In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXV, South Asia*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v25/d65> (accessed October 13, 2011).

⁵⁹ Kux, *The United States and Pakistan*, 21.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

Pakistan has a history of military rule since its origin in 1947. Civilian governments in Pakistan have regularly experienced conflict during multi-party democratic political campaigns. The depth of this conflict threatened the fragile security of the country, and greatly worried military leaders. Commanding generals of the Pakistan military would regularly seize power and declare martial law, and then establish social order as they saw fit. This has happened four times in Pakistan's modern history under Ayub Khan (1958), Yahya Khan (1969)⁶³, Zia-ul-Haq (1977), and Pervez Musharraf (1999). These coups were often related to Pakistan's fear of India, but were just as often a mere pretext by the military to seize the reins of power. Experience had taught Pakistan's generals that civilian rule was too deeply divided and lacked the precision and unity of a military structure. When internal strife caused by partisan elections weakened the government, a military leader would seize power for himself in the name of national security. The generals assured the people that civilian rule would soon be reestablished once national security was assured, but such promises often proved hollow.

Pakistan's desire for U.S. armaments has been a central theme of U.S.-Pakistan relations from the very beginning. Pakistan became a member of the Baghdad Pact of 1955 which later became known as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO).⁶⁴ This evolved into a bilateral agreement of cooperation between the U.S., Turkey, Iran, and

⁶³ "In 1969 Ayub Khan was overthrown by a massive upsurge of the people. Instead of transferring power to the speaker of the National Assembly as required by his own constitution of 1962, Ayub Khan asked his military protégé, Yahya Khan to declare martial law and again usurp...supreme power of the State." Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, *My Dearest Daughter: A Letter from the Death Cell*, (Lahore: Classic, 1994), 39-40, http://bhutto.org/Acrobat/Dearest_Daughter%5B1%5D.pdf (accessed July 6, 2012).

⁶⁴ "Milestones: 1953-1960, The Baghdad Pact and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)," <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/CENTO> (accessed February 13, 2012).

Pakistan in 1959.⁶⁵ CENTO and its companion organization SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) guaranteed member nations the right to have access to U.S. armaments in order to defend against communist encroachment by the Soviet Union or China. Pakistan's alliance with the U.S. had little to do with stopping the advance of communism. When the U.S. offered weapons in exchange for Pakistan joining an alliance to combat communism, Pakistan agreed because it wanted a stockpile of U.S. weapons to insure its own security against India. It was most likely for this reason that Pakistan agreed to join U.S. anti-communist alliances like CENTO and SEATO during the Cold War. Membership meant that Pakistan became eligible for U.S. military aid.⁶⁶ Kissinger said this aid "was intended for use against Communist aggression, but was suspected by India of having other more likely uses."⁶⁷

American involvement in Pakistan followed the episodic nature of U.S. Cold War strategy around the globe. The U.S. became interested in Pakistan when it leased a U.S. Air Force Base in Peshawar in July, 1959.⁶⁸ The base was used for Cold War surveillance operations.⁶⁹ This motivated U.S. development projects including loans and grants for irrigation, seaports, water and sewage, education, highways, railways, banks, food

⁶⁵ "Editorial Note" *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960 South and Southeast Asia, Volume XV*, Document 346, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1959-60v15/d346> (accessed February 13, 2012).

⁶⁶ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 846.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ "Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Warnke) to Secretary of Defense McNamara," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968 Volume XXV, South Asia, Document 491*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v25/d491> (accessed June 6, 2012).

⁶⁹ "Letter From President Ayub to President Johnson," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968 Volume XXV, South Asia, Document 505*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v25/d505> (accessed October 18, 2011).

storage, and commercial road vehicle projects.⁷⁰ These investments in Pakistan's future were designed to produce healthy economic growth and to provide the needed capital for individual business initiative.⁷¹ The investments were the result of American interest in Peshawar. When the base closed in July 1969⁷² after Pakistan terminated the lease, U.S. interest in Pakistan faded. There existed no abiding loyalty or commitment toward Pakistan as far as the U.S. was concerned once a Cold War episode concluded. American governmental programs and expenditures often ended suddenly. This pattern of American activity is clearly evident in U.S. relations with Pakistan.

The 1962 border war between China and India was a Cold War episode that resulted in the U.S. supplying armaments to India to stop communist advance by the Chinese. Pakistan protested this action, but Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson decided India was going to get what it needed militarily regardless of Pakistani protests. American global Cold War objectives took priority over Pakistan's regional objectives. In the 1960s, verbal assurances to Pakistan of American protection in times of conflict increasingly substituted for military hardware.⁷³ The U.S. assured Pakistani President Ayub Khan that it would check Indian aggression against Pakistan through the use of an American aircraft carrier task force on standby in the Indian Ocean. In 1962,

⁷⁰ U.S. House of Representatives, Hearing before the Committee of Banking and Currency, *To Provide For Increased Participation by the United States in the International Development Association*, Ninetieth Congress, Second Session, H.R. 16775, May 8-9, 1968, 76.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Development credits included twenty-eight million (USD) for irrigation projects in 1961, 1962, and 1963; fifty million for water and sewer projects in 1963; thirteen million for education projects in 1964; thirty nine point five million for highway projects in 1964; thirty-five million for railway projects in 1964; twenty-seven million for agricultural bank development in 1965; nineteen point two million for a food storage project in 1966; an additional thirteen million for education in 1966; and twenty-five million for a commercial road vehicles project.

⁷² "Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Warnke) to Secretary of Defense McNamara," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968 Volume XXV, South Asia, Document 491*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v25/d491> (accessed June 6, 2012).

⁷³ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 846.

U.S./Pakistani relations suffered greatly because the U.S. assisted India militarily against Chinese encroachment. American military aid to India in 1962 began the Pakistani relationship with China. Ayub reached out to China for military aid to supplement Pakistan's forces against India because the U.S. provided India with military equipment based on American Cold War objectives.

India and Pakistan went to war in September 1965, with both countries using U.S. arms in the conflict. President Johnson "halted all arms shipments" to both countries.⁷⁴ The arms embargo remained in effect for the remainder of the 1960s, and into the Nixon era. In February 1966, the U.S. relaxed the ban to permit purchases of "non-lethal" equipment."⁷⁵ America was protecting its economic investments in Pakistan by providing limited military aid. The U.S. worried that Pakistan would divert money from economic development and invest it in new military equipment at significantly higher prices.⁷⁶ When Nixon came to the White House in 1969, Pakistan was still scrambling for military aid which the U.S. was hesitant to provide. India had superior military capabilities compared to Pakistan.⁷⁷ Much of Pakistan's military equipment was growing

⁷⁴ "Analytical Summary Prepared for the National Security Council Review Group, Washington, November 22, 1969," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 42*, <http://state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d42> (accessed October 18, 2011).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Trucks and other items would be allowed, but tanks, artillery, fighter jets, missiles, and other lethal equipment would still be prohibited. Spare parts and ammunition for Pakistani equipment would be allowed.

⁷⁶ U.S. Senate, *Suspension of Military Assistance to Pakistan, 12929-1 Senate Miscellaneous Reports on Public Bills I, Senate Reports*, Ninety-Second Congress, First Session, Report No. 92-105, May 13, 1971, 2.

⁷⁷ U.S. House of Representatives, *Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Foreign Operations and Related Agencies, Part 1, Military Assistance Foreign Assistance and Related Agencies Appropriations for 1971*, Ninety-First Congress, Second Session (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), 446-505.

obsolete by 1971 and they did not have the industrial capacity to manufacture their own equipment as India did.⁷⁸



East and West Pakistan in 1970 showing the disputed region of Kashmir with India located in between the eastern and western wings of Pakistan. Pakistan in 1970 consisted of these two wings, each separated from the other by roughly 1,000 miles of hostile Indian territory. Pakistan had a difficult job governing the two wings because the eastern part of Pakistan (modern Bangladesh) was ruled from West Pakistan.

In order to prevent further military entanglements in foreign wars such as Vietnam, Nixon formulated a policy for Asia known as the Nixon Doctrine during his first year in office. It was established in order to align U.S. foreign policy with America's goal to withdraw from Vietnam. In July, 1969, President Nixon met with

⁷⁸ Ibid., According to Lieutenant General R.H. Warren, India had been "gaining proficiency and capability in the production of aircraft such as the domestically designed and produced HF-24 fighter jet." Warren also explained that India had "two assembly plants at which Mig-21s are assembled, mostly from U.S.S.R. components." In 1970 U.S. military assistance to Pakistan was "limited to training in the United States and to foreign military sales of nonlethal end-items and spare parts." General Warren testified before the House Committee on Appropriations: "We do not sell any arms of a lethal nature to India or Pakistan, and all sales of nonlethal items are screened on a case-by-case basis."

⁷⁹ Map of Pakistan, http://www.martinfrost.ws/htmlfiles/aug2007/part_india01.gif (accessed March 20, 2012).

reporters in Guam after he had witnessed the splashdown of the Apollo astronauts following their return from the first landing on the moon. Perhaps due to the elation of an American moon landing in the heart of the Cold War, Nixon spontaneously outlined a doctrine that would define U.S. policy in Asia and reassure American allies. The Nixon Doctrine was built on three primary points. The first was that the United States would keep all its treaty commitments.⁸⁰ The second point promised that the U.S. would provide a shield if a nuclear power threatened the freedom of a nation allied with America or of a nation whose survival the U.S. considered vital to U.S. security and that of the region as a whole.⁸¹ Third, in cases involving other types of aggression the U.S. promised to furnish military and economic assistance when requested and as appropriate. Yet, the U.S. would “look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.”⁸² Vietnam had altered American foreign policy in that it would no longer intervene militarily unless the communist superpowers (Russia or China) attacked a U.S. ally directly.⁸³ Nixon said, “As far as our role is concerned, we must avoid the kind of policy that will make countries in Asia so dependent upon us that we are dragged into conflicts such as the one we have in Vietnam.”⁸⁴ The Nixon Doctrine was designed to limit American involvement in Asia, and it required Third World nations to take responsibility for the manpower necessary for their own defense. In a summary prepared for the National Security Council Staff in August 1971, as Nixon’s administration considered what to do

⁸⁰ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 224.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 224-225.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 225.

⁸³ Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power*, 296.

⁸⁴ “Editorial Note” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1969-1972, Document 29*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v01/d29> (accessed January, 12, 2012).

in the event of hostilities between Pakistan and India, the phrase “short of providing U.S. combat personnel”⁸⁵ appears twice. This clearly suggested that the U.S. had no intention of sending troops into another Asian conflict.

Détente flowed out of the Nixon Doctrine by necessity. The U.S. needed a legitimate means of negotiation in place to limit its Third World conflicts and avoid superpower entanglements. Diplomatic negotiation from a neutral position to defuse hostilities was the primary U.S. objective. When Nixon initiated détente, one of his goals was to end the Vietnam War, but by 1971 Nixon seemed to be looking past the Vietnam War to larger Cold War opportunities that were presented through détente. Reelection meant historic breakthroughs on nuclear armaments between the Soviets and the U.S. that promised to assure Nixon a place in history. The Nixon Doctrine laid the diplomatic foundation for détente by establishing that the U.S. desired to negotiate with other great powers.

As Nixon came to office, political unrest was emerging in Pakistan. Pakistani President Ayub Khan had resigned his office in March, 1969, and declared martial law in Pakistan. He said that he did not want to preside over the destruction of his country.⁸⁶ Ayub appointed General Yahya Khan as martial law administrator to reestablish order. East Pakistan had been the stage for regular problems related to famine and poverty. In October 1969, Yahya appealed to President Nixon for one million tons of wheat on an emergency basis to stem the tide of a deteriorating food and price situation in East

⁸⁵ “Analytical Summary Prepared for the National Security Council Staff” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 125*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d125> (accessed January 23, 2012).

⁸⁶ “Memorandum from the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Washington, March 25, 1969,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 13*, <http://state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d13> (accessed January 12, 2012).

Pakistan.⁸⁷ Yahya had already shipped a quarter-million tons of wheat and 350,000 tons of rice from West to East Pakistan, but even that was insufficient.⁸⁸ The problems of geographical separation and chronic hunger challenges posed great difficulty for Yahya Khan as he attempted to govern East Pakistan.

As part of Nixon's détente strategy to remain in the good graces of Yahya Khan, Nixon secured a one-time exception to the arms embargo imposed against Pakistan by the U.S. Congress. In July of 1970 the Nixon administration notified Agha Hilaly, the Ambassador from Pakistan, that it had approved a military arms sale to Pakistan. Included in this sale were twelve tactical fighter aircraft (F-104Gs or F-5s), 300 armored personnel carriers, four advanced design naval patrol anti-submarine aircraft, and seven B-57 bombers (to replace those lost through attrition).⁸⁹ When the ambassador asked why no tanks were included in the sale, Kissinger replied that tanks could create a furor in Congress that could "wreck the whole arrangement."⁹⁰ Pakistan wanted tanks from the U.S., but this would increase the difficulty of selling the bill to Congress.⁹¹ Nixon and Kissinger instead sought to have tanks transferred from Turkey to Pakistan.⁹² Nixon

⁸⁷ "Letter From Pakistani President Yahya to President Nixon, Rawalpindi, October 1, 1969," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents of South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 37*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d37> (accessed October 18, 2011).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ "Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, June 17, 1970, 7:30 p.m." *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 66*, <http://state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d66> (accessed January 14, 2012).

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ "Transcript of Telephone Conversation between President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) and the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (Sisco), Washington, June 12, 1970, 11:30 a.m.," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 64*, <http://state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d64> (accessed January 14, 2012).

⁹² "Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Washington, November 29, 1969" *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 44*, <http://state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d44> (accessed January 14, 2012).

and Kissinger desired to provide military equipment to Pakistan because Yahya Khan was a military leader rather than a civilian leader and his political support base was military. For Yahya to secure his government, he had to present himself to the military as a leader capable of acquiring the military equipment his country needed.

Nixon's military aid package to Yahya Khan would secure their friendship and strengthen Yahya's hand with his political support base in Pakistan. Nixon's military aid package for Pakistan during a time of U.S. military embargo placed Nixon's relationship with Yahya on very solid ground. Nixon took full credit for the one-time exception so that Yahya would know he had a personal debt to the American president.⁹³ In October of 1970, the same month that the military aid sale to Pakistan was approved, Nixon said to Yahya, "It is essential that we open negotiations with China."⁹⁴ Yahya Khan was happy to be of assistance as the mediator between Washington and Peking based on America's renewed interest in supplying military aid to Pakistan. Nixon's military aid package for Yahya Khan was designed to produce precisely his kind of enthusiasm from the Pakistani President.

The exception to the U.S. military embargo against Pakistan was done by Nixon for the sake of détente. Nixon's arms package to Yahya Khan during a time of U.S. embargo caused strain in U.S. relations with India even before the civil war began. This would make peace negotiations significantly more difficult during the South Asia Crisis that was soon to follow. Nixon's military aid package to Pakistan prior to the outbreak of Pakistan's civil war shows that détente-related actions by the Nixon White House

⁹³ "Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, June 17, 1970, 7:30 p.m." *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 66.*

⁹⁴ "Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, October 25, 1970, 10:49-11:45 a.m." *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 90,* <http://state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d90> (accessed October 25, 2011).

contributed to the South Asia Crisis. India could see only that the U.S. and Pakistan were in collusion, but it did not understand why. India expected the worst. Nixon's military support for Pakistan grieved India and the U.S. ambassador to India, Kenneth Keating, found it difficult to explain.⁹⁵ The favoritism that the Nixon administration was showing to Pakistan in order to secure détente was misunderstood by India. India had no knowledge of Nixon's desire to visit Peking using Yahya Khan to mediate. India measured U.S. military sales to Pakistan as a threat to Indian security and it brought a cooling in U.S./Indian relations. The deal caused tension between India and the United States by causing suspicion as to U.S. intentions.

A month after Nixon's military aid package for Pakistan was secured, a natural disaster hit the Bengali people of East Pakistan that made all previous hardships appear minimal. A massive cyclone struck the region on November 12-13, 1970. The *New York Times* reported on November 16 that the cyclone and subsequent tidal wave may have killed 200,000 people.⁹⁶ More than one million people were said to be homeless, and one-half million people needed relief.⁹⁷ The *New York Times* added that 235,000 houses had been destroyed and another 100,000 damaged; some 250,000 tons of rice crops had been destroyed, followed by an outbreak of cholera and typhoid.⁹⁸ On November 22, the

⁹⁵ "Telegram 12174 From the Embassy in India to the Department of State, September 30, 1970, 1537Z," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 78*, <http://state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d78> (accessed on May 11, 2012).

⁹⁶ "Toll in Pakistan Is Put At 16,000, Expected to Rise: Poor Communications Cause Varied Estimates in Flood and Cyclone Coast," *New York Times* (1923-Current File); November 16, 1970; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The New York Times* (1851-2008) with Index (1851-1993), 1.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ "Disease Increases in Pakistani Area Swept by Cyclone: Cholera and Typhoid Add to Problems – Vaccines and Water Supplies Rushed," By Reuters, *New York Times* (1923-Current File); November 18, 1970; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The New York Times* (1851-2008) with Index (1851-1993), 1.

