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India-Pakistan War 1971 Examining the Evolution of India's Decision-Making for the War

Lt Gen (Dr.) J S Cheema

CENTRE FOR LAND WARFARE STUDIES

Field Marshal Sam Hormusji Framji Jamshedji Manekshaw, better known as Sam “Bahadur”, was the 8th Chief of the Army Staff (COAS). It was under his command that the Indian forces achieved a spectacular victory in the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971. Starting from 1932, when he joined the first batch at the Indian Military Academy (IMA), his distinguished military career spanned over four decades and five wars, including World War II. He was the first of only two Field Marshals in the Indian Army. Sam Manekshaw’s contributions to the Indian Army are legendary. He was a soldier’s soldier and a General’s General. He was outspoken and stood by his convictions. He was immensely popular within the Services and among civilians of all ages. Boyish charm, wit and humour were other notable qualities of independent India’s best known soldier. Apart from hardcore military affairs, the Field Marshal took immense interest in strategic studies and national security issues. Owing to this unique blend of qualities, a grateful nation honoured him with the Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan in 1968 and 1972 respectively.



Photographs courtesy: The Manekshaw family/FORCE

Field Marshal SHFJ Manekshaw, MC
1914-2008

CLAWS Occasional Papers are dedicated to the memory of Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw

India-Pakistan War 1971

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India-Pakistan War 1971

Examining the Evolution of India's Decision-Making for the War

“Wars usually end when the fighting nations agree on their relative strength, and wars usually begin when fighting nations disagree on their relative strengths.”

— Geoffrey Blainey¹

The 1971 India-Pakistan War is a significant confrontational event between India and Pakistan. It created a new state of Bangladesh by splitting Pakistan. It was the first war in the post-independence era in which India, proactively, displayed political resolve and military capability to achieve a decisive victory. It was one of the shortest wars in world history but had profound global ramifications. The Simla Accord signed between the two warring sides in July 1972 did not usher in enduring peace; yet, it has been a touchstone of India's foreign policy ever since—framing its bilateral interaction with Pakistan.

The study of India's decision-making for the war that transformed a humongous human crisis into a significant strategic success has unravelled certain commonly known beliefs and facts. Sisson and Rose remains the best analysis of the conflict from a strategic perspective.² Srinath Raghavan has meticulously researched historical and international complexities.³ The PN Haksar papers provide an insight into the Indian Government's policy outlook.⁴ As we approach the golden jubilee year of the 1971 India-Pakistan War, it is pertinent to revisit India's decision-making for the war. The paper is divided into two parts as under:

- **Part I:** The Crisis and its Outcome.
- **Part II:** Analysis of Decision-Making.

PART I: THE CRISIS AND ITS OUTCOME

The Crisis

The simmering discontent between East and West Pakistan reached a climax in 1971. The West Pakistan dominated Central Government denied the legislated right to the East Pakistani political party—Awami League—to form a government after it had won an absolute majority in the national assembly elections, held in December 1970. Negotiations floundered on the irreconcilable differences between Awami Party leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, on one side, and the military Government of West Pakistan, under General Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan on the other. Large-scale protests, often turning violent, erupted. The Pakistan Army, overwhelmingly drawn from the West, launched ‘Operation Searchlight’—a ruthless military crackdown on the night of March 25, 1971, to suppress the people of East Pakistan. The Army brutally killed civilians, raped women, disarmed the Bengalis in their forces, arrested hundreds of suspected separatists, and plundered property. Predictably, the Bengalis retaliated, and an open rebellion broke out. It led to a large-scale exodus of refugees, including thousands of former East Pakistani regular soldiers and paramilitary troops, into India. The refugees precipitated a severe economic and security crisis for India. The political demand for autonomy, simmering up for the past few years amongst the populace of East Pakistan, now turned into a secessionist movement. The rebels proclaimed the ‘Independence of Bangladesh’ and formed a ‘Provisional Government of Bangladesh’ (PGB) in exile on April 17 in India. In the meantime, the Pakistan Army had augmented its troop levels in East Pakistan from 14,000 to 60,000 (about four infantry divisions and 25,000 paramilitary forces).⁵

Indian Response

The civil conflict in East Pakistan presented a significant challenge to India—particularly the enormous economic burden imposed by the millions of refugees in India. The formal and the highest consultative institution for decision-making on security in India in 1971 was the Political Affairs Committee (PAC), comprising the Prime Minister (PM), Foreign, Defence, and Finance Ministers. Many other ministers, service chiefs, and secretaries attended, when considered necessary. General SHFJ Manekshaw, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), and the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC), was also a part of this group. Besides this formal body, the PM’s secretariat, headed by PN Haksar, comprising a small, informal, and homogeneous group deliberated on all-important foreign policy and security matters.⁶ Mrs. Indira Gandhi relied extensively on this core group.