Times modified its reports to say that the “cyclone may be the worst catastrophe of the century,” with news that 500,000 persons may have perished.⁹⁹

The cyclone disaster quickly evolved into a political crisis for the military regime of Yahya Khan. Yahya had scheduled national elections for October 1970, but due to the cyclone these elections were delayed until December. This turned out to be a tragic political misstep for Yahya Khan. The national elections became a platform to criticize Yahya’s incompetence during the cyclone crisis.¹⁰⁰ He was depicted as slow in his response and negligent when it came to the suffering of the people in East Pakistan. The elections yielded a dramatic victory in the East for Mujibur Rahman and his political organization known as the Awami League. Mujib Rahman and the Awami League put forth a six-point program calling for “full provincial autonomy for East Pakistan.” Rahman declared that East Pakistan “would have its own currency, keep its own separate account for foreign exchange, raise its own taxes, set its own fiscal policy, and maintain its own militia...”¹⁰¹ East and West Pakistan would be held together only by mutual responsibilities to defense and foreign policy.¹⁰²

President Yahya Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of the Pakistan People’s Party, who had won significant votes in the West during the election, rejected Mujib’s demands for East Pakistan saying they were “tantamount to secession.”¹⁰³ As each side stiffened their resolve, “a stalemate, or crisis, was imminent.”¹⁰⁴ In March 1971, Mujib Rahman

⁹⁹ “Disaster: East Pakistan: Cyclone May Be The Worst Catastrophe of Century” *New York Times* (1923-Current File); November 22, 1970; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The New York Times* (1851-2008) with Index (1851-1993), 169.

¹⁰⁰ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 850.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 851.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

announced the takeover of the administration of East Pakistan.¹⁰⁵ This action directly confronted Yahya's government while carefully avoiding a declaration of independence.¹⁰⁶ Yahya then flew to Dacca in East Pakistan to talk directly with Mujib himself. When this achieved no results, Yahya had Mujib arrested for treason and brought him back to West Pakistan to be imprisoned.

Yahya Khan was a military autocrat who would not tolerate the idea of political autonomy in East Pakistan and the likely dismemberment of his country. He stubbornly believed that he could intimidate East Pakistan's people into submission using a force of 30,000-40,000 troops in the East violently brutalizing the population. Yahya's brutality in East Pakistan began in late March of 1971. Soon after, Yahya sent a letter to President Nixon explaining that "the situation in East Pakistan is well under control and normal life is being restored."¹⁰⁷ Yahya assured Nixon that he could handle the problems in East Pakistan, but reminded the American President of India's interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan. He told Nixon that India had moved its military closer to the East Pakistan border, and assured Nixon that negative reports from "outside sources" were inaccurate, "especially the news media," and were "designed to mislead world public opinion."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ "Information Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (Sisco) to Secretary of State Rogers," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 9*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d9> (accessed November 1, 2011).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ "Letter From Pakistani Ambassador (Hilaly) to Secretary of State Rogers," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 16*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d16> (accessed approx. October 18, 2011).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Nixon and Kissinger took some comfort in this report,¹⁰⁹ until their own diplomats began to speak out against them. On April 6, the U.S. Consul General in Dacca, East Pakistan, Archer K. Blood, sent a statement of dissent signed by roughly twenty of his colleagues to the U.S. Department of State. They expressed anger at the U.S. government's failure to denounce the suppression of democracy in East Pakistan, and to denounce Yahya's atrocities. Blood alleged that the U.S. failed to adequately to protect its citizens and was "bending over backwards to placate the West Pakistan dominated government and to lessen...negative international public relations impact against them."¹¹⁰ In this telegram, Blood accused the U.S. government of "moral bankruptcy."¹¹¹ U.S. Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Kissinger were furious that the State Department in East Pakistan had made public statements against the Nixon White House. They believed that Blood's letter would eventually reach Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Refugees, and the Democratic Congress, which would embarrass the Nixon administration.¹¹² Nixon transferred Archer Blood as a result of the cable. Yet, Kissinger saw validity in Blood's charges because "the United States could not condone a brutal military repression" and "the strong-arm tactics of the Pakistani military" under Yahya Khan.¹¹³ Kissinger explained that "the

¹⁰⁹ "Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and His Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 14*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d14> (accessed approx. October 18, 2011).

¹¹⁰ "Telegram From the Consulate General in Dacca to the Department of State," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 19*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d19> (accessed November 1, 2011).

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² "Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between Secretary of State Rogers and the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 20*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d20> (accessed February 7, 2012).

¹¹³ Ibid., (see footnote 4).

administration's decision not to react publicly to the military repression in East Pakistan" was "necessary to protect "our sole channel to China.""¹¹⁴ Nixon wanted to protect détente by remaining silent. His failure to chastise Yahya for his actions confused many, and outraged some.

One of the components in Nixon's détente strategy was secrecy. There were very few people aware that Nixon wanted to start diplomatic relations with the Chinese while arms limitation talks were under way with the Soviets. Nixon pursued a larger Cold War strategy than simply attempting to negotiate with the Soviets on nuclear armaments. Nixon desired to be the key player in a global effort to bring all the Cold War superpowers to the negotiating table. If successful, Nixon knew détente could also provide the means to extricate the U.S. from the Vietnam War as well as provide his best hope for reelection in 1972. The secrecy of the Nixon White House over détente caused him to be misunderstood by many regarding his foreign policy moves in Pakistan. He came under severe criticism for not using his influence to curb Yahya's actions. As Nixon prepared to initiate détente and utilize Pakistan as the intermediary to China, he needed to guarantee the loyalty of Yahya Khan as his channel to China. Nixon realized that any public statement he made against Yahya's treatment of the Bengali people could alienate him from the Pakistani President and jeopardize détente. In order to assure the loyalty of the Pakistani President Nixon did not speak out at any point against Yahya's atrocities.

The U.S. believed an independent Bangladesh would come into existence as the natural result of Pakistan's political evolution regardless of Yahya's efforts to prevent it. Nixon and Kissinger saw no point getting involved in an internal Pakistani civil war in

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

which both the United States and China believed the outcome was already assured. The American Ambassador to Pakistan, Joseph S. Farland, explained in an April telegram that the Awami League had mounted a resistance movement against Yahya's forces. He said, "events of the past two weeks have left such severe emotional scars that it (is) hard to conceive that anything West Pakistan can now do will make most Bengalis willing citizens of Pakistan. Bengali grievances (were) now etched in blood."¹¹⁵ Farland was convinced that Yahya might be able to crush his political opposition temporarily, but not permanently.¹¹⁶

The effects of the cyclone and the ensuing civil war were so far-reaching that the musician George Harrison, of Beatles fame, organized a concert in Madison Square Garden called the *Concert for Bangladesh*. It was the first benefit concert of its kind, and it "became the model for large scale, big name benefits that are common today."¹¹⁷ When approached in 1971 by his friend, Indian musician Ravi Shankar, for help for flood and war ravaged Bangladesh; Harrison decided he wanted to help.¹¹⁸ Harrison pulled together an all-star lineup including the famous musicians Eric Clapton, Bob Dylan, Leon Russell, and Billy Preston. On August first, the concert was held; it was recorded and filmed and later released in movie theaters.¹¹⁹ Shankar later told *Rolling Stone* magazine, "Within hours of the show, Bangladesh was known all over the world."¹²⁰ This global exposure of events in Bangladesh brought Nixon's policies in South Asia under even

¹¹⁵ "Telegram From the Embassy in Pakistan to the Department of State," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 22*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d22> (accessed approx. November 1, 2011).

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ "Concert For Bangladesh," DVD Review – <http://classicrock.about.com/od/cdandconcertreviews/fr/bangladesh.htm?p=1> (accessed January 9, 2012).

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

more scrutiny. Nixon had originally earmarked \$2.5 million¹²¹ for refugee relief to cyclone-ravaged East Pakistan. As the death toll mounted and the civil war began to emerge, the U.S. committed \$250 million in relief funds.¹²² Even this significant amount of U.S. aid only touched the surface of the needs in East Pakistan.

The unforeseen consequence of Nixon's silence was the Indian reaction. India interpreted Nixon's silence as agreement with Yahya's policies on East Pakistan. This encouraged India to step in and take a leadership role on behalf of the Bengali people. One month after the Pakistan civil war began; India gave direct assistance to the Bengali militia of East Pakistan. In April 1971, Henry Kissinger learned of a request by India to provide unmarked small arms for the East Pakistani "freedom fighters" through American CIA channels.¹²³ Lieutenant General Robert E. Cushman believed that he had a secure channel for delivery, but did not think the operation would remain secret for long.¹²⁴ Assistant Secretary of State Joseph J. Sisco felt that the Indians were testing the United States, and he noted: "It is one thing for the U.S. to close its eyes to reports of clandestine Indian support for the East Pakistani resistance movement, but quite another thing for the U.S. to collude with the Indians in this supply."¹²⁵ Kissinger said, "He felt the President would never approve this project."¹²⁶

¹²¹ "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 48*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d48> (accessed approx. February 13, 2012).

¹²² "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 155*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d155> (accessed on January 24, 2012).

¹²³ "Memorandum for the Record," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 24*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d24> (accessed approx. November 1, 2011).

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Nixon's strategy of protecting détente by refusing to criticize Pakistan led to an escalation of the conflict between Pakistan and India. Nixon's unwillingness to publicly denounce Yahya's military created an impression within India that the United States colluded with Pakistan in the oppression of the Bengali people. Nixon's apathy encouraged India to support East Pakistan both militarily and politically. Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Agha Hilaly, told the U.S. Department of State in April, 1971, that representatives of the "Provisional Government of Bangla Desh" might approach them.¹²⁷ Hilaly said that India had permitted the establishment of a Bangla Desh government on its territory, and was providing financial support.¹²⁸ Hilaly added that Bengali representatives had no right to speak on behalf of Pakistan and had been charged with treason.¹²⁹ Pakistan was outraged that India interfered in what was an internal affair within the borders of a sovereign country, but India could only see that someone needed to stand up to Yahya for the sake of the Bengali refugees. Nixon has chosen not to do this, so Gandhi believed that it was her responsibility to do so.

Nixon's public silence on Yahya's actions led to Indian support of East Pakistan's political and military goals. Once Gandhi had established this precedent, she appealed directly to Nixon to use his influence with Pakistan to help prevent the endless flow of Bengali refugees into India. Gandhi sent a letter to President Nixon on May 13, saying that some three million refugees had fled East Pakistan to India; a number that grew at

¹²⁷ "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Pakistan," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 31*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d31> (accessed December 29, 2011).

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

the rate of about 50,000 per day.¹³⁰ The care of these refugees was “imposing an enormous burden” on her country, said Gandhi, and “the regions which the refugees are entering are over-crowded and politically the most sensitive.”¹³¹ She feared that these areas could “very easily become explosive,” thereby constituting a “security risk” to India “which no responsible government can allow to develop.”¹³² Gandhi asked Nixon to “impress upon the rulers of Pakistan that they owe a duty towards their own citizens whom they have treated so callously.”¹³³ She hoped “that the power and prestige of the United States will be used to persuade the military rulers of Pakistan to recognize that the solution they have chosen for their problem in East Pakistan is unwise and untenable.”¹³⁴ Gandhi explained that Yahya’s claims of restoring normalcy to East Pakistan could not be taken seriously until Pakistan “is able to stop this daily flow of its citizens across the border.”¹³⁵

Gandhi’s letter was meant to suggest to Nixon that he needed to intervene by restraining Yahya Khan, or India would take the fighting in East Pakistan to the next level. The refugees were posing a political danger to India, and she meant that India would be forced to act if Nixon did not use America’s influence to curb Yahya’s actions. Her letter was an appeal to reason which also carried the veiled threat of war with Pakistan. Two weeks later, in a slow response to Gandhi’s letter, Nixon replied that the

¹³⁰ “Letter From Indian Prime Minister Gandhi to President Nixon,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 46*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d46> (accessed approx. December 31, 2011).

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

U.S. was significantly involved in relief efforts for the Bengali refugees.¹³⁶ He explained that “in regard to the basic cause of the human suffering and dislocation...we have chosen to work primarily through *quiet diplomacy*.”¹³⁷ Nixon expressed concern for the Bengali people, and assured Gandhi of his work behind the scenes to achieve peace, and to create conditions where the refugees could “return to their homes.”¹³⁸ Yet, he would not say anything against Yahya’s actions publicly. The result was that Yahya’s military never showed restraint, which proved that Nixon’s *quiet diplomacy* efforts were entirely ineffective. Quiet diplomacy instead of direct confrontation toward Pakistan was a strategy designed to protect détente. Nixon’s inadequate response to Gandhi’s letter further encouraged India to intervene on behalf of the Bengali people, and led to war in South Asia.

Nixon’s loyalty to Yahya Khan for the sake of détente would alienate India. Indira Gandhi eventually reached a point where she no longer tried to negotiate with the American President, but took matters into her own hands. India expected nothing from China as far as restraining Pakistan because both China and Pakistan were considered enemies of India. Yet, America was on friendly terms with India, and Gandhi expected Nixon and Kissinger to use their influence to help curb the brutality of Yahya’s military. When this did not happen, Gandhi actively supported the Bengali resistance. Even though the Nixon White House had provided significant humanitarian aid to help with displaced refugees, India would stiffen its resolve against the United States once Nixon and Kissinger began to negotiate for peace. The indifference Nixon had communicated

¹³⁶ “Letter From President Nixon to Indian Prime Minister Gandhi,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 62*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d62> (accessed April 24, 2012).

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

to Gandhi when she asked the American president to use his influence to restrain Yahya Khan would be returned to Nixon when he asked the Indian Prime Minister to restrain her own military. Both requests would be ignored.

Nixon had groomed Yahya to become his channel to China before and during the Pakistan civil war. Nixon had developed a good deal of political influence with Yahya Khan, but he did not use it to curb Yahya's atrocities against his own people. Instead, Nixon reserved his political capital with the Pakistani President solely for purposes related to détente. The secret trip to China by Henry Kissinger in the summer of 1971 gave Yahya a sense of participation in a game of international intrigue that he greatly enjoyed. Kissinger said to Chinese Premier, Chou En-Lai, that Yahya was "not very intelligent" and "not a very good general," but he was "a decent man" who was thrilled to be part of Kissinger's secret trip to China because "he loved secret missions" and he "was beside himself with conspiratorial maneuvers."¹³⁹ Kissinger also said that Yahya's advice on how to deal with the Chinese Prime Minister turned out to be wrong, which caused Chou En-lai to laugh when he heard of it.¹⁴⁰ Yahya may not have been the ideal channel to China, but he represented a nation that had built strong diplomatic ties with the Chinese for nearly a decade, while maintaining good relations with the United States as well. He was the best channel to China as Nixon began détente because both the U.S. and China trusted him.

Yahya Khan had always believed he would remain in power in one form or another as the civilian governmental factions of Pakistan fought with each other. He saw

¹³⁹ "Memorandum of Conversation, Peking, June 20, 1972, 2:05'6:05 p.m." *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 267*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d267> (accessed March 5, 2012).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

his military role as a sort of paternal watchman. He would allow the civilian governments to do their best, but Yahya was confident it would inevitably become his job to restore order should chaos envelope the country due to political battles between rival parties. Kissinger observed that Yahya was confident he would “remain the arbiter of Pakistan’s politics”¹⁴¹ regardless of the elections of civilian leaders, but the South Asia Crisis would threaten Yahya Khan’s hold on power. Yahya’s attempts to stop the East Pakistani insurrection using brute force would cause atrocities that outraged the world, and East Pakistan’s refugees would become a continuous and ever-increasing flow into India’s major urban areas.¹⁴² Nixon’s partnership with Yahya Khan regarding détente was kept secret from the public, resulting in a negative interpretation of his actions where the Bengali refugees were concerned. The Nixon White House was considered to be calloused and indifferent. The U.S. Congress, Nixon’s own diplomats, and Indira Gandhi were unaware of Nixon’s détente goals with China at the time. The American news media, Congress, and the international community supported India who had borne the burden of caring for the refugees that fled before Pakistan’s military. Yahya found his military isolated in the east and the threat of war with India hanging over his head.

Nixon’s efforts to protect détente by taking no public action against Yahya’s atrocities motivated India to a greater determination to intervene on behalf of the Bengali people. What appeared to Gandhi as U.S. indifference toward the Bengali people caused her to close her mind to peace negotiations. India would use the refugee problem as the reason why it needed to intervene in Pakistan’s civil war, and few would deny that Indian

¹⁴¹ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 850.

¹⁴² “Conversation Among President Nixon, his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), and the Ambassador to India (Keating), Washington, June 15th, 5:13-5:40 p.m.,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 137*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d137> (accessed on January 6, 2012).

intervention was a just cause. Nixon's détente actions prior to and during the Pakistan civil war increased anxiety among Indian leaders and hardened their resolve against Pakistan. The Nixon administration had scheduled a secret trip to China by Henry Kissinger on July 9-11, and Nixon refused to jeopardize his détente initiative by making public statements against the actions of Yahya Khan's military even when those actions were egregious and brutal. This left India to become the defender of an oppressed and abused Bengali people, and the support of the international community rested with India.

The cyclone in East Pakistan would be the primary cause of Pakistan's civil war, but the South Asia Crisis was caused by détente. The civil war was an internal affair within the borders of a sovereign country, and Yahya Khan wanted it to stay that way. The atrocities perpetrated by Yahya's military upon his own people in East Pakistan, combined with Nixon's refusal to intervene or speak publicly against Yahya's actions, provoked India to intervene. Indian intervention defined the South Asia Crisis. With world opinion behind it, India aided East Pakistani guerilla forces, and sought to establish an independent government of Bangladesh to enable the Bengali people to escape the brutality of Pakistan's military. An aggressive and determined group of East Pakistani guerilla fighters became known as the Mukti Bahini. India trained and equipped these Bengali freedom fighters and then sent them back into East Pakistan to battle Yahya's forces and fight to obtain their independence.¹⁴³ The breakdown in U.S./India relations precipitated by Nixon's détente objectives, encouraged Indira Gandhi to become aggressively involved in the defense of the Bengali people. In so doing she launched the potential for superpower hostilities based on U.S./Chinese alliances with Pakistan, and a Soviet alliance with India. The South Asia Crisis was war between Pakistan and India

¹⁴³ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 873.

combined with a Cold War confrontation between the U.S., China, and the Soviet Union caused by détente.