On March 31, 1971, the Indian Parliament unanimously passed a resolution expressing deep anguish and grave concern on the Pakistan Army's military crackdown. It called upon the world governments to prevail upon Pakistan to immediately end the systematic decimation of the people of East Pakistan. The resolution further assured that the struggle and sacrifices of 75 million people of East Pakistan would receive the whole-hearted support of the people of India.⁷ Beyond the strain on finances and social services, India was deeply concerned about the leftist elements within the Bengali separatist movement, who had used East Pakistan as a safe sanctuary and had conducted a vicious militant campaign in Eastern India in the late 1960s. Simultaneously, the Indian Government had to deal with widespread sympathy for the Bengalis and the resultant outcry for military intervention and political recognition to exploit the situation. Domestic pressure notwithstanding, the initial Indian reaction was relatively cautious. While discussing the military intervention, the COAS in a cabinet meeting, held on April 25, 1971, reiterated the constraints of a direct military intervention as he had done in his first meeting with the PM on March 26, 1971. These were:⁸

- Chinese intervention due to the opening of the mountain passes along the Northern borders, is a distinct possibility.
- The riverine terrain of East Pakistan would severely impede military operations during the impending monsoons in June.
- It was not possible to concentrate the required superiority of forces before June due to the dispersed deployment of the Indian Army in North-East on account of the national elections.

The Finance and Defence Ministers and the public, particularly of West Bengal, favoured military action. However, the Foreign Minister and the PM's close advisors were not in favour of a military intervention in April-May 1971, without building up favourable international opinion. The Indian Railways was also not well prepared to ferry the men and material.⁹ India, therefore, ruled out immediate military intervention and even the grant of political recognition to the PGB. Instead, it decided to assist the Mukti Bahini to launch a guerrilla campaign. The PM explained the policy in a closed-door meeting with opposition leaders on May 7, 1971—"to constantly and continuously harass the West Pakistan Army as an armed intervention at this stage would evoke hostile reactions all over the world, and all the sympathy and support for Bangladesh will be drowned in Indo-Pak conflict."¹⁰

In consonance with this policy, the Indian Army took over the responsibility from the Border Security Force (BSF) to arm, train, and guide the Mukti Bahini¹¹ to conduct guerrilla operations inside East Pakistan. It

planned to organise and equip a guerrilla force of 20,000, which would be later enhanced to 100,000 and encouraged the Mukti Bahini “to carve out a liberated area near the border to have some capability to influence the turn of events later”.¹²

The Government concurrently sought the world community’s support to persuade Pakistan to cease its military brutality in East Pakistan, but could not convince them. The PM stated, “the growing agony of the people of East Pakistan does not seem to have moved many governments; our restraint has been appreciated only in words while the basic issues involved and the real threat to peace and stability in Asia are being ignored”.¹³

Policy Formulation

As the refugees continued to pour in, India reviewed the political situation. By the end of May 1971, over 3.5 million refugees had entered India, and the number was rising every month.¹⁴ India was worried not only about the economic burden but also about the changing composition of refugees. The ratio of Muslims to Hindu refugees initially was 80 to 20 percent, but by the end of April, this had reversed with nearly 80 percent Hindus and only about 20 percent Muslims.¹⁵ The PM stated in the Parliament on May 24, 1971, “What was claimed to be an internal problem of Pakistan has also become an internal problem for India; Pakistan cannot be allowed to seek a solution of its political or other problems at the expense of India and on Indian soil”.¹⁶ Considering it impossible to provide relief to the refugees for an indefinite period, India formulated the following broad contours of its policy:¹⁷

- The return of all refugees, including the Bengali Hindus, was the first and most fundamental objective, and India would not accept any “peaceful solution” that did not meet this condition.
- Support the formation of the moderate Awami League-led Government in East Pakistan.
- Provide calibrated indirect military support to the Mukti Bahini, but, if that proved unsuccessful, be prepared to escalate to a direct military intervention at an appropriate time.
- Mobilise the international support for own objectives in East Pakistan alternatively neutralise their capacity to counter the Indian policy.

India launched an extensive diplomatic campaign to mobilise international opinion to persuade Pakistan to evolve a viable political solution and create conditions for the return of the refugees. All the countries visited¹⁸ showed sympathy with India but considered it an internal matter of Pakistan, which

encouraged it to continue its repression policy. India rejected the United Nations' (UN) proposal to establish the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in the refugee camps and deploying UN observers on each side of the border.¹⁹ India revisited the Friendship Treaty with Russia, that was under negotiation for nearly six years. It signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation with the USSR in New Delhi on August 9, 1971.²⁰

Determining Factors

By end-August 1971, the following factors determined the broad contours of the Indian policy to be adopted thereafter:

- The international community did not share India's view of the crisis requiring a political resolution and was unlikely to put pressure on Pakistan. They regarded the refugee problem and the situation in East Pakistan as separate issues.
- The Pakistan government published a White Paper on August 5, 1971,²¹ blaming the Awami League for the crisis and ordered the trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for treason in camera. It disqualified 79 of its 160 members in the National Assembly and charged 30 of them with treason.
- Pakistan published the district-wise tally of refugees in late August 1971, putting the total figure at just over 2 million, which closely resembled the number of Muslims among the Bengali refugees.²²
- The continuous influx of refugees posed a substantial economic burden on India. Up to the end of July 1971, 7.23 million refugees had taken shelter in India, and by December 15, 1971, this figure was expected to reach 10 million, whose projected cost was assessed at Rs.525 crores, while the external aid amounted only to Rs.112.5 crore.²³ In July 1971, an economic assessment underlined that India was not vulnerable on account of foreign exchange reserves until March 1972, even if international trade was adversely affected due to war.²⁴ The one-time total cost of the war was estimated to be Rs.500 crore.²⁵
- The Bangladesh liberation movement leaders were disenchanted with India for neither recognising the PGB nor intervening militarily. The leaders were not comfortable with the tight control being exercised over them by the Indian State.
- General Yahya Khan upped the war-phobia in August 1971 and stated that, "War with India is very near, and in case of war, Pakistan would not be alone".²⁶

Relative Military Capability and Strategy

The factors mentioned in the above para, increased India's propensity towards military intervention. India enjoyed a superior military capability over Pakistan. The Indian Army, comprising 833,800 men, had fourteen infantry divisions, ten mountain divisions, an armoured division, four independent armoured brigades, and two parachute brigades having more than 1,450 tanks and 3,000 artillery pieces.²⁷ Ten infantry/mountain divisions were deployed in the Eastern Theatre along the Chinese border and to contain insurgency in the North-East. The Pakistan Army, comprising 365,000 men, had two armoured divisions, thirteen infantry divisions, and three independent armoured brigades with approximately 850 tanks and 800 guns. India enjoyed numerical superiority over Pakistan in the East while it was near parity in the West. Both India and Pakistan had extraordinarily large paramilitary forces—the Mukti Bahini, supported by India, had an approximate strength of more than 100,000 personnel. Pakistan had assembled more than 70,000 militia.²⁸

The Indian Air Force (IAF), with some 625 combat aircraft and over 450 transport and support planes, outnumbered the 273 fighters and bombers of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF). The Indian Navy (IN) was not only one of the few navies in the world to have an aircraft carrier (INS Vikrant), it also had 21 other major surface combatants, four submarines, and several patrol boats. Pakistan's Navy also had four submarines, but its surface fleet had only eight major combatants and few patrol boats.