CHAPTER III

DÉTENTE THREATENED DURING THE SOUTH ASIA CRISIS

War between Pakistan and India Threatens to Become a Cold War Confrontation between the Great Powers that could End Détente

The South Asia Crisis had its roots in détente, and the South Asia Crisis threatened to destroy détente. As Richard Nixon approached the diplomatic breakthrough with China that defined his presidency, the South Asia Crisis was about to explode. Nixon's ability to restore diplomatic relations with China would be remembered as a profound foreign relations triumph that established détente between the superpowers. Yet, as Nixon's historic foreign policies were beginning to blossom the U.S. Congress took action against Pakistan that threatened to thwart Nixon's partnership with Pakistan's President Yahya Khan. The U.S. Ambassador to India sided with India in the crisis, and Indira Gandhi of India ignored peace initiatives by Nixon and Kissinger. Gandhi used the Pakistani refugees as a tool to leverage her political goals by insisting that Yahya Khan grant the Bengali people independence before she released the refugees to return to East Pakistan. As Indira Gandhi asked her generals to design an Israeli-type lightning strike into East Pakistan, Nixon found his détente initiative further complicated by Yahya's impulsiveness. Yahya made plans to have Mujibur Rahman tried for treason, a politically inept move that could only complicate the crisis. When Yahya's West

Pakistan forces and East Pakistan's militia (Mukti Bahini) went to war, Hindus were targeted by the Muslim military of Pakistan. This greatly multiplied the number of refugees fleeing into India. The Awami League leaders were arrested or killed because East Pakistan wanted autonomy as the independent country of Bangladesh. India's support of the Bengali people escalated into Indian military intervention with forces crossing into East Pakistan; an act of war against Yahya Khan.

As the Soviet Union sponsored Indian aggression against Pakistan by supplying military arms, Nixon and Kissinger wondered if détente with the Russians was even possible. A Soviet treaty with India on the eve of war with Pakistan while Washington and Moscow were planning a summit meeting on arms reduction revealed that Soviet ambition was relentless. The Soviet Union could leverage the South Asia Crisis to its advantage in order to reveal American weakness. If the Americans refrained from intervention on behalf of Pakistan in order to secure détente with the Soviets, then it would increase the impression of American weakness. If America appeared to desire peace at all costs then it would cause détente to fail because the U.S. would not be able to negotiate with other nations from a position of strength; a situation the Soviets would certainly exploit to their advantage.

Nixon and Kissinger were statesmen that were confident they could address the challenging issues of the Cold War with poise and tact. Their memoirs present an image of the two men as cool in a crisis and in control, but the South Asia Crisis of 1971 proved that war between India and Pakistan, and the superpower alliances it involved, threatened to unravel détente. Nixon and Kissinger found themselves reacting to urgent situations more than they initiated events as the crisis unfolded. In private conversations Nixon and

Kissinger raged against India for avoiding peace proposals and threatening war, thereby endangering détente. The South Asia Crisis showed that even when the diplomatic visionaries like Nixon and Kissinger played their roles to perfection, there was still much left to fate.

China and Pakistan were allies, the U.S. had treaty obligations and firm alliances to Pakistan, and India held a casual alliance with the Soviet Union because it desired to maintain an unaligned status. After news of Kissinger's secret trip to China in July of 1971 had been broadcast globally, he presented a veiled threat to India implying a triangle alliance of the U.S., Pakistan, and China against India should India decide to invade East Pakistan. Indira Gandhi became belligerent. A more secure alliance with the Soviets would be sought by India immediately. Unaligned India solidly aligned itself with the Soviet Union in August. Kissinger's implication of Indian isolation was meant to preserve the peace and protect détente by intimidating Indira Gandhi into a peaceful attitude. Instead, it provided the Soviet Union with a significant opportunity to engage its Cold War opponents using India as a proxy. The Soviets invested massive amounts of military hardware into India as Gandhi prepared for war with Pakistan. Kissinger's plan to protect détente by intimidating Gandhi resulted in greatly endangering détente.

In truth, India had nothing to fear from Kissinger's visit to China. Nixon had no designs against India. He merely sought to take advantage of Pakistan's alliance with China in order to build détente. When it came to détente Nixon and Kissinger both understood that without a China trip there would not be a Moscow trip.¹⁴⁴ A U.S. relationship with China would soften the Soviets when it came to détente and Strategic Arms Limitation Talks because they would not want to risk a U.S./Chinese alliance

¹⁴⁴ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 886.

against them. Without the leverage of a China trip Moscow may not be too interested in American proposals. As the Pakistan civil war evolved into the South Asia Crisis the Nixon administration, Pakistan, and China were on one side of the equation, while the odd combination of India, the U.S. Congress, the U.S. media, the international community, and eventually the Soviet Union were on the other.

The Soviet Union did not remain passive when political opportunities arose, and as events unfolded the Soviets tested America's resolve regarding obligations to its allies. Henry Kissinger explained that the Soviet Union was known to throw a lighted match on a powder keg if it would be favorable to its own interests.¹⁴⁵ When the Russians backed India in August 1971 a weakened Pakistan was confronted by an emboldened India. Soviet support maximized the aggressiveness of India's political and military machinery. According to Kissinger, the Soviets seized a strategic opportunity and sought to humiliate Pakistan which was a friend of both the U.S. and China.¹⁴⁶ If either the U.S. or China failed to come to the aid of Pakistan while having alliances firmly in place, it would prove they were impotent.¹⁴⁷ This would humiliate both the U.S. and China in the eyes of the world for backing down in the face of Soviet-sponsored aggression as India crushed Pakistan's military. If the U.S. or China failed to assist Pakistan when confronted by the superior forces of India it could put doubt in the hearts of all U.S. and Chinese allies regarding the reliability and trustworthiness of these two superpowers. By significantly increasing military support to India in the middle of the South Asia Crisis, the Russians manipulated the crisis to their own advantage, and tested American resolve regarding détente.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 867.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

The South Asia Crisis threatened détente due to the hawkish attitude of Indira Gandhi as the crisis escalated. She had moved past any desire for a peaceful solution to the plight of the Bengali people, and prepared for war. In addition, the Soviet Union seized an opportunity to crush Pakistan and damage the prestige of both the U.S. and Communist China. Nixon and Kissinger saw a threat not just to East Pakistan, but to all of Pakistan. The South Asia Crisis threatened détente by forcing the U.S. into a defense of Pakistan against a determined and aggressive Indian/Soviet alliance. Nixon and Kissinger may have appeared to be confident statesmen during the crisis in their memoirs, but the two men were actually consumed with trying to find solutions to complicated problems without the promise of success. Some historians argue that Nixon made the crisis into a global Cold War confrontation when it was actually just a regional war. This chapter will give evidence that Nixon and Kissinger were correct in their assessment that India intended to crush the entire nation of Pakistan once the East was defeated. Rather than Nixon's paranoia, it was Soviet opportunism that escalated the South Asia Crisis into a global Cold War confrontation.

The developing crisis caused two major threats to détente when the U.S. Congress went over Nixon's head in its dealings with Pakistan, and the U.S. Ambassador to India decided to defend India. These internal moves by members of Nixon's own government could have potentially jeopardized Nixon's relationship with Yahya Khan. Nixon's people were working against him as world opinion was mounting against Yahya and Pakistan. Nixon and Kissinger realized that using Yahya Khan as the sole diplomatic channel to the Chinese government was hazardous. Nixon could be manipulated into actions he wished to avoid in order to keep Yahya willing to mediate, and if Yahya were

to fall from power the channel would close. It was therefore necessary for Kissinger to insure that the U.S. and China developed additional channels of communication as soon as possible in order to protect the détente initiative.

The Pakistani civil war caused the U.S. Congress to take action against Yahya Khan. This threatened Nixon's "one time" sale of military equipment to Pakistan involving armored personnel carriers, modified patrol aircraft, F-104 fighter planes, and B-57 bombers.¹⁴⁸ This sale had occurred during peacetime in South Asia, but when Yahya Khan began to move his troops into East Pakistan to suppress a national uprising, the U.S. Congress suspended all military aid to Pakistan. The Democratic Congress did not want to see West Pakistan using American military equipment against the East Pakistani people. This Congressional move was done apart from White House sponsorship as reports of abuses by Yahya's forces increased. Senator Walter F. Mondale of Minnesota said at the time, "There is something very wrong when guns, tanks, and planes supplied by the United States are used against the very people they are supposed to protect."¹⁴⁹ These weapons that Mondale mentioned were obsolete by modern standards, as they had been supplied prior to 1965 under CENTO and SEATO. When Congress received reports of West Pakistani atrocities, it wanted to remove American weapons from the hands of Yahya Khan until the situation in East Pakistan had been resolved.

Beyond Congressional restraints, Kenneth B. Keating, the U.S. Ambassador to India during the first Nixon administration, had strong leanings toward India and was

¹⁴⁸ U.S. Senate, *Senate Concurrent Resolution 21 – Submission of a Concurrent Resolution Calling for Suspension of Military Assistance to Pakistan*, Congressional Record, Vol. 117, Part 8, Ninety-Second Congress, First Session (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1971), p. 10500.

¹⁴⁹ U.S. Senate, *Suspension of Military Assistance to Pakistan*, 12929-1 Senate Miscellaneous Reports on Public Bills I, Senate Reports, Ninety-Second Congress, First Session, Report No. 92-105, May 13, 1971, 5.

deeply sympathetic toward India's mounting refugee crisis. In May 1971 the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Joseph Farland, pointed out to Henry Kissinger, that "Ambassador Keating seems to have gone berserk...he has violated security and appears determined to break Pakistan...he recently called in a *New York Times* reporter and, (told) him the essence of Blood's report."¹⁵⁰ Keating did not know that Kissinger and Nixon had plans to visit China within the next year, nor did he understand Nixon's special relationship with Yahya Khan. On June 4, Nixon and Kissinger agreed "that Keating had effectively become an advocate" for the Indian government.¹⁵¹ Nixon had told Keating that the U.S. should not become involved in an internal Pakistani conflict, but Nixon doubted that Keating would hold to that course.¹⁵² Keating's opposition to Pakistan complicated Nixon's détente efforts.

If Yahya Khan felt that the U.S. was wavering in its commitment to Pakistan by withholding military aid it had already been promised, and if he saw division developing in Nixon's government regarding Pakistan, it could cause him to hesitate in his willingness to mediate between the U.S. and China. This created a potential threat to détente. Keating's actions were presenting a picture of a divided U.S. government, and Nixon needed to address this problem so that Yahya would not waver in his commitment. At a Washington meeting with Nixon and Kissinger on June 15, the President chided Keating by asking him, "Where are your sandals?"¹⁵³ Keating advocated for India and

¹⁵⁰ "Memorandum of Conversation," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 42*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d42> (accessed December 31, 2011).

¹⁵¹ "Editorial Note," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 65*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d65> (accessed January 4, 2012).

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ "Conversation Among President Nixon, his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), and the Ambassador to India (Keating), Washington, June 15th, 5:13-5:40 p.m.," *Foreign Relations of the United*

explained that the refugee influx from East Pakistan to India had reached five million, and of that number about three million were settling in Calcutta.¹⁵⁴ Keating explained that Calcutta was about the size of New York, and the present refugee situation would “be like dumping three million people into New York, except that Calcutta is in much worse shape than New York.”¹⁵⁵ Keating added that the latest he had heard was that the refugee population in India increased by 150,000 each day, “because they’re killing the Hindus” in East Pakistan.¹⁵⁶ West Pakistan had also targeted the East Pakistan intellectual leaders and had “outlawed the Awami League” and killed its leadership.¹⁵⁷ Keating suggested taking \$25 million out of U.S. aid for Pakistan and giving it to India.¹⁵⁸ Soon afterward, Keating left the meeting while Nixon and Kissinger continued the conversation alone. Kissinger told Nixon that to take Pakistan’s aid and give it to India “would be considered such an insult by Yahya that the whole deal would be off.”¹⁵⁹ Kissinger “was referring to Pakistan’s role as intermediary in the contacts that were developing with China.”¹⁶⁰

Keating had made legitimate points regarding the intolerable actions of Yahya’s military, and Nixon knew his recommendations were justified, but Nixon could not follow Keating’s advice lest it destroy détente. Kissinger’s visit to China was only weeks away and Nixon needed Yahya’s cooperation, which prevented him from speaking out

States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 137, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d137> (accessed January 6, 2012).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵⁹ “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 72*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d72> (accessed January 6, 2012).

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

against his actions. Nixon and Kissinger understood that Keating's sympathies toward India were reasonable, and that Pakistan was behaving in an increasingly villainous manner. Yet, Nixon's desire to protect détente caused him to maintain his silence. In order to provide more political latitude, Kissinger promised that when he talked to the Chinese the following month he would set up a different channel of communication besides Yahya, so that the U.S. was not so vulnerable to having its diplomatic communications with the Chinese collapse.¹⁶¹ After Henry Kissinger's China visit in July, 1971, he and the Chinese agreed to two new channels of communication apart from Yahya Khan. The first of these would be in Paris. Kissinger was in Paris regularly to negotiate with the North Vietnamese, so China arranged for Kissinger to use the Chinese ambassador, Huang Chen, as a direct link to Peking. General Vernon A. Walters would deliver messages from Kissinger and Nixon to Huang Chen in Paris, and they would in turn be communicated to Peking.¹⁶² A second channel of communication was also opened using Huang Hua, Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations.¹⁶³ Kissinger said that "Peking had agreed that we could use Huang Hua in New York as a contact on U.N. matters or for emergency messages; the rest of our business was to be conducted through Paris."¹⁶⁴ The new U.N. and Paris channels to China helped protect détente by providing multiple ways for Washington and Peking to communicate, and also insured that détente with China would continue if Yahya fell from power.

¹⁶¹ "Conversation Among President Nixon, his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), and the Ambassador to India (Keating), Washington, June 15th, 5:13-5:40 p.m.," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 137*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d137> (accessed January 6, 2012).

¹⁶² Kissinger, *White House Years*, 765.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 889.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

The international community believed that India had sufficient grounds to intervene in East Pakistan because of the massive refugee influx it had experienced. India had protected the Bengali people from Yahya's military who had suppressed democracy and murdered innocent people. India cared for millions of Pakistani refugees, and aided the Mukti Bahini freedom fighters whom India and the international community believed were involved in a just cause. By late August 1971 the refugee flow from East Pakistan into India totaled seven million.¹⁶⁵ This number would reach 10 million by November. Few believed India had any plans beyond helping Mujibur Rahman and the Bengali people to establish a safe and independent homeland, then allowing the refugees to return home.

The U.S. understood that tensions between India and Pakistan were rapidly escalating as the summer of 1971 approached. In a memorandum to Henry Kissinger on May 25, 1971 he was made aware that "there is strong and mounting public pressure in India to take direct action against the Pakistanis over the refugee problem."¹⁶⁶ The memorandum explained that "Mrs. Gandhi warned that Pakistan must provide "credible guarantees" for the return and future safety of the refugees."¹⁶⁷ She also warned "that unless the great powers take action to remedy the situation, India will be "constrained to take all measures that might be necessary" to safeguard its own well-being."¹⁶⁸ India's resolve for direct military intervention inside Pakistan was growing. In an ominous

¹⁶⁵ "Memorandum From Samuel Hoskinson of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 135*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d135> (accessed January 24, 2012).

¹⁶⁶ "Memorandum From Samuel Hoskinson and Richard Kennedy of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 57*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d57> (accessed approx. December 31, 2011).

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

picture of future developments the memo alleged that Prime Minister Gandhi had “ordered her army to prepare a plan for a rapid take-over of East Pakistan and is said to be particularly interested in an “Israeli-type lightning thrust.”¹⁶⁹

Indira Gandhi formulated a military campaign similar to what Israel had done in the Six-Day War of 1967. In June of 1967 Israel had preempted an attack by Egypt, Syria, and Jordan by initiating a simultaneous lightning strike against enemy airbases, catching enemy warplanes on their runways.¹⁷⁰ The Israeli devastation of enemy air power, 309 of 340 Egyptian aircraft destroyed, freed Israeli ground troops for simultaneous attacks.¹⁷¹ Israeli warplanes were free to fly unhindered. Egypt and Syria had no time to organize for a defensive war. The Egyptian troops were dug in so deep on the Israeli border that those bypassed by Israeli forces could not aid those attacked.¹⁷² In six days Israel had significantly increased the size of its territory and had seized large amounts of Soviet-built military equipment from the enemy.¹⁷³ Israel was actually stronger after the war than it was prior to the war, which was an event almost unprecedented in military history.¹⁷⁴ The Six-Day War had given the Soviet Union a bloody nose in the heart of the Cold War and established Israel as a credible and capable military power. In the South Asia Crisis, Gandhi wanted to apply this same military strategy against Pakistan. As the South Asia Crisis mounted, India planned a lightning military thrust into East Pakistan to quickly control territory, seize enemy assets, and immobilize enemy troops. If her plan worked, the war would be over before the rest of

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ John Keegan, “Six-Day War: A Victory that changed the Mideast map” *U.S. News and World Report*, (June 8, 1987), 35.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 36.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

the world had time to fully understand what had taken place. Gandhi would provide the military backing to enable the East Pakistan resistance fighters, the Mukti Bahini, to successfully defeat Yahya's forces and then establish their own independent country of Bangladesh.

Yahya accused India of interfering in the sovereign affairs of Pakistan, hoping that Nixon would use his influence with India to pressure Gandhi to cease. By the summer of 1971 Yahya Khan insisted that India continually interfered in the internal affairs of Pakistan and that India's actions made the refugee problem worse. On June 28, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Joseph Farland, said that Yahya thought "Mrs. Gandhi had instigated the current problems through clandestine plotting with Mujib."¹⁷⁵ Yahya said dealing with the refugee problem and getting them back to their homes would be much easier "if India would stop giving support to armed resistance" in East Pakistan.¹⁷⁶ A distinct contradictory nature in India's actions arose as the crisis intensified. India repeatedly focused on the problem of the refugees as the reason for its involvement in East Pakistan, but India's support of the Mukti Bahini guerilla fighters sustained the flow of refugees into India with constant warfare with Yahya's troops in East Pakistan. India "took no responsibility for the Bengali guerillas' contribution to the chaos," even when "they were recruited on Indian soil, trained by Indian officers, equipped with Indian arms, and supported by Indian artillery from the Indian side of the frontier."¹⁷⁷ India persistently claimed the guerillas were not under their control.¹⁷⁸ In a White House

¹⁷⁵ "Telegram From the Embassy in Pakistan to the Department of State," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 81*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d81> (accessed January, 18, 2012).

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 873.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

meeting with Nixon and Kissinger on July 28, Ambassador Joseph Farland said Yahya had told him that his intelligence had pinpointed twenty-nine guerilla training camps in India.¹⁷⁹ The guerilla threat was growing by leaps and bounds,¹⁸⁰ meaning that India's intervention could quickly lead to war. India held the refugees safely inside its borders, reviewing military plans to invade, and training the Mukti Bahini freedom fighters. Gandhi demanded a solution to the refugee crisis in India, but sustained it by her actions.

Indira Gandhi had determined that she needed to take charge of the chaotic situation in East Pakistan. Her intention to intervene militarily on behalf of the Bengali people increased and she stalled any serious peace negotiations. With the sympathies of the international community behind her, Gandhi became emboldened to make demands on behalf of the Bengali people and to place conditions on agreements. India trained and equipped the Bengali militia. Gandhi held Pakistani refugees in India and would not allow them to return to East Pakistan until Yahya could guarantee that the Bengali people would become independent and that their safety could be guaranteed. Kissinger suggested that because India is “hooking a refugee solution to an overall political solution,” it implies that India is “using the refugees for political purposes.”¹⁸¹ Gandhi determined to keep the refugees in India until immediate independence was declared for Bangladesh, which India knew could not occur quickly. The refugees had become tied to India's political demands for Bangladesh. In a Washington meeting on November 12, 1971, Kissinger summarized the situation by saying, “India claims this is a Pakistani

¹⁷⁹ “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 109*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d109> (accessed January 23, 2012).

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

problem, but they are deliberately creating conditions which make it insoluble.”¹⁸²

Kissinger and Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco, speculated that India actually desired war. Kissinger argued that “India will never again get the Paks in such a weak position.”¹⁸³ A lightning war in East Pakistan, resulting in a quick Indian victory, could also bring about the fall of West Pakistan. Kissinger explained that when Sisco started an appeasement policy with India regarding its demands for Bangladesh, “India immediately escalated their demands, so that they were not possibly fulfillable in the existing time frame.”¹⁸⁴ Kissinger and Sisco believed that India applied constant pressure to Yahya in order to “suck Pakistan in militarily.”¹⁸⁵ If India could trigger a military response by Pakistan against India in West Pakistan, then Indian could blame Pakistan for escalating the war and freely retaliate without being accused of initiating hostilities.

The greatest external threat to détente involved Indira Gandhi’s treaty with the Soviets on the eve of war with Pakistan. In order to apply pressure to India so that Gandhi would be more agreeable to peace negotiations, Kissinger issued a warning to the Indian Ambassador to the U.S., Lakshmi Kant Jha. He explained that America would not support India should China decide to attack his country during the South Asia Crisis. Kissinger said “that the United States Government would consider any Chinese invasion of India” that occurred as a result of Indian invasion of East Pakistan “as entirely different from the Chinese invasion (of India) in 1962, and that the U.S. Government

¹⁸² “Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 183*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d183> (accessed on January 25, 2012).

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

would provide no support to India, either military or political, in that event.”¹⁸⁶ This warning to India came in the same month as Kissinger’s visit to China. India saw itself as the target of a U.S., Chinese, and Pakistani alliance against it. It meant that if India wished to pursue its interests in East Pakistan, it would face both America and China as allies of Pakistan. When Gandhi realized that Kissinger was implying a U.S./Chinese partnership against India on the heels of Kissinger’s secret trip to Peking (July 9-11), India acted accordingly in its own defense.

Rather than having the desired effect of pressuring India to negotiate for peace, Kissinger’s warning backfired, and Gandhi immediately signed a treaty with the Soviet Union. In New Delhi on August 9, 1971, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko and Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh signed a “Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation”¹⁸⁷ that would last for twenty years. The treaty was “an important Soviet initiative to gain greater influence over the course of events in South Asia,” and it assured India that the Soviet Union would provide significant support in the event of war.¹⁸⁸ The Russians immediately began to provide massive military aid to India, giving the Soviets a significant voice in what was happening in East Pakistan. India could now pursue its interests with the backing of an ally feared by both the U.S. and China. With the promise of Soviet backing, India knew it could bring a permanent conclusion to the problem of Pakistan. Soviet opportunism in South Asia on the heels of Kissinger’s China visit

¹⁸⁶ “Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Helms to eh President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 110*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d110> (accessed January 23, 2012).

¹⁸⁷ “Memorandum From Acting Secretary of State Irwin to President Nixon,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 116*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d116> (accessed January 23, 2012).

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

demonstrated that the Russians were confident they could handle a U.S./Chinese alliance against them. Their backing of India escalated the South Asia Crisis and aggravated Cold War tensions which seriously threatened the future of détente.

The South Asia Crisis had reached a point where the leaders of Pakistan and India were taking actions that accelerated the likelihood of war rather than lessening it. In the same month that the Soviets and Indians signed their treaty of friendship, Yahya Khan decided that Mujibur Rahman of the Awami League would face charges of treason, which implied a possible death sentence. Rahman was an elected representative of the Awami League, with overwhelming support in East Pakistan. Yahya's trial of Mujib would aggravate an already volatile situation. Indira Gandhi appealed to the U.S. to use its influence to help Yahya Khan "to take a realistic view" of the situation.¹⁸⁹ Nixon pointed out that since Ambassador Farland had a good personal relationship with Yahya, he might suggest to Yahya that "not shooting Mujib"¹⁹⁰ would be wise. Farland learned that Yahya had decided that the trial would "be conducted with the greatest care," and "that because the charge carried the possibility of a death sentence," it was Yahya's plan to accept a petition for mercy on Rahman's behalf, if convicted, and then "sit on it for a few months...until power could be turned over to a civilian government."¹⁹¹ Once a civilian government was in charge of Mujibur's mercy plea, "there was little or no

¹⁸⁹ "Letter From the Indian Ambassador (Jha) to President Nixon," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 119*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d119> (accessed on January 23, 2012).

¹⁹⁰ "Memorandum for the Record," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 121*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d121> (accessed January 23, 2012).

¹⁹¹ "Telegram From the Embassy in Pakistan to the Department of State," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 130*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d130> (accessed January 23, 2012).

possibility that Mujibur would be executed.”¹⁹² Farland said that Yahya had given the matter “considerable thought,” to which Yahya replied, “I have, and you can stop worrying because I am not going to execute the man even though he is a traitor.”¹⁹³ Ambassador Farland spoke to Yahya at Nixon’s request, but Nixon was careful not to speak of the matter himself to Yahya so that there could be no potential repercussions that would affect détente.

Nixon and Kissinger might have better understood why Indira Gandhi opted for a treaty with the Soviets and refused to negotiate for peace with Pakistan by taking a close look at her family history. The South Asia Crisis demonstrated a generational cycle of political retaliation between Pakistan and India. In 1964, Pakistan President Ayub Khan had tried to pressure the United Nations to rule in Pakistan’s favor regarding the disputed region of Kashmir. Kashmir had long been coveted by both Pakistan and India for its natural beauty, lakes, and climate. This U.N. appeal by Ayub was done at a time when India was politically weakened due to the fact that India’s Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was in failing health. Ayub took advantage of India’s political weakness and attempted to seize Kashmir. This opportunistic tendency was not forgotten by Indira Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru’s daughter, when she became Prime Minister of India (1966). In 1971 Indira Gandhi had the opportunity to repay Pakistan for its political maneuvers to gain Kashmir while her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, was near death. As Ayub Khan had used India’s weakness to attempt the seizure of Kashmir for Pakistan, Gandhi later had opportunity to exploit Yahya’s political weakness and could attempt to seize Kashmir for India. Gandhi trained and equipped the East Pakistan freedom fighters during their 1971

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

civil war against Yahya Khan. She also fought for them politically and harbored the interim government of Bangladesh in India while Mujib Rahman was imprisoned. Gandhi's refusals to negotiate a peaceful solution when peace was within reach implied Indian motives went beyond settling the issues of the Bengali people. Mrs. Gandhi took advantage of Pakistan's political weakness as Ayub Khan had done. This illustrates a cycle of political retaliation based on ancient wounds between the two countries that Nixon did not fully grasp and perhaps could not fully understand when he began his détente initiative.

Nixon and Kissinger presented concrete peace proposals to Indira Gandhi to protect détente and to avoid a confrontation between superpower nations, but she showed no interest in their proposals when she visited the U.S. during her international tour in early November. Based on intelligence reports Kissinger had received, he believed that she would use her visit with the American President as a cover for an imminent attack on Pakistan.¹⁹⁴ In Washington on November 4, Nixon discussed with Gandhi the return of refugees to Pakistan and a mutual withdrawal of military forces by India and Pakistan. These possibilities were brushed aside by Indira Gandhi during her U.S. visit. Gandhi offered no assurances that her country desired to avoid war. The following morning Nixon and Kissinger privately expressed deep resentment toward Gandhi, and distrust of India. Mrs. Gandhi knew that Yahya had agreed to meet with a representative of the Awami League, who would be pre-approved by Mujibur Rahman, but she did not pay much attention to this offer. Kissinger believed that "the Indians are bastards anyway.

¹⁹⁴ "Memorandum of Conversation," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 146*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d146> (accessed February 8, 2012).

They are starting a war over there...”¹⁹⁵ Mrs. “Gandhi did not respond to Nixon’s proposal of the previous day to consider a withdrawal of forces from the borders of India and Pakistan.”¹⁹⁶ Troop withdrawal was not something that India was considering in November. Nixon and Kissinger believed that Gandhi’s indifference toward their peace proposals meant that she had determined to go to war with Pakistan, confirming their suspicions, and endangering détente by creating Cold War tensions based on the South Asian alliances.

Nixon believed that India was intent on invading West Pakistan once East Pakistan was defeated. America was willing to work with Gandhi to establish an independent Bangladesh because it was an obvious political evolution that was unavoidable. An independent Bangladesh seemed inevitable, and the U.S. agreed to accept this conclusion. This rendered war between India and Pakistan completely unnecessary, but Indira Gandhi showed no interest in avoiding a war. To the contrary, her actions indicated war was imminent. India had no need to send its armies into East Pakistan because the international community had pledged to help India with the refugee hardship. Legitimate peace negotiations were also available to all parties. When Gandhi ignored opportunities to negotiate a peace, and made up her mind to invade East Pakistan, Nixon was convinced that there were more sinister motives at work. Kissinger and Nixon believed it was “India’s determination to use the crisis to establish its preeminence

¹⁹⁵ “Conversation among President Nixon, the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), and the President’s Assistant (Haldeman), Washington, November 5, 1971, 8:51-9:00 a.m.,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 150*, <http://state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d150> (accessed October 25, 2011).

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

on the subcontinent.”¹⁹⁷ President Nixon told his key leaders in July, 1971, that Keating believed world opinion was on the side of the Indians.¹⁹⁸ Nixon observed that this assessment was probably correct, but added that the Indians are “a slippery, treacherous people,” and he felt that the Indians “would like nothing better than to use this tragedy to destroy Pakistan.”¹⁹⁹ Nixon and Kissinger believed that the U.S. diplomatic efforts had made war easily avoidable if India desired it, but India did not desire peace. India was using the refugee situation as a pretext for war against Yahya in which it was certain to come out the victor.

Nixon and Kissinger speculated that Indira Gandhi had made up her mind to invade Pakistan before her arrival in Washington. India had assumed the moral high ground in the eyes of the international community; therefore, any actions taken against Pakistan by India would be free of reprimand. The Nixon administration concluded that India planned to invade East Pakistan, establish an independent Bangladesh, move its forces into West Pakistan to crush the Pakistan military, and then move to seize Kashmir and further dismember Pakistan. Backed by the Soviets, India would make a strategic move to cripple all of Pakistan in order to establish itself as the superior power in South Asia. Indira Gandhi began to manipulate India’s responses in order to stall for time when it came to finding peace with Pakistan. Gandhi’s demand for “credible guarantees” from Pakistan on behalf of the refugees, and her escalation of demands gave the impression of a strategy to avoid a ceasefire and keep all refugees inside India. This provided India with time to position its military while training and fully equipping the Mukti Bahini.

¹⁹⁷ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 885.

¹⁹⁸ “Memorandum for the Record,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 103*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d103> (accessed January 23, 2012).

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Part of Gandhi's military plan involved the safety of Pakistani refugees in India, so she could not allow the refugees to return to East Pakistan if war was imminent. It was important for her to keep the refugees in India and out of harm's way as she prepared for war with Pakistan.

India's belligerence, encouraged by the Soviets, threatened to unravel détente. Should India invade East Pakistan and then threaten to invade West Pakistan as well, a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union would be unavoidable. This confrontation had no predictable result for Nixon and it could destroy détente. The attempts made by Nixon and Kissinger to defuse the South Asia Crisis up to this point turned out to be ineffective. Nixon's efforts to establish peace between India and Pakistan to protect détente had failed. Nixon and Kissinger were merely reacting to events rather than guiding their course. As statesmen, the two men found their skills stretched to the limit, and much would still be left to chance.

The Soviet Union had given India the military backing to initiate war with Pakistan and confront the potential of a U.S., Chinese, and Pakistani alliance against it. On November 22, 1971, Pakistani radio broadcasts announced that India had launched an all-out offensive against East Pakistan without a formal declaration of war.²⁰⁰ Pakistan alleged that the attack included infantry, armor, and aircraft, while the Indians branded these reports as "absolutely false."²⁰¹ Without a formal declaration of war from either side it was difficult to know who had initiated hostilities. In a meeting of the Washington Special Actions Group on November 23, Kissinger declared that India had launched an

²⁰⁰ "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 195*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d195> (accessed on January 25, 2012).

²⁰¹ Ibid.

offensive in conjunction with the Mukti Bahini guerilla fighters, and provided air and ground support for them to accomplish their objectives. Kissinger said in the meeting, “There is no way guerillas could get tanks and aircraft and be operating in brigade formation. We can play this charade only so long.”²⁰² Kissinger was convinced that it made no sense for India to claim that Pakistan had started the conflict. Pakistan had twelve planes to India’s 200. Kissinger said it would be like the “Germans claiming they were attacked by the Lithuanians.”²⁰³ The following day in a subsequent meeting with the same group Kissinger asked, “Is there any doubt in the mind of anyone in this room that the Indians have attacked with regular units across the Pakistan border?...Can we possibly believe that these are guerillas attacking across hundreds of miles, with tanks and aircraft, that this is an indigenous movement?”²⁰⁴ The lack of a formal declaration of war kept Pakistan’s allies confused until India could seize East Pakistan and establish an independent government in Bangladesh. President Yahya Khan by this time wanted “to wash his hands of the situation” by proceeding with the election of a civilian leader intending to turn “the situation over to (Zulfikar) Bhutto.”²⁰⁵

Nixon decided to “tilt” U.S. policy toward Pakistan in early December despite pro-India sentiment in the U.S. Congress, the news media, and most of the U.S. government bureaucracy. Nixon wanted to publicly express U.S. displeasure with India. He wanted his press secretaries to do a background report on how India had refused to

²⁰² “Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 196*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d196> (accessed January 25, 2012).

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ “Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 198*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d198> (accessed January 25, 2012).