Considering East Pakistan to be the centre of gravity where the war was to be won or lost, India planned a strategy of "Swift Offensive in the East, Offensive-Defensive in the West and Defensive along the Northern borders".²⁹ A quick offensive operation in East Pakistan was imperative to achieve a decisive victory before the international community could intervene. Pakistan's strategy, on the other hand, was almost the exact opposite of India—it planned to defend East Pakistan by threatening vital Indian areas in Kashmir and Punjab to draw the Indian forces away from the East, thereby gaining enough time for the international community to restrain New Delhi.

The political objective in East Pakistan was to "assist the Mukti Bahini in liberating a part of East Pakistan, where the refugees could return and live under their own government".³⁰ The Army strategy envisioned capturing maximum territory bordering the Brahmaputra and Meghna river lines and setting up a 'provisional Bangladesh government' with Khulna and Chittagong being the principal objectives.³¹ Subsequently, the task was enhanced to liberate the whole of East Pakistan.³²

Military Plans

East Pakistan was bifurcated by the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers into four distinct sectors: Western, North-Western, Northern, and South-Eastern. The Indian military plan envisaged a multiprong offensive along each of the four sectors—2 Corps was to capture Jessore and Jhenida and subsequently secure Khulna and Faridpur in the Western Sector, while 33 Corps was to capture Bogra/Rangpur in the North-Western Sector. In the Northern Sector, 101 Communications Zone was to capture Jamalpur, Mymensingh, and secure Tangail with airborne forces. 4 Corps was to capture Sylhet, Daudkandi, Chandpur, and Chittagong in the South-Eastern Sector. Four mountain divisions were to remain deployed along the Chinese border.³³ The Pakistan Army had deployed four divisions plus in East Pakistan—usually a division in each sector to deny significant ingress to the Indian Army. Its strategy was to hold firmly the cities and garrisons located along the major roads. The IAF had 11 Squadrons, while the IN had deployed an aircraft carrier, a destroyer, a submarine, and two frigates in the Bay of Bengal. Although the political leadership was confident that Beijing would not intervene militarily, the Indian Army was apprehensive about Chinese intentions and had deployed four divisions along the Northern borders.

The Western Theatre was to adopt a holding strategy with contingency plans to execute limited offensive operations on orders.³⁴ Accordingly, the Indian Army moved to the border progressively from the first week of October onwards to avoid any provocations to Pakistan. Western Command defended J&K and Punjab with 15 and 11 Corps respectively, deploying ten divisions, while the Southern Command held the desertic Rajasthan Sector with two divisions. 1 Corps, with three infantry divisions, was responsible for Samba-Pathankot area's defence and launching of the counteroffensive in Shakargarh Sector. 1 Armoured Division was the Army HQ reserve and positioned in the general area Kotkapura near Ferozepore. It was to be employed for the offensive on orders. The Pakistan Army also had three Corps (1, 2, and 4) having ten infantry and two armoured divisions, besides three independent armoured brigades. The PAF had ten squadrons, while all the naval assets were deployed in the Arabian sea.³⁵

Escalation

India, with effect from the last week of August 1971, accelerated the preparations for a military intervention in East Pakistan, including seizure of enclaves along the frontier.³⁶ It upscaled the qualitative and quantitative support to the Mukti Bahini—even procuring essential equipment from abroad and embedding some commando troops to fight alongside the Mukti

Bahini.³⁷ From the second week of October, it began to conduct operations within East Pakistan. The aim was to improve its defensive posture, secure a suitable launchpad for subsequent large-scale operations, and ascertain likely Pakistan Army's reaction at the tactical and strategic level. The Pakistan Army moved to the border areas, while the Mukti Bahini extended its hold in the interior. There was a sharp rise in the scale and intensity of military operations, including the use of tanks and AF. Indian troops, after November 21, 1971, positioned themselves within East Pakistan, though India denied the presence of its forces.³⁸

Pakistani Preparations

Pakistan continued its repression policy in East Pakistan and ordered a full mobilisation of its forces in the Western Sector in the first week of October 1971. General Yahya Khan upped the war-phobia. He stated in an interview, "if the Indians imagine they will be able to take one morsel of my territory without provoking war, they are making a serious mistake; let me warn you and the world that it would mean war, out and out war".³⁹ On November 1, 1971, he reportedly stated in an interview, "China would intervene in the event of an Indian attack on Pakistan".⁴⁰ The Pakistan Army considered attacking the Western front on November 22, 1971, in response to India's intensification of military activities in East Pakistan; however, President Yahya restrained it, hoping the UN Security Council would intervene in its favour.⁴¹ At the same time, he intensified efforts to install a civilian government in Dacca to lend some legitimacy and enable the international community to intervene, but it didn't work. The USSR and Britain effectively restrained the US to summon the UN Security Council prematurely.