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

agree to any of the legitimate steps his administration had taken to avoid war in South Asia. He was determined to cut off all aid to India. Nixon had previously stated, “If there is a war, I will go on national television and ask Congress to cut off all aid to India. They won’t get a dime.”²⁰⁶ Nixon’s tilt toward Pakistan was not apparent quickly enough for the President in government press statements. In a meeting of the Washington Special Actions Group on December 3, Kissinger told those in attendance, “I’ve been catching unshirted hell every half-hour from the President who says we’re not tough enough...He really doesn’t believe we’re carrying out his wishes. He wants to tilt toward Pakistan, and he believes that every briefing or statement is going the other way.”²⁰⁷

Nixon also attempted to get military equipment for Pakistan from other parts of the world because of Congressional restrictions on any U.S. military aid to Pakistan. Nixon authorized Kissinger to negotiate with the Shah of Iran, with “the understanding that any “back channel” military assistance provided to Pakistan by Iran would be offset by comparable assistance provided to Iran by the United States.”²⁰⁸ It turned out “that in light of the treaty of friendship signed by India and the Soviet Union,” the Shah of Iran “could not send Iranian aircraft and pilots to Pakistan.”²⁰⁹ The Jordanians replied that

²⁰⁶ “Memorandum for the Record,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 121*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d121> (accessed January 23, 2012).

²⁰⁷ “Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 218*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d218> (accessed February 3, 2012).

²⁰⁸ “Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to Pakistan (Farland) to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 222*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d222> (accessed approx. January 25, 2012).

²⁰⁹ The Shah of Iran did propose an alternative way to provide aircraft for Pakistan. He suggested that the United States “urge King Hussein to send Jordanian F-104 fighters to Pakistan. The Shah in turn would send two squadrons of Iranian aircraft to Jordan to defend Jordan while Jordanian planes and pilots were in Pakistan.” “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia*

they would “send four aircraft with Jordanian pilots immediately to Pakistan,” and up to twenty-two planes once Jordan had a grasp of the operation.²¹⁰ The Turks agreed to provide six F-5s if the U.S. agreed.²¹¹ China would also send warplanes, but these armaments could not change the final outcome of the war. According to General Alexander Haig, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, India and the Mukti Bahini had received massive amounts of Soviet equipment.²¹² In addition to this support, India had its own military arms production capabilities, and Indian forces outnumbered Pakistan in equipment and troops.

Both India and Pakistan increased military forces on their western borders as the war between them progressed, triggering an expanded war. India had demonstrated an aggressive intent by escalating its military presence on West Pakistan’s borders, so Yahya decided to preempt instead of waiting for an attack in a location of India’s choosing. On December 3, Pakistan launched airstrikes on Indian airbases inside India in Kashmir and the Punjab region.²¹³ Yahya was provoked into action by the presence of India’s military already in East Pakistan, and the threatening buildup of India’s forces on his western borders. Conflict took place beyond East Pakistan in the regions of Kashmir and in West Pakistan based on what the U.S. would call the Indian method of “sucking

Crisis, 1971, Document 250, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d250> (accessed approx. February 4, 2012).

²¹⁰ “Memorandum From the President’s Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig) to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 273*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d273> (accessed on February 3, 2012).

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² “Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and His Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 278*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d278> (accessed on February 3, 2012).

²¹³ “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 215*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d215> (accessed February 18, 2012).

the Pakistanis in”²¹⁴ to a war. The constant goading of Pakistan by India provoked this airstrike against Indian airbases. Nixon and Kissinger believed that the Indians would use this as a justification to attack West Pakistan and Kashmir. Kissinger later confirmed that he had a “whole file of intelligence reports which makes it unmistakably clear that the Indian strategy was to knock over West Pakistan.”²¹⁵ According to Kissinger, if India succeeded in destroying Pakistan’s army, tanks, artillery, and air force, then “Pakistan would be in their paws.”²¹⁶ There would be nothing to prevent India from having its will in Pakistan, and settling issues completely according to its own interests.

When Yahya attacked Indian airfields in Kashmir, India had the green light it desired to take out West Pakistan’s oil reserves in Karachi. After Yahya’s airstrikes, Gandhi immediately said “that Pakistan had launched a full-scale attack against India,” and “that Pakistan’s Air Force had struck at six India airfields in Kashmir and...that Pakistani artillery was shelling Indian positions...”²¹⁷ India in turn felt justified in attacking two West Pakistan oil company dumps in Karachi, producing a nasty fire that the Pakistanis could not put out.²¹⁸ Destroying Pakistan’s oil reserves would bring a rapid conclusion to any military action by Yahya Khan. India did not attack Pakistan’s

²¹⁴ “Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 183*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d183> (accessed February 13, 2012).

²¹⁵ “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 309*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d309> (accessed on February 4, 2012).

²¹⁶ “Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 255*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d255> (accessed February 12, 2012).

²¹⁷ “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 215*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d215> (accessed February 13, 2012).

²¹⁸ “Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 224*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d224> (accessed February 12, 2012).

oil reserves in the West until Yahya had made the first move against India in a region apart from East Pakistan. The Indian military strategy was to goad the Pakistanis into a conflict and then hammer them to death militarily as a result. This enabled India to maintain the support of the international community by alleging that Pakistan had started hostilities.

Nixon's disregard of Gandhi's desire for him to confront the atrocities of Yahya Khan had caused the South Asia Crisis. Gandhi held to her conviction that U.S. collusion with Pakistan had triggered Indian intervention. As war progressed, Gandhi maintained that India had acted morally, and expressed genuine surprise that Nixon could think that India had caused the crisis. She wrote Nixon that "the world press, radio, and television have faithfully recorded the story"²¹⁹ of the struggling Bengali people. Gandhi said regarding Nixon's actions, "it was heartbreaking to find that while there was sympathy for the poor refugees, the disease itself was ignored."²²⁰ This referred to Nixon's willingness to provide aid for the Bengali refugees, but his refusal to confront Yahya Khan and get him to restrain his military. Gandhi explained that "war could also have been avoided if the power, influence and authority of...the United States had got Sheikh Mujibur Rahman released."²²¹ She noted, "We are deeply hurt by the...insinuations that it was we who have precipitated the crisis and have in any way thwarted the emergence of solutions."²²²

²¹⁹ "Letter From Indian Ambassador (Jha) to President Nixon," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 314*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d314> (accessed approx. February 4, 2012).

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

Nixon replied to Gandhi's letter immediately because he wanted the public record to show that he had done a great deal to prevent war, but that Gandhi had resisted these attempts. He said, "When we met in Washington you were assured of our intention to continue to carry the main financial burden for care of the refugees."²²³ Nixon also mentioned he had discussed with her the various ways to begin talks between the government representatives of Pakistan and Bangladesh, and that the government of Pakistan was willing "to take the first step of military disengagement if...India would reciprocate."²²⁴ These proposals did not meet India's requirements fully, but "they were proposals that would have started the process of negotiations"²²⁵ and avoided war. Nixon insisted that India had resisted these steps and determined instead to go to war. Gandhi's preconditions to peace involved the release of Mujibur Rahman and the immediate independence of Bangladesh. Her demands left little room for negotiation. Gandhi had made peace negotiations insoluble. The point of Nixon's letter was to explain to Gandhi that he felt she was to blame for the South Asia Crisis rather than the United States because she believed she had the right to intervene in the affairs of a sovereign Pakistan.

In a move that only a few months earlier would have ruined Nixon's hopes of having Yahya act as the intermediary between the U.S. and China, Nixon and the United States government hesitated to honor its treaty obligations to Pakistan in a time of war. Pakistan was fighting for its very life against a superior Indian army with heavy Soviet military support. The U.N. and Paris channels of communication to China that Kissinger had set up during his visit enabled Nixon to remain aloof during the South Asia Crisis

²²³ "Letter From President Nixon to Indian Prime Minister Gandhi," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 326*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d326> (accessed approx. February 4, 2012).

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

instead of being forced to intervene to secure détente's only channel to China. Yet, Nixon understood that the South Asia Crisis needed to be contained and ended as soon as possible in order to protect détente. Continuation of the war by India threatened the destruction of West Pakistan and a direct confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Such a confrontation could destroy all that Nixon had worked to obtain regarding détente, SALT 1, and also the Moscow summit scheduled for the spring of 1972.

Diplomatic efforts were consistently made by the United States to end the South Asia Crisis quickly, but Nixon received intense pressure from Pakistan to do more. As the South Asia Crisis evolved into full scale war between Pakistan and India across their Eastern and Western borders, Yahya Khan invoked Article I of the 1959 Pakistan-United States Bilateral Agreement of Co-operation.²²⁶ In a telegram to President Nixon, Yahya asked the U.S. to honor its treaty obligations "in keeping with the solemn agreements signed with them, to meet this formidable challenge."²²⁷ Yahya desired the U.S. to do for Pakistan what it was doing for South Vietnam, but Nixon faced Congressional restraints against helping Pakistan militarily and the Nixon doctrine made it clear that sending U.S. military personnel to Pakistan was out of the question. Pakistan's membership in CENTO had promised U.S. military assistance against direct Russian or Chinese attack, but it did not include American military backing in the case of an attack from India. With his forces outnumbered, Yahya Khan pleaded with President Nixon "to issue a stern

²²⁶ "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Pakistan," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 219*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d219> (accessed on February 12, 2012).

²²⁷ Ibid.

warning to Russia and India to stop aggression against Pakistan.”²²⁸ Yahya continued: “There is also urgent need for material assistance from the United States of America, directly or indirectly...”²²⁹ Nixon immediately replied to Yahya’s message, explaining that the U.S. was involved in major diplomatic activities to end the crisis as soon as possible, but there was no mention of military assistance for Pakistan in Nixon’s letter.²³⁰

The U.S. began engaging in legal maneuvers to avoid helping Pakistan militarily when it was clear that the U.S. had moral obligations to Pakistan in its present situation. The door to China had been opened at this point, so Nixon did not have to intervene in the South Asia Crisis solely to preserve Yahya as his only channel to the Chinese. Some argued that the United States had no legal obligation to Pakistan under CENTO in the South Asia Crisis.²³¹ Pakistan’s Major General Nawabzada Agha Mohammad Raza, Pakistani Ambassador to the United States, called on Joseph Sisco to again request help based on the 1959 bilateral treaty.²³² Raza appealed to American willingness to help Pakistan in its hour of need, and to avoid “specific treaty commitments which might be subject to differing interpretations.”²³³ Raza said that, “We depend on you entirely.”²³⁴

²²⁸ “Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to Pakistan (Farland) to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 242*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d242> (accessed approx. February 3, 2012).

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ “Backchannel Message From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the Ambassador to Pakistan (Farland),” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 243*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d243> (accessed approx. February 3, 2012).

²³¹ “Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 248*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d248> (accessed February 2, 2012).

²³² “Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Pakistan,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 260*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d260> (accessed approx. February 3, 2012).

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

He understood the U.S. could not provide manpower, but that it could supply armaments, “either directly or indirectly via third countries.”²³⁵ Raza presented an aide-memoire to Sisco that stated: “Pakistan fully appreciates the political support given to her by President Nixon and the administration, but because of deep and open Soviet involvement, mere political support is not enough.”²³⁶

In spite of repeated appeals by Pakistan, Nixon and Kissinger could make no promise to Yahya that the U.S. would intervene with military aid. Due to Congressional restraints Nixon could not directly assist Pakistan militarily and establish a balance of power in South Asia which would help insure peace in the region. In addition, Nixon may have had no desire to become involved to that degree in order to protect détente by not risking his diplomatic gains with the Russians. Nixon limited U.S. alliance obligations to intense diplomatic efforts to end India’s war against Pakistan. Nixon did have arrangements underway to provide military equipment for Pakistan through intermediaries, but he was bound by law not to send American military aid to Pakistan. George H.W. Bush, Permanent Representative to the United Nations (February 1971 - January 1973), negotiated with Russian and Indian representatives to end hostilities. Zulfikar Bhutto of Pakistan became Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister to Yahya Khan during the South Asia Crisis. Together Bush and Bhutto worked in the United Nations Security Council to get an immediate cease-fire in East Pakistan, and the withdrawal of Indian forces. The Russians used their veto in the U.N. to block any actions taken against India, and China voted in favor of Pakistan on resolutions related to the war with India.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

Pakistan had no chance militarily against a Soviet-sponsored Indian assault. Nixon realized that all of Pakistan could soon fall unless the U.S. or China intervened. He understood that an ominous shadow loomed over détente due to Indian and Soviet actions in South Asia. By December 5, Nixon and Kissinger saw that it was necessary to take a stand of some kind to confront the Soviet Union, or the Russians would be emboldened by the implication of American weakness in future Third World conflicts. In a telephone conversation with the President, Kissinger remarked that, “This is going to be a dress rehearsal for the Middle East in the spring.”²³⁷ If the U.S. acquiesced to the Soviets as they armed India, and then allowed the Indians to rampage through Pakistan, the Soviets would also sponsor similar activities in the Middle East soon afterward. If the U.S. did not take a tough stand, West Pakistan would fall, and a similar attempt would be made by the Soviets against Israel using a Soviet-sponsored country (Egypt and/or Syria) in the Middle East.

Détente became threatened by the South Asia Crisis due to Gandhi’s belligerence and the Soviet Union’s aggressiveness. In the beginning, Nixon’s silence on Yahya Khan’s atrocities caused the rift between Nixon and Gandhi. Nixon’s channel to China had been secured before India invaded East Pakistan in November, and the loss of Yahya as a channel to the Chinese was no longer the threat to détente. The threat to détente came through the crisis itself when India learned of Kissinger’s secret visit to China, and Nixon’s planned visit to China the following year. Unaligned India became anxious about a U.S. and China alliance supporting Pakistan, and India immediately aligned with

²³⁷“Transcript of Telephone Conversation between President Nixon and His Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 230*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d230> (accessed January 31, 2012).

the Russians. Gandhi's plans to invade East Pakistan were already in place, but they could not succeed unless she had a superpower ally that both the U.S. and China feared. Détente was threatened by the Soviet/Indian alliance and its determination to bring Pakistan to its knees. Nixon had to defend West Pakistan to maintain U.S. integrity and to protect the global balance of power. Détente was endangered by a potential military confrontation between the great nations of the Cold War era during the South Asia Crisis. The Russians had gained a strategic advantage in which they could probe for weakness in American resolve, and humiliate both the Americans and the Chinese if they allowed Pakistan to fall.

Nixon and Kissinger were certain that India would invade West Pakistan. India had goaded Pakistan into a war that Gandhi wanted. She had U.S. Congressional restraints against Nixon helping Pakistan, the international community supported her, the Soviets had given her massive assistance, her military was superior to Pakistan's, and she would have a significant portion of Yahya's troops in custody once East Pakistan fell. The international community would not reprimand her for crushing Yahya's military all across West Pakistan after it had committed atrocities upon the Bengali people. India would appear justified and even heroic in destroying the army that had tried to destroy the Bengali people. The historic bitterness between India and Pakistan made it unreasonable to conclude that India would show any degree of mercy toward its ancient enemy when it could permanently remove the threat of further war with Pakistan. Gandhi possessed a political and military opportunity to crush its historic enemy that no

Indian leader could ever hope for again.²³⁸ Kissinger's intelligence reports confirmed that Gandhi would not let the opportunity pass.

Nixon and Kissinger liked to think of themselves as foreign relations experts who could solve Cold War problems, but the South Asia Crisis showed they were continually on the verge of losing control of détente's ultimate destiny. The crisis proved to be anything but a regular situation that the two professional statesmen could handle with poise and tact. Nixon and Kissinger were constantly thwarted by Gandhi's refusal to negotiate for peace and her support of the Bengali guerilla fighters. Kissinger's warning that Gandhi was on her own against China if she invaded Pakistan was supposed to be the political move that would end the crisis, but it created a stubborn determination in India to persist in its goals. India's treaty with the Soviets put Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs on the defensive. The war between India and Pakistan created Cold War tensions between the great nations, and could have been a way for the Soviets to communicate to Nixon that Kissinger's visit to China would not intimidate them.²³⁹ The aggressiveness of the Soviet Union during the South Asia Crisis threatened to end détente before it could begin.

Nixon knew it was time to take action. He could remain silent no longer where the Soviet Union was concerned. Failure to do so would imply significant American weakness which would make the Soviets impossible to negotiate with. In order for détente to be successful the balance of power between the great nations had to be

²³⁸ "Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 183*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d183> (accessed January 25, 2012).

²³⁹ Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power*, 338.

maintained.²⁴⁰ Unless the U.S. could begin détente as a nuclear power with the principled determination and courage of a great leader behind it, détente would fail. Nixon would have to take a bold stand against the Soviet Union if he was to save détente as the South Asia Crisis reached its most crucial point, even though his hands were tied as he sought to assist Yahya Khan militarily. Nixon was already negotiating the SALT 1 treaty with the Soviet Union and plans for a spring summit in Moscow were on the table. His presidential visit to China was only two months away. Soviet opportunism in South Asia proved to be antagonistic and subversive as détente hung in the balance. The South Asia Crisis would ultimately reveal to what lengths Nixon would go in order to protect détente.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ "Editorial Note," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 256*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d256> (accessed August 2, 2012).

²⁴¹ "Editorial Note," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 252*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d252> (accessed August 2, 2012).

CHAPTER IV

DÉTENTE BRINGS AN END TO THE SOUTH ASIA CRISIS

Nixon Risks Détente and Warns the Soviet Union that He Intends To Intervene on Behalf of Pakistan

Convinced that the Indian/Soviet objective was to defeat and cripple all of Pakistan, the Nixon administration decided to take aggressive steps to bring about an immediate ceasefire and maintain the territorial integrity of West Pakistan. Short of these steps, the Soviets would not only humiliate China for failing to come to the aid of Pakistan, but the U.S. would be humiliated as well for failing to help an ally militarily at a time when its very existence was threatened. It was clear that East Pakistan would fall, and the new nation of Bangladesh would result, but Nixon and Kissinger were convinced that the U.S. had to protect West Pakistan from falling. Failure to do so would threaten détente by demonstrating that Soviet ambition was beyond restraint, and it would damage the integrity of U.S. alliances worldwide. Détente had given the U.S. a means by which to work directly with the Soviet Union and China, but the South Asia Crisis placed Nixon in a situation where he needed to negotiate détente during the heat of an escalating war. The potential for mistrust and suspicion significantly increased in this wartime scenario, and having to use a confrontational tone in his dealings with the Indians and the Soviets would threaten to derail détente as well.

The South Asia Crisis revealed the lengths to which Nixon would go in order to protect détente and why. Beginning with an aide-memoire from the Kennedy administration, Nixon sought to leverage Indian and Soviet restraint by warning of his intention to enter the war on behalf of Pakistan. As Nixon warned the Russians of his plans to intervene should India threaten to invade West Pakistan, he also requested China to move some of its military forces to feint a joint U.S./Chinese intervention. This created the problem of potentially escalating the crisis should the Soviets become defiant and stiffen in their resolve. If the Soviets moved against China due to a Chinese move against India, Nixon would have to step in and assist China in some way lest he sacrifice Kissinger's diplomatic gains. Any move the U.S. made against the Soviets to protect détente with the Chinese, would threaten détente with the Soviets. As the South Asia Crisis became a complicated Cold War contest, Nixon took a stand based on the principle that American weakness was not the reason he desired détente.

Nixon's actions during the South Asia Crisis proved his willingness to risk détente. Gandhi had waged a successful lightning war against Pakistan similar to the Israeli campaign of 1967, and Yahya's East Pakistani forces surrendered quickly due to overwhelming Indian/Soviet force. India and the Russians then needed to determine whether to accept their gains in the eastern portion of Pakistan as sufficient, or commit to war in West Pakistan. Nixon pressed the Soviets to rein in the Indian military in order to preserve the integrity of West Pakistan under threat of U.S. intervention. Nixon moved his naval forces toward the conflict and placed détente at risk. The Soviet power play during the South Asia Crisis would determine if détente with the Soviets was possible. Nixon had to maintain the balance of power during the Cold War or détente could not

succeed. If Russian ambition caused the disintegration of Pakistan by India, and the U.S. did not act, the Soviets would believe they could have détente and free rein in the Third World as well. Nixon had to prove to the Russians that he would not abandon an ally for the sake of détente. Peace at all costs was not an option because it signaled American weakness to an opponent that considered force to be the key to political success.

Détente brought an end to the South Asia Crisis. Nixon believed he could corral the Soviets using their own desire to protect their détente interests. As a result, Nixon gambled with détente, SALT 1, and the 1972 summit meeting in Moscow. Nixon had to risk détente based on principle, and communicate to the Russians that the U.S. would not tolerate further Soviet ambition at Pakistan's expense. If the Soviet Union viewed détente as a political expedient caused by American weakness then it could not succeed. Nixon would have to use the threat of force in order to remain a credible opponent and protect American Cold War interests. Moscow hoped to save détente for a variety of reasons. Soviet détente interests included grain sales from the U.S., avoiding a U.S./Chinese alliance against it, negotiating troop levels in Europe, and limiting the American nuclear arsenal.²⁴² When Nixon made it clear that he would not tolerate Indian and Soviet aggression for the sake of détente, the Soviet Union reined in the Indian military and preserved the integrity of West Pakistan. The Russians ended the South Asia Crisis in order to protect their interests in détente, and détente brought an end to the South Asia Crisis.

As the South Asia Crisis expanded into West Pakistan and war in the east ended, Nixon needed to deal directly with the Russians if he hoped to end hostilities. Nixon had allowed India to arm the Mukti Bahini and train them for war in East Pakistan. He also

²⁴² Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power*, 287.

had implied a degree of American weakness as India crossed Pakistan's border to assist in the defeat of Yahya's forces while America watched. Nixon had warned India that going to war with Pakistan would have serious consequences in U.S./Indian relations, but the only bite in his words was the threat of suspending all U.S. aid to India. Kissinger told the President, "What we are seeing here is a Soviet-Indian power play to humiliate the Chinese and also somewhat us."²⁴³ Kissinger added, "...our only hope in my judgment...is to become very threatening to the Russians and tell them that if they are going to participate in the dismemberment of another country, that will affect their whole relationship to us."²⁴⁴ Nixon needed a way to convince the Russians that he was a tough and courageous leader, and that he would risk détente if necessary to get the Soviets to rein in India. Threats to India would accomplish nothing unless the Soviets would cooperate.

Nixon had to convince the Soviets that he would enter the war on behalf of Pakistan if India did not show restraint. He devised a strategy based on an "aide-memoire" from the years of the Kennedy administration. In November 1962, the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Walter P. McCaughy, had met with Agha Khan, promising U.S. assistance in the form of a telegram that McCaughy handed to Ayub.²⁴⁵ The aid-memoire read, "The government of the United States of America reaffirms its previous

²⁴³ "Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and His Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 228*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d228> (accessed January 31, 2012).

²⁴⁴ "Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and His Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 229*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d229> (accessed on January 31, 2012).

²⁴⁵ "Telegram From the Embassy in Pakistan to the Department of State," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963 Volume XIX, South Asia, Document 191*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v19/d191> (accessed February 3, 2012).

assurances to the Government of Pakistan that it will come to Pakistan's assistance in the event of aggression from India against Pakistan”²⁴⁶ At the time, the aide-memoire was meant to divert concerns by Pakistan that the U.S. had supported India militarily in 1962 against the Chinese. This document became the instrument that Nixon used with the Soviet Union in the South Asia Crisis in order to restrain their ambitions.

Nixon and Kissinger agreed to use the Kennedy pledge to warn the Soviets of a clear U.S. obligation to aid Pakistan against Indian attack. On December 10, Kissinger was scheduled to meet with Yuli M. Vorontsov, Minister of the Soviet Embassy in the United States. Kissinger explained, “I’m going to show him the Kennedy understanding,” and “I’m going to hand him a very tough note to Brezhnev and say this is it now...let’s get a cease fire.”²⁴⁷ The U.S. would concede that India had won East Pakistan, but if India and the Soviets made hostile moves against West Pakistan, Nixon wanted the Soviets to understand the U.S. would be obligated to intervene. A letter from Nixon to Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev explained that unless there was an immediate cease fire in West Pakistan, the U.S. would assume that an act of aggression was in progress against all of Pakistan, “a friendly country toward which we have obligations.”²⁴⁸ Nixon reminded Brezhnev that because of the Soviet/Indian friendship treaty the Soviets “have great influence” with the Indians, “and for whose actions you must share responsibility.”²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Ibid., footnote 6.

²⁴⁷ Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 266*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d266> (accessed February 3, 2012).

²⁴⁸ “Letter From President Nixon to Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 269*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d269> (accessed February 12, 2012).

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

It was important for Kissinger to show a united U.S. government to convince the Soviets that Nixon's threat to intervene was legitimate. Kissinger's emphasized to Vorontsov the Kennedy promise to help Pakistan against India.²⁵⁰ He showed him the treaty and said, "...now I hope you understand the significance of this. It isn't just an obligation. It will completely defuse the Democrats because they are not going to attack their own President."²⁵¹ Kissinger meant that Congress would support Nixon because Kennedy was a Democratic president and the Democrats in Congress would not oppose alliance agreements by Kennedy. The message to Vorontsov was intended to imply that all Congressional opposition to Nixon's policies would disappear if Nixon decided to intervene. Kissinger warned Vorontsov that when President Nixon spoke of an obligation to Pakistan "he was speaking of the Kennedy obligation."²⁵² Vorontsov's conversation with Kissinger would be communicated to Moscow immediately. Kissinger told Nixon that after his meeting, "Vorontsov had needed no further proof of United States resolve."²⁵³ Kissinger later explained to Nixon that "When I showed Vorontsov the Kennedy treaty they knew they were looking down the gun barrel."²⁵⁴ Nixon asked, "Did he react?"²⁵⁵ Kissinger replied, "Oh yeah."²⁵⁶

Nixon believed that if the Indians and Soviets saw a combined military movement by both the U.S. and the Chinese that suggested a defense of West Pakistan, it would

²⁵⁰ "Editorial Note," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 268*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d268> (accessed February 3, 2012).

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ "Editorial Note," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 283*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d283> (accessed February 3, 2012).

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

restrain them enough to get a ceasefire. In conjunction with the Vorontsov conversation Nixon requested that Kissinger ask the Chinese to move some forces.²⁵⁷ Nixon believed it was important for the Chinese to move something militarily to secure a ceasefire. He told Kissinger to have them do “some symbolic act” like moving a military division, or something even simpler would be sufficient like moving some trucks or flying some planes.²⁵⁸ Nixon also ordered a U.S. aircraft carrier task force to move into the Bay of Bengal to frighten both India and the Soviets. It was Nixon’s desire to present the likelihood of a U.S.-Chinese alliance moving against the Soviet Union if the Russians and Indians did not agree to a ceasefire.

Nixon’s decision to gamble with détente revealed that he was willing to jeopardize diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and sacrifice détente if necessary. Both Nixon and Brezhnev wanted to keep détente intact, and both desired to follow through on their plans for a Moscow summit in the spring of 1972, but Soviet actions in the South Asia Crisis were unacceptable and jeopardized all détente plans. Nixon observed that “If Brezhnev does not have the good judgment not to push us to the wall on this miserable issue...we just may as well forget the summit” (SALT 1).²⁵⁹ Nixon and Kissinger also discussed the fact that the Soviets had sent notes to Iran and Turkey and other countries with veiled threats if they should help Pakistan.²⁶⁰ Nixon gambling with détente in order to get tough with the Soviets showed that détente required the Soviets to respect political boundaries. They could not trample on an American ally without

²⁵⁷ “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 266*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d266> (accessed February 3, 2012).

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, Document 268*.

²⁶⁰ “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, Document 266*.

endangering their own détente interests. By presenting the Kennedy aide-memoire, Nixon himself had placed détente at risk, demonstrating to the Soviets that their manipulation of the South Asia Crisis had negative consequences to Soviet interests. The Russians could not expect to have détente with the U.S. and rampage through West Pakistan at the same time.

Nixon believed that the Russians would not escalate the South Asian war to the point where they might lose the opportunities presented to them by détente. As ceasefire negotiations were underway Nixon communicated to Brezhnev on December 12 that “time is of the essence to avoid consequences *neither of us want*.”²⁶¹ It was clear that the Indians and the Soviets would seize East Pakistan, but Nixon and Kissinger had calculated that the Soviets would settle for the gains made in East Pakistan, and agree to a ceasefire before invading West Pakistan in order to protect their interests in détente. Kissinger told Nixon that he believed the Russians would not drive India to the extreme in Pakistan, “because after all they already got 60% of the population of Pakistan.”²⁶² Nixon said that he agreed.²⁶³ The American threat of military intervention on behalf of Pakistan might not have been enough of a deterrent to the Soviets by itself, but potential Soviet gains through détente with the Americans was not something the Soviets wanted to sacrifice too quickly.

²⁶¹ “Message From President Nixon to Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 286*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d286> (accessed March 16, 2012).

²⁶² “Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and His Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 277*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d277> (accessed February 3, 2012).

²⁶³ Ibid.

As the Soviet Union pondered their response to Nixon's presentation of the Kennedy aide-memoire, a potential problem arose regarding the Chinese. Kissinger feared that if the Chinese made an aggressive move toward India it could "stiffen the Russians," instead of causing them to back down.²⁶⁴ The Soviets could decide to take aggressive action against China in defense of India. This would cause the stakes to rise significantly by increasing tension between Cold War superpowers. When Kissinger suggested to Huang Hua on December 10 that the Chinese consider military assistance for Pakistan,²⁶⁵ there was the very real possibility he would get it. Then Alexander Haig interrupted a meeting in the Oval Office between Nixon and Kissinger on December 12, to announce that the Chinese wanted an urgent meeting.²⁶⁶ They believed that the Chinese were going to move militarily on behalf of West Pakistan. Nixon's dilemma was how the U.S. would respond to a Soviet move against China. Haig was designated to travel to New York to meet the Chinese as Nixon and Kissinger planned to leave for the Azores for meetings with the French. All believed that the Chinese would do as Kissinger had suggested, and feign a joint U.S./Chinese military move to protect West Pakistan. It was too late to call off the Chinese for fear of Russian moves against China without losing U.S. diplomatic gains with the Chinese, so Haig was instructed to tell the Chinese that if the Soviets threatened China for moving against India the U.S. "would not ignore Soviet intervention."²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ "Memorandum of Conversation," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 274*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d274> (accessed June 4, 2012).

²⁶⁶ "Editorial Note," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 281*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d281> (accessed February 3, 2012).

²⁶⁷ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 910.

Nixon believed that if the Chinese moved against India on behalf of Pakistan, it would greatly increase the likelihood of Indian/Soviet restraint, but if the Soviets hardened their resolve and moved against China militarily as a result then it posed serious problems. Kissinger said to Nixon regarding the possibility of a Soviet move against China, “I must warn you, Mr. President, if our bluff is called, we’ll be in trouble.”²⁶⁸ If the U.S. backed down and refused to assist the Chinese against the Soviets, after China had acted at U.S. request, it could ruin all diplomatic efforts begun with China by Kissinger in July. If China’s involvement stiffened Soviet resolve and the U.S. reneged, then détente with China would be over. Kissinger told Nixon and Haig, “If the Soviets move against them (China) and then we don’t do anything, we’ll be finished.”²⁶⁹ The Chinese would feel betrayed and the Soviets would be convinced the Americans were weak. Kissinger added, “If the Russians get away with facing down the Chinese and if the Indians get away with licking the Pakistanis...we may be looking down the gun barrel.”²⁷⁰ Even if the United States were to do something symbolic like go on alert militarily, or put a minimum of forces in, or give some bombing assistance to the Chinese,²⁷¹ warlike moves would still severely damage détente with the Soviet Union, or end it altogether.

The urgent message from the Chinese was that “China was prepared to support the United Nations procedure Kissinger had outlined in the December 10 meeting.”²⁷² Haig’s promise to China of American support against the Soviets was never given

²⁶⁸ “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 251*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d251> (accessed approx. February 3, 2012).

²⁶⁹ “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, Document 281*.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

because China never moved its forces to threaten India. The Soviets were given no reason to move against China. Like the Americans, the Chinese promised to support diplomatic actions in the United Nations on behalf of Pakistan, and would use their influence to restrain the Indians and the Soviets. Kissinger had recommended to the Chinese a joint U.N. strategy in which both nations would call for immediate cease fire and withdrawal of forces from East Pakistan, but then would simply settle for an immediate cease fire in order to save West Pakistan after the East was lost.²⁷³ Nixon would not need to jeopardize détente with the Soviet Union based on his promise to assist China.

The Soviet Union had made a significant investment in India's war. They were not going to agree to a ceasefire and walk away from a victory. The Russians delayed their agreement to Nixon's demand for a ceasefire based on the Kennedy aide-memoire until the Indians had obtained the surrender of Yahya's forces in East Pakistan and secured their victory. An exchange of communications between Nixon and Brezhnev which promised a quick Soviet response to Nixon's demands for a ceasefire and withdrawal was essentially a stalling tactic by the Soviets. These responses by the Soviets were merely meant to buy time as the Indians pressed their victory to its inevitable conclusion. The Soviet Union then used its influence with India to put an end to the South Asia Crisis in order to protect Soviet interests in détente.

As the Indian military invaded East Pakistan to assist the Mukti Bahini, Yahya's military forces were severely outmatched and gathered around major cities such as Dacca for defense and soon began to negotiate for cessation of hostilities. Kissinger told Nixon on December 10 that "the war in the East has reached its final stages," and "Indian forces

²⁷³ Ibid.

are encircling Dacca and preparing the final assault” on Yahya’s forces.²⁷⁴ Kissinger explained that the top Pakistani military official in Dacca had offered terms for a ceasefire. Pakistani Lieutenant General Ameer Abdullah Khan Niazi, requested an urgent meeting with the U.S. Consul General in Dacca, Herbert D. Spivack, on December 14.²⁷⁵ Niazi said that the bombing of his forces in Dacca “had convinced him that the fighting must be stopped immediately to prevent further bloodshed...”²⁷⁶ Niazi offered terms which, if met, would result in the immediate end of all Pakistani military operations in East Pakistan.

The surrender of Niazi’s forces in East Pakistan signaled the turning point of the war. It allowed Indira Gandhi to move her East Pakistan forces to West Pakistan and continue her campaign if she desired. The crucial question after India and the Mukti Bahini defeated Niazi would be the degree of Indian and Soviet ambition in West Pakistan. Nixon knew that the South Asia Crisis could end, or the real war could begin as India and the Soviets invaded West Pakistan and challenged its alliance with the U.S. and China. Once the eastern wing of Pakistan had been defeated, and Yahya’s forces in Dacca were in Indian custody, the Soviets used their influence with the Indian government to prevent an assault on West Pakistan. The Soviets persuaded the Indians to agree to a ceasefire. West Pakistan remained secure. Once Indian forces secured East Pakistan and an independent Bangladesh was guaranteed, the South Asia Crisis ended as

²⁷⁴ “Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 267*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d267> (accessed February 12, 2012).

²⁷⁵ “Telegram From the Consulate General in Dacca to the Department of State,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 300*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d300> (accessed February 13, 2012).

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

suddenly as it had begun. India did not pursue further military objectives in West Pakistan.