The War

In the last week of November 1971, the Indian PM accorded approval for the launch of a full-scale offensive in East Pakistan on December 4, 1971.⁴² The Pakistani President, too, had decided, on November 30, 1971, to launch an invasion on the Western Front on December 2, 1971, but postponed it by a day. Pakistan launched pre-emptive airstrikes on December 3, 1971, at 5.45 pm on several Indian airfields in the Western Sector marking the commencement of the 1971 India-Pakistan War.⁴³ The Indian PM declared hostilities on Pakistan and recognised Bangladesh. The Indian Armed Forces launched attacks on the night of December 3/4, 1971 concurrently in the Western and Eastern Theatres.

Map I: Area of Military Operations of 1971 War in East Pakistan



Source : Annotated by Author

The Indian Army made significant tactical gains in J&K, Punjab, and Rajasthan. It stoutly defended Poonch and Longewala and advanced nearly 45 kilometres into Sind in Pakistan. It launched a major offensive on December 5, 1971, in the Shakargarh Sector and achieved reasonable success. The Pakistan Army made substantial progress in the Akhnoor sub-sector of the Jammu region, thereby forcing the Indian Army to retreat.

The Indian Army launched the multipronged offensive in East Pakistan. It made rapid progress capturing Jessore, Jhenida, Jamalpur, Mymensingh, Daudkandi-Chandpur area, and securing the Eastern bank of the Meghna River by December 10. Bogra and Hilli fell by December 14 after stiff resistance. In the Eastern sector, after the capture of Daudkandi and Chandpur and Sylhet's containment, plans were modified to build-up forces across the Meghna river and posed a severe threat to Dacca. The IAF achieved total air superiority in the first few days of the war while the IN established a naval blockade to prevent any Pakistani build-up in the region, including third-party intervention in East Pakistan. The Indian Army, on December 8, pulled out two brigades from the Chinese border to strengthen the Northern Sector and exploit the rapidly deteriorating situation.⁴⁴ A parachute battalion was airdropped on the Eastern bank of the Jamuna River at Tangail on December 11. Another 4,000 troops were heli-lifted to supplement the forces across

the Meghna River. By December 14, 1971, the Indian Army had mustered almost a division-sized strength for the final assault from multiple directions on Dacca.⁴⁵ The IAF launched a successful airstrike at the Governor's house in Dacca on December 14, 1971. Pakistan could not organise a forceful defence of Dacca as the earmarked troops could not fall back.

Seeing the rapidly deteriorating situation, the Pakistani Commander-Lieutenant General AAK Niazi started to feel immense psychological pressure to surrender. The Pakistan Government was desperately looking for a UN sponsored ceasefire as a face-saving mechanism to avoid the ignominy of surrender. It encouraged General Niazi to continue fighting, assuring him of a direct military intervention by China and the USA.⁴⁶ Nothing happened from the Chinese side. On December 13, 1971, the US Seventh Fleet entered the Bay of Bengal.⁴⁷ India carried out intensive bombings on naval assets in East Pakistan to render them unusable for the Seventh Fleet. The sinking of Pakistani submarine PNS Ghazi gave total freedom to IN's aircraft carrier INS Vikrant.⁴⁸ By the morning of December 16, nearly five brigades of the Indian Army had encircled Dacca, with four infantry battalions and an independent armoured squadron entering the city by the afternoon.⁴⁹

Surrender, Ceasefire, and Peace Agreement

The UN Security Council (UNSC) moved 24 resolutions. The one submitted by Poland was the most significant. The resolution called for an immediate ceasefire, troop withdrawal by both sides, renouncing claims to any occupied territories, and transferring power in East Pakistan to the representatives elected in December 1970.⁵⁰ The passage of the Polish resolution would have denied India the surrender of Pakistani forces and significantly delayed refugees' return