When the war ended on December 16, 1971, Indira Gandhi announced “that the Pakistani forces commanded by General Niazi had surrendered unconditionally...in Dacca.”²⁷⁷ She proclaimed it “the free capital of a free country,” and “announced a cease fire on the front between India and West Pakistan to take effect the following day.”²⁷⁸ Her government stated that “India had no territorial ambitions in the conflict.”²⁷⁹ At the same time, India announced that it “expected there would be a “corresponding immediate response” from Pakistan.”²⁸⁰ Pakistan accepted the ceasefire offer and the South Asia Crisis was over.

The Soviets had humiliated China and the U.S. by the inability of Yahya Khan and his superpower allies to prevent the fall and seizure of East Pakistan. The Russians had successfully defeated Yahya’s forces in the eastern wing of his country by arming India. The Soviets had also gained significant political credibility in the Third World as an ally that could get the job done in wartime situations. On the other hand, Nixon’s stand against Indian and Soviet aggression using the Kennedy pledge had brought the desired result. His willingness to gamble with the future of détente had caused the Russians to back down in order to protect their détente interests. To Nixon’s credit, Kissinger mentioned that Chou En-lai, the Chinese Premier, would later tell Zulfikar Ali

²⁷⁷ “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 320*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d320> (accessed February 18, 2012).

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

Bhutto of Pakistan that it was his judgment that U.S. actions during the South Asia Crisis “had saved West Pakistan.”²⁸¹

When it came to U.S. intervention in South Asia the Soviets may have understood that Nixon was bluffing, but to call his bluff would be to sacrifice détente. The Russians were held responsible for emboldening the Indians and aggravating Cold War tensions. If India and its Soviet support base would have invaded West Pakistan once Yahya’s armies in the east were defeated, it could have triggered a Cold War military engagement between all three superpowers that would transcend South Asia. It would also have killed détente and all potential Soviet gains. It was therefore in Soviet interests to accept the gains they had already made, and to keep the summit plans intact for Nixon and Brezhnev in 1972. Without remorse or apology, the Indians and Soviets ceased aggressive actions against Pakistan. Soviet gains were accepted by the Americans, and the Soviets did not hold resentment against Nixon for threatening to intervene on behalf of Pakistan. Based on mutual self-interest, both sides understood that détente would continue as planned in spite of the South Asia Crisis. As if the South Asia Crisis were nothing more than a simple game of chess, Anatoly Dobrynin, Soviet ambassador to Washington, “repeated an earlier suggestion that Kissinger make a secret visit to Moscow so that Vietnam and other agenda items could be discussed with Brezhnev before the summit.”²⁸²

In the aftermath of the South Asia Crisis, Kissinger convinced Nixon that it was necessary to take steps in the U.N. to preserve the Cold War balance of power. If Nixon’s threat to intervene militarily on behalf of Pakistan based on the Kennedy aide-

²⁸¹ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 913.

²⁸² Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset and Dunlop, 1978), 587.

memoire was not reinforced with an emotional display and public anger at India/Soviet behavior it could make U.S. resolve appear unconvincing. After the Soviets backed down and agreed to work toward an immediate ceasefire, Kissinger believed that registering American outrage in a highly public format could give pause to the Soviets in the future. He realized the U.S. needed to maintain a tough Cold War image to maintain the balance of power. It was not enough for the U.S. to concede that India and the Soviet Union had gained East Pakistan, without making public proclamations to oppose it. The Nixon administration wanted to register its outrage at Indian and Soviet ambition. Kissinger believed that “if the United States was to ease up on the pressure on India and the Soviet Union “we’ve had it.””²⁸³ He recommended to Nixon that it was time “to turn the screw another half turn.”²⁸⁴ Kissinger wanted the U.S. to make strong resolutions in the United Nations to go on record as condemning India,²⁸⁵ but he told Nixon, “We are doing this Mr. President with no cards whatsoever,”²⁸⁶ indicating that if the Soviets became belligerent toward American criticism and pushed back, the U.S. would again be in a difficult political position. Yet, Kissinger felt it was necessary to publicly register American outrage in order to sway public opinion against the Indians and the Soviets to curb future Soviet ambitions.

The Nixon administration took a tough stand on India in the United Nations, demanding an immediate cease fire and withdrawal of Indian military forces,²⁸⁷ as well as strongly condemning India’s actions in the crisis. The U.S. naval fleet would move

²⁸³ “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, Document 283*.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ “Memorandum of Conversation,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 285*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d285> (accessed February 17, 2012).

toward Karachi in West Pakistan²⁸⁸ in order to establish that U.S. intervention was still a possibility even after hostilities ended. By going on record in the U.N. as strongly condemning India,²⁸⁹ the U.S. would maintain a tough posture with the hope that the Soviets would be intimidated and therefore less likely to push their agenda too aggressively in the coming months. The U.N. actions were primarily for the public record because Nixon and Kissinger had already agreed to accept a simple ceasefire after East Pakistan had been defeated. In a telegram from U.S. Ambassador Keating, he “reported that rumors of possible U.S. involvement in the Indo-Pak war were circulating in India. He asked for authorization to offer assurances that the United States did not intend to support Pakistan with U.S. arms or equipment.”²⁹⁰ Kissinger replied, “Keating is to give no such assurances.”²⁹¹ This prohibition by Kissinger kept the Indians and the Russians guessing as to U.S. intentions, and gave the U.S. the political initiative.

Henry Kissinger’s book *White House Years* presents a picture of Nixon and Kissinger as taking a heroic stand against Soviet and Indian aggression. Yet, in a telephone conversation on December 17, Kissinger said to Nixon, “We have come out of this amazingly well and we scared the pants off the Russians.”²⁹² Kissinger also considered the fact that India did not completely devour Pakistan to be “an absolute

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ “Telegram from the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to the President’s Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig),” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 302*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d302> (accessed approx. February 4, 2012).

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² “Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and His Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 324*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d324> (accessed February 18, 2012).

miracle.”²⁹³ The Nixon administration knew that it had relatively little control over the outcome of the situation and had taken a bold gamble. Nixon’s private conversations with Kissinger demonstrate surprise at the positive results of the South Asia Crisis where American interests were concerned, and indicate the two men had little actual control over the end result. Nixon’s hope that he could usher in the age of détente with his diplomatic visits to Peking and Moscow were seriously challenged by the South Asia Crisis. At every turn Nixon and Kissinger found themselves surrounded by unexpected problems that threatened détente. Nixon’s détente goals could have crumbled at any moment during the crisis if the Soviet Union pushed back on American resolve to probe for signs of weakness that it could exploit.

The announcement by Indira Gandhi on December 16 of a ceasefire effective in all parts of both India and Pakistan, assured the future of West Pakistan. Yet, Yahya’s role as Pakistan’s leader was doubtful. In the immediate aftermath of the crisis there were unanswered questions related to his fate, as well as what would become of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, still in prison in West Pakistan. The Pakistani soldiers under the command of General Niazi became prisoners of war in India, with their futures to be determined. The entire Indo/Pak war lasted from November 22, 1971, to December 16, which was less than four weeks. The South Asia Crisis was a brief Cold War episode that caught the attention of Nixon and Kissinger only for a short time, but during that time the crisis held their full attention as they sought to save détente.

The episodic character of the Cold War meant that the U.S. did not linger long in the various Third World regions where conflict took place. Once a crisis passed, as in

²⁹³ “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 309*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d309> (accessed February 4, 2012).

Pakistan, the U.S. would become preoccupied by other issues and seldom consider the region again politically to any significant degree. Yet, if the region became a Cold War stage once again, as when Pakistani President Zia-ul-Haq assisted the U.S. in combating communist advance during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, then the U.S. would turn its attention there once more. Apart from these Cold War episodes, the U.S. did not engage in significant foreign policy endeavors in the Third World unless there were substantial economic resources to be gained such as oil. The United States had no significant interest in Pakistan after the diplomatic bridge to China had been created and the South Asia Crisis had passed. American diplomatic actions during the Cold War followed a “get in and get out” strategy that was wholly dependent on where the greatest threats of communist advance or activity existed in the world.

When Bhutto became the President of Pakistan in December 1971, he was anxious about Pakistan’s weakened state, and presented an invitation to the U.S. that was meant to help him find the security Pakistan needed. In March 1972, Pakistan offered the U.S. an opportunity to utilize the seaports and land-based facilities of Pakistan for U.S. military purposes.²⁹⁴ Pakistan remained deeply concerned over the intentions of the Soviets and the Indians after the war, and Bhutto felt that a U.S. military presence inside Pakistan “could bolster up its defenses in order to provide some credible deterrent.”²⁹⁵ To Bhutto’s disappointment, the U.S. had no political interest in Pakistan after the war that could justify a military presence there. American interests overseas revolved around a series of Cold War episodes such as the Vietnam War or Arab/Israeli conflicts in the

²⁹⁴ “Telegram 2213 From the Embassy in Pakistan to the Department of State, March 10, 1972, 0725Z,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 235*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d235> (accessed March 5, 2012).

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

Middle East. During the Cold War the U.S. had no interest in maintaining a military presence in Pakistan strictly for Pakistan's sake.

The Cold War interests of the U.S. would cause its leaders to focus attention on Pakistan periodically, but when these episodes ended, the attention that America gave to the nation of Pakistan ended as well. As the South Asia Crisis diminished, Nixon would make plans for his historic visits to Peking and Moscow. Kissinger's talents would be redirected to concentrate more on other areas such as Vietnam peace negotiations in Paris. Kissinger's skills were needed elsewhere, and former Secretary of the Treasury, John B. Connally, became a key Nixon liaison to South Asia. The U.S. would not take significant notice of Pakistan again until Bhutto sought to arm his country against India with nuclear weapons in the mid 1970s.

In post-crisis Pakistan, U.S. relations remained positive. The U.S. did not come to Pakistan's aid militarily when India attacked, but Pakistan knew that Nixon faced Congressional restraints from doing so. Nixon and Kissinger had done everything possible where the U.N. was concerned, and had gone so far as to assist Pakistan in gaining military aircraft from third nations. Nixon's tilt toward Pakistan was not a secret when it came to the international arena, and Bhutto did not accuse Nixon of abandoning or betraying Pakistan during the South Asia Crisis. Bhutto thanked Nixon for supporting Pakistan throughout the war and condemning India's actions.

As president of Pakistan, Bhutto was a civilian leader rather than a military leader. Bhutto had been elected by a majority in West Pakistan during the December 1970 elections, and since East Pakistan no longer existed, Bhutto's majority in the west made him the legitimate civil authority of the country. He ended martial law and

instituted a new constitution as his Pakistan People's Party took the reins of power. Pakistan had been under military rule for thirteen years, but under Bhutto the country experienced its first democratically elected civilian leader since Ayub Khan came to power in a military coup in 1958. During the Bhutto presidency U.S.-Pakistan relations were cordial, but were often unstable due to Bhutto's impulsive and unpredictable nature. His western education gave him strong leanings toward democracy as a political structure for Pakistan. Unlike Yahya, Bhutto was highly intelligent and a shrewd politician. Bhutto was considered to be a political leftist.²⁹⁶ He was hot-tempered and pugnacious. If he felt slighted, he could be vindictive. Bhutto had "denounced the Ayub Khan regime as a dictatorship and was subsequently imprisoned"²⁹⁷ in 1968-69 before he became president.

Addressing the issue of Mujibur Rahman and securing the release of Pakistan's prisoners of war after the South Asia Crisis fell to Bhutto. He and Mujib were colleagues, and even though they were political opponents they were not enemies. On January 3, 1972, Bhutto announced that Mujibur Rahman would be unconditionally released from prison "without commitments or pre-conditions."²⁹⁸ Bhutto said that Mujib "came to me almost on his knees with tears in his eyes begging for his life and expressing

²⁹⁶ "Memorandum Prepared by the National Security Council Staff for President Nixon, Washington, undated," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 1*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d1> (accessed January 13, 2012).

²⁹⁷ Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/64265/Zulfikar-Ali-Bhutto> (accessed March 13, 2012).

²⁹⁸ "Telegram 22 From the Consulate General in Karachi to the Department of State, January 3, 1972, 1014Z," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 199*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d199> (accessed March 5, 2012).

his eternal gratitude for saving his life.”²⁹⁹ The kindness Bhutto showed Mujibur Rahman after Yahya’s cruelty to him was a significant contrast, but Bhutto faced criticism for not receiving solid commitments from Mujib before his release regarding the 93,000 Pakistani prisoners of war being held by India. Mujib not only hesitated to release the Pakistani prisoners of war, he also threatened to hold war crimes trials for some of them³⁰⁰ based on atrocities committed during the civil war.

It was Indira Gandhi that held the fate of Pakistan’s prisoners of war in her hands, and once again Gandhi tied the release of Pakistani citizens under her control to a political goal, just like she had done with the Bengali refugees. Gandhi said that “she could not return”³⁰¹ Pakistani “prisoners of war to augment Pakistan’s war potential until she was satisfied as to Pakistan’s peaceful intentions.”³⁰² More importantly, Pakistan was required to acknowledge the sovereignty of Bangladesh as a precondition for the repatriation of Pakistani prisoners of war. Bhutto said “it was wholly inappropriate for India to link the question of the release of prisoners of war with other political issues,”³⁰³ and he was outraged that Mujib sought “to try some 1500 prisoners of war for alleged “war crimes.””³⁰⁴ Pakistan prisoners of war remained captive in India until August 1973. Potential war crimes trials were eventually reduced to only 195 of the captives taken by

²⁹⁹ “Telegram 4087 From the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, July 8, 1972, 1030Z,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 286*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d286> (accessed March 5, 2012).

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Letter From Pakistani President Bhutto to President Nixon, Rawalpindi, April 18, 1972,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972, Document 251*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d251> (accessed March 5, 2012).

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

India's forces when General Niazi had surrendered in Dacca.³⁰⁵ With the Indo-Pakistani Agreement of August 28, 1973, all prisoners of war were released and repatriated to Pakistan.³⁰⁶ Bhutto said that once Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh could reach agreement on the fates of the 195 individuals being held for war crimes trials, then Pakistan would formally recognize the country of Bangladesh and agree to diplomatic relations.³⁰⁷ Pakistan's official recognition of Bangladesh was announced by Bhutto in February 1974.³⁰⁸ As democracy gained a foothold in Pakistan, America moved on to other Cold War episodes.

Détente could only be effective if the global balance of power were maintained. Nixon realized that Indian and Soviet ambition in South Asia could upset the balance of power and give the Soviets an advantage in détente negotiations. Kissinger understood that if America did not maintain a hard line against Soviet military support for India as it invaded East Pakistan, then it was highly likely the Soviets would repeat their actions elsewhere. Détente had no ability to modify the global ambition of the Soviet Union. It could produce no change of attitude or ideology among Cold War adversaries. Throughout the remainder of Nixon's time in office the Soviet pattern of supplying massive armaments to Third World countries that were at war with American allies continued. Soviet backing of a North Vietnamese invasion into South Vietnam in 1972 and Soviet backing of Egypt and Syria against Israel in the Yom Kippur War of 1973

³⁰⁵ Howard S. Levie, "The Indo-Pakistani Agreement of August 28, 1973" *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (Jan.1974), pp 95-97, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2198806> (accessed March 13, 2012).

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Washington, February 22, 1974," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume E-8, Documents on South Asia, 1973-1976, Document 157*, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve08/d157> (accessed March 5, 2012).

further demonstrated the Cold War ambitions of the Soviet Union. Nixon later explained, “I have never said that the Soviets are “good guys.” What I have always said is that we should not enter into unnecessary confrontations with them.”³⁰⁹ Nixon went on to say that “the Soviet Union will always act in its own self-interest; and so will the United States. Détente cannot change that. All we can hope from détente is that it will minimize confrontation in marginal areas and provide...alternative possibilities in the major ones.”³¹⁰ The Soviet Union believed it had the ideological solution to the needs of the world. In the Marxist/Leninist mind this often involved the necessity of war rather than pursuing peace.

Détente brought an end to the South Asia Crisis because the Soviet Union believed détente served Soviet interests more than the dismantling of Pakistan. The Soviet Union remained content with the gains made in the East Pakistan portion of the war, and discouraged India from pursuing further ambitions in West Pakistan. Nixon demanded that the Russians use their influence to rein in the Indian military to protect the sovereignty of West Pakistan, and the Soviets consented based on their desire to preserve their potential gains through détente. Were it not for détente and the benefits the Soviets hoped to receive as a result of their participation and cooperation, the South Asia Crisis could have continued until Pakistan was destroyed. India’s military stopped short of these intentions due to the insistence of the Soviet Union.

³⁰⁹ Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 941.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The Episodic Nature of U.S. Relations with Pakistan Continues

The South Asia Crisis demonstrated how the U.S. approached the Third World in general during the Cold War. The crisis illustrated the episodic nature of U.S. relationships with developing countries. American Cold War policy in developing countries was to pursue and prevent the threat of global communist expansion. The U.S., the Soviet Union, and Communist China aligned themselves with the developing countries of the Third World in order to promote their respective political ideologies. When these developing countries went to war with one another, the various superpowers would back them. In this way the Third World armies would fight the Cold War battles of the great nations as proxies. America followed potential communist threats around the globe incorporating a get-in and get-out strategy of assisting its allies in the Third World. These Third World battlefields frequently changed location as nations like the U.S. and the Soviet Union engaged each other in various locations in an episodic fashion. When a Soviet or Chinese ally threatened a U.S. ally, the U.S. got in quickly and aggressively, but would then move on suddenly and completely to confront new Cold War challenges once the threat had been addressed.

The South Asia Crisis is a case study of U.S. Cold War relations with the Third World. Nixon became involved in Pakistan in order to secure a diplomatic opening to China to begin his détente initiative. The U.S. had no significant interest in Pakistan apart from American Cold War objectives in the region. Nixon supported a Pakistani government that had committed atrocities against its own people during a sudden and unexpected civil war. To protect détente he maintained a public silence where Pakistan was concerned. India and the Soviet Union intervened, leading to the South Asia Crisis which threatened détente on various levels. When Soviet Cold War ambitions became too blatant in South Asia, Nixon confronted the Soviets and threatened U.S. intervention on behalf of Pakistan. Nixon and Kissinger did what was necessary to regain control of the situation to preserve the Cold War balance of power. Nixon's reasons for U.S. involvement in Pakistan were to secure diplomatic relations with China and minimize Soviet advances in South Asia. His intervention during the crisis was done for the sake of U.S. Cold War interests, and not for Pakistan's own sake. Once U.S. Cold War objectives in Pakistan had been accomplished, the U.S. diplomatically and politically vacated the country, moving on to other regions of the world that were threatened by communism.

The episodic nature of U.S. relations with Pakistan is a pattern America has followed since the South Asia Crisis, and presents a picture of U.S. Cold War relations with developing countries that continues today. After the South Asia Crisis, the U.S. again became involved in Pakistan during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. This episode caused a close U.S. relationship to develop with Pakistani President Zia ul-Haq during the presidency of Ronald Reagan. After the Soviet withdrawal from

Afghanistan, the U.S. quickly departed the region. The modern War on Terror has also produced a new episode in U.S. relations with Pakistan as President George W. Bush recruited Pakistani President Pervez Musharaff to cooperate in the American battle against the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

Maintaining the political stability of Pakistan during an episode of involvement is a primary concern to the United States. Political stability in Pakistan often comes in the form of an autocratic dictator backed by the country's military. When a military dictator can manage to keep Pakistan politically stable, the U.S. will work with him in pursuit of American interests because he is the most reliable path to accomplishing American objectives. This was demonstrated in the way that Nixon worked with the military regime of Yahya Khan during the South Asia Crisis, overlooking its flaws and propping up its authority. It is also evident in the American alliance with General Zia ul-Haq during the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, and with General Pervez Musharaff during the modern War on Terror.

Before the end of the 1970s both Mujibur Rahman and Zulfikar Bhutto were murdered by military factions opposed to their governments. Mujib would become the victim of a violent assassination in Bangladesh as he and a large number of his family members were slain in August, 1975. Allegedly, six disgruntled majors along with three hundred men under their command acted unilaterally and ended Mujib's regime.³¹¹ Serious doubts arouse as to the unilateral nature of the assassination when the new leadership took power soon after. Two years later, Zulfikar Bhutto would be arrested and imprisoned by his senior military commander, General Zia ul-Haq, in July, 1977.

³¹¹ Lawrence Lifschultz and Kai Bard, "Bangladesh: Anatomy of a Coup" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 14, No. 50 (Dec. 15, 1979), pp. 2059-2068., 2059.

Zulfikar's 24-year-old daughter at the time, Benazir, remembered her mother waking the family and calling out, "The army's taken over, the army's taken over!"³¹² Zulfikar's son was ready to resist, but his father warned him, "Never resist a military coup. We must give them no pretext to justify our murders."³¹³ Benazir later wrote that she "shuddered to think of how Mujib and most of his family had been assassinated in their Dacca home two years before."³¹⁴

Benazir Bhutto later wrote that, "General Zia is often identified as the person most responsible for turning Pakistan into a global center for political Islam," and he "attained power as a result of a mosque-military alliance."³¹⁵ The Pakistan People's Party under Zulfikar Bhutto carried the slogan of "Bread, Clothing, and Shelter"³¹⁶ for all. Zia allied himself with the Islamists, and in order to court their favor, created the motto of "Faith, Piety, and Jihad."³¹⁷ Zia later charged Zulfikar Bhutto "with a baseless crime, and, in the face of worldwide outrage, executed him on April 4, 1979, in what leading jurists referred to as a judicial murder."³¹⁸ This would be the American equivalent of General Douglas MacArthur seizing the White House with his forces and ordering President Harry S. Truman arrested, tried, and then executed for alleged crimes. The assassination of Mujibur Rahman in Bangladesh, and the death of Zulfikar Bhutto in Pakistan four years later, marked "the end of an entire era of hopes and illusions surrounding the prospects for social democracy in conditions of severe backwardness and

³¹² Stanley A. Wolpert, *Zulfi Bhutto of Pakistan: His Life and Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 302.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Benazir Bhutto, *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy, and the West* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 188.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 184.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 188.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 187.

underdevelopment.”³¹⁹ By the end of the 1970s the civilian governments of both Bhutto and Rahman had ended. Pakistan under Zia then experienced an autocratic period of military rule.

The true power in Pakistan has always been the military, and it remains so today. Under the Zia regime and using U.S. dollars he reinvented the intelligence agency called Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The ISI “is Pakistan’s military equivalent of the Central Intelligence Agency” (CIA).³²⁰ According to the *New York Times*, American officials believe that “the ISI has sometimes functioned as a shadow government” using its ties “to drug dealers and Islamic extremists to stir up trouble not only in Pakistan but also in Afghanistan.”³²¹ The ISI “helped bring the Taliban to power in Afghanistan in the 1990s, and many American officials suspect that those ties still are at work.”³²² After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Zia partnered with the U.S. to combat the Soviets. The U.S. supported the dictatorship of Zia because he had an organized military that could provide the necessary structure in the resistance movement against the Soviet Union. America ignored the fact that he had come to power by murdering a democratically elected civilian President.

Concentrating solely on its Cold War objectives, the U.S. abundantly armed the anti-Soviet fighters in both Afghanistan and Pakistan through the Zia regime. Known as the mujahedeen, these Pakistani and Afghan freedom fighters aggressively opposed the Soviet military and eventually became the Islamist radicals of the 1990s. Osama Bin

³¹⁹ Lifschultz and Bard, “Bangladesh: Anatomy of a Coup,” 2068.

³²⁰ “Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)” *New York Times*, Updated: March 9, 2012, http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/i/interservices_intelligence/index.html (accessed April 20, 2012).

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

Laden was numbered among them as a chieftain. American support for the mujahedeen in the Afghan war with the Soviet Union in 1979 became the next “get in and get out” episode in U.S.-Pakistani relations. When the Soviet Union withdrew its forces from Afghanistan in 1989, the U.S. did what it had done after the 1971 South Asia Crisis; America pulled out of Afghanistan and Pakistan completely. Benazir Bhutto, a former Pakistani Prime Minister, explained that “the West had abandoned three million Afghan refugees and stopped all assistance to them after the Soviets left.”³²³ It is important to note that many of these Afghan refugees migrated between Afghanistan and Pakistan, not recognizing the border between the two countries. She also said, “By pulling out of Afghanistan in the early 1990s, the United States lost all control over, influence on, and intelligence about the radical groups it had financed. Suddenly, there were thousands of U.S.-trained...radical fighters left out in the cold.”³²⁴ The pattern of America “getting in and then getting out” once the crisis had passed is a pattern of U.S. behavior seen throughout the Cold War in various places around the world. General Zia was killed in an airplane explosion in August, 1988, paving the way for the Bhutto legacy of democracy to return to Pakistan through Zulfikar’s daughter, Benazir. She would be elected twice as Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Thirty years after the South Asia Crisis, in 2001, the War on Terror replaced the Cold War, and once more Pakistan became central to U.S. foreign policy in the battle against Al Qaeda. The U.S. had shown little interest in Pakistan after vacating the country once the Soviets had been defeated in Afghanistan, but after 9/11 Pakistan once again became central to U.S. foreign policy. The War on Terror had opened another

³²³ Bhutto, *Reconciliation*, 77.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

episode in U.S./Pakistan relations. General Pervez Musharaff came to power in Pakistan in a 1999 military coup. He became President of Pakistan in June 2001, and held power in the country when Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaeda network destroyed the World Trade Center towers in New York City. America recruited the Musharaff government to assist the U.S. against Bin Laden and the Taliban in the aftermath of 9/11.

Developing a viable democracy in Pakistan has been secondary to U.S. security interests in the country. When a legitimate democratic political movement takes shape in Pakistan the U.S. will hesitate to support that movement if it jeopardizes the political stability of the nation during a national security episode such as the War on Terror. This was the case with Benazir Bhutto. She returned to Pakistan in October of 2007 to run in national elections scheduled to take place the following January. Like her father, she believed in the establishment of a democratic Pakistan. The U.S. did not support her political goals to any significant degree for the sake of protecting its partnership with the Musharaff military regime which had become an ally against Al Qaeda and was involved in the hunt for Osama Bin Laden. America's post 9/11 partnership with Musharaff made him the best ally in the War on Terror, and Benazir's antagonism toward Musharaff's government threatened to upset the stability of the country at a time when the U.S. needed political stability intact.

The U.S. understood that the military establishment held power in Pakistan, and Bhutto had previously been ousted from her office as Prime Minister on two occasions. Her ability to hold and exercise power in Pakistan was doubtful based on her past experience. "Dismissed twice as Prime Minister, she often complained of being *in office*

but not in power.”³²⁵ Bhutto found that her popular base was insufficient to oppose a firmly entrenched military and religious political hierarchy. For the U.S. to support Bhutto would have been admirable and consistent with democratic values, but it would have jeopardized the U.S. alliance with Pakistan in the War on Terror should Bhutto fail. America could not risk alienating the Musharaff regime, and needed its help in the hunt for Osama Bin Laden. In 2007 the U.S. was more concerned about its short-term goals in the War on Terror than any long-term goals related to a democratic Pakistan.

Benazir Bhutto became the target of two assassination attempts in the three month period prior to elections. Although Bhutto survived the first assassination attempt in October which involved twin bomb blasts and sniper-fire, she did not survive the second assassination attempt. She was killed on December 27, 2007. Bhutto was assassinated in Pakistan before democratic elections could take place. Rage mounted in the streets and President Musharraf called for restraint.³²⁶ After Bhutto’s assassination Musharaff would resign his military commission in order to become a civilian president, a political charade designed to bolster his legitimacy in late 2007. Musharraf would eventually resign his office as President in 2008 in the face of impeachment proceedings against him, and leave Pakistan to live in London in self-imposed exile. Asif Ali Zardari, the husband of the late Benazir Bhutto, “easily won the September 2008 presidential elections.”³²⁷

General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani took charge of the Pakistani military in the wake of Musharraf’s resignation and is considered the nation’s most powerful official today.

³²⁵ Harinder Baweja, “The Emperor of Chance,” *Tehelka Magazine*, Vol. 5, Issue 37, Sept. 20, 2008., http://www.tehelka.com/story_main40.asp?filename=Ne200908CoverStory.asp (accessed March 4, 2012).

³²⁶ Salman Masood and Carlotta Gall, “Bhutto Is Killed, and Pakistan Faces Rage and More Turmoil,” *New York Times*, December 28, 2007, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, (1851-1993), A1.

³²⁷ Lawrence Ziring, “Asif Ali Zardari” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1351439/Asif-Ali-Zardari> (accessed April 22, 2012).

Kayani is a shadow figure looming over Zardari's administration. In many ways Zardari is in office but not in power, just like his late wife, Benazir, had claimed during her years in office. According to the *New York Times*, "Although a civilian government led by President Asif Ali Zardari is in power...General Kayani makes all the vital strategic decisions."³²⁸ Forty years after the South Asia Crisis, in May, 2011, America's most notorious public enemy, Osama Bin Laden, was discovered and killed in Pakistan. The American raid into Pakistan that resulted in the death of the Al Qaeda leader enraged the Pakistani military. "Kayani said that he would not tolerate a repeat of such a raid."³²⁹ The incident was considered a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty³³⁰ in that it took place without the prior knowledge of Pakistan's government.³³¹ The raid caused Kayani embarrassment over the legitimacy of Pakistan's security and he had to fight to maintain his position.³³² Questions arose as to how Bin Laden could be living in the military garrison city of Abbottabad without the Pakistani military being aware of his presence. The fact that the U.S. invaded the Bin Laden compound without first telling the Pakistani military of its plans, illustrates that the level of trust existing in U.S./Pakistani relations today is very low.

In the immediate wake of the Bin Laden execution, an unsigned memorandum surfaced in Pakistan on October of 2011 requesting the support of the United States "to curb the military's influence and avert a possible coup."³³³ Kayani demanded a Supreme

³²⁸ "Ashfaq Parvez Kayani," *New York Times*, Updated: Dec. 23, 2011, http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/k/ashfaq_parvez_kayani/index.html (accessed January 30, 2012).

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Tom Wright, Matthew Rosenberg, and Adam Entous, "The Death of Osama Bin Laden: Pakistan Warns U.S. Against Raids," ProQuest, *Wall Street Journal*, New York, N.Y., (May 6, 2011), A8.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² "Ashfaq Parvez Kayani," *New York Times*.

³³³ Ibid.

Court investigation to determine if the memo originated with the Zardari government.³³⁴

“Kayani dispelled the speculations of any military takeover,” but stated that “there can be no compromise on national security.”³³⁵ Kayani did little to relieve anxiety over a possible coup by the military.³³⁶ Pakistani ambassador to Washington, Husain Haqqani, was the person behind the memorandum which was sent to U.S. Admiral Mike Mullen, “just days after Bin Laden was killed in Pakistan.”³³⁷ “The memo was allegedly an attempt to enlist U.S. help to head off a feared military coup”³³⁸ by Pakistani military leaders concerned about national security. “Zardari reportedly feared that the military might seize power in a bid to limit the damaging fallout”³³⁹ of the Bin Laden assassination in Pakistan. Kayani’s demands left a clear impression about who was in charge in Pakistan, and the Zardari government had good reason to be nervous about a military coup. There were multiple precedents for military takeovers of government in Pakistan’s history allegedly to restore order and to protect the national security.

Pakistan has a history of Military/Islamic cooperation since the days of General Zia ul-Haq in the 1970s. Today in Pakistan “many in the lower ranks of the military have more sympathy for the militant groups than for the United States.”³⁴⁰ The Military/Islamic establishment will give a nod to democracy because it understands the need to govern with the approval and support of the people based on the Bhutto legacy, but both the Pakistani military and the Islamists believe in autocratic rule.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Sajjad Tarakzai (AFP), “Pakistan Judges say Ex-Envoy asked U.S. to Curb Army,” http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iPHNCYf2it_ZcD0uyulGO3Qlz_yw?docId=CNG.faf8df20a253202de74b7bc7ee29c335.421 (accessed June 13, 2012).

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ “Ashfaq Parvez Kayani,” *New York Times*.

Democratically elected civilian leaders are not taken seriously in Pakistan because when Pakistan's generals control the military instead of a civilian president having that authority, the generals can intervene and seize political power anytime they choose. Some speculate "that the military would prefer to rule without challenge, but behind a civilian façade."³⁴¹ The military establishment in Pakistan has a traditional collusion with extreme Islamic elements, and together they pose a consistent threat to democratic civilian authority in the country.

The U.S. maintains its episodic approach to foreign policy in the Third World today. America's impatience with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and its desire for a hasty military withdrawal from both countries demonstrates that the present American episode in the War on Terror is coming to an end. After its military goals in Iraq had been achieved, the U.S. evacuated its forces, but continued to address its challenges in Afghanistan. The Afghan war continues to be fought by U.S. troops in an effort to contain the possible resurgence of the Taliban and its Islamic terrorist network. U.S. relations with Pakistan are strained due to the American military raid that killed Osama Bin Laden, and America has determined to bring U.S. troops home from Afghanistan as soon as possible. U.S. foreign policy related to the War on Terror once more suggests a get-in and get-out approach to the Third World by the United States.

Modern Pakistan in 2012 faces an uncertain future. The threat of Pakistan's military once again seizing power in the country is an ever-present possibility. The modern civilian government of Asif Ali Zardari faces the possibility of another military coup today, which would once more bring Pakistan under the control of an autocratic military dictatorship led by Kayani. Pakistan is considered one of the most dangerous

³⁴¹ Ibid.

places in the world today due to its possession of nuclear weapons, an ongoing unstable political situation, and the ubiquitous presence of militant Islam. If the United States follows its historical pattern of evacuating Afghanistan and Pakistan once its military goals related to the War on Terror are resolved, then it will embolden Pakistan's military establishment to seize power once more, and it will weaken Pakistan's civilian government.

If the United States moves on to other concerns, leaving the Afghans and the Pakistanis to care for their own problems once America has dealt with its security concerns in the region, then the Islamic/Military partnership in Pakistan can only grow stronger. The Islamic extremists will continue to migrate between Afghanistan and Pakistan at their leisure, secure in their mountainous terrain, and it will allow them to boast that they have beaten the Americans just like they beat the Soviets during the Cold War. If the War on Terror is reduced to just another American wartime episode, a quick get-in and get-out strategy, then the Muslim world will maintain its "disillusionment and cynicism"³⁴² regarding Western democracy. Military autocracy and Islamic extremism will continue to dominate Pakistan. The South Asia Crisis was short in its duration, but it revealed an American tendency to act in an episodic fashion according to its short-term interests in Pakistan. The U.S. has often failed to give adequate regard to long-term issues in its relations with Pakistan. The potential problems that can arise as a result have been largely ignored. In modern times, the evidence suggests that the U.S. continues its episodic approach and short-term focus where Pakistan is concerned.

³⁴² Bhutto, *Reconciliation*, 82.

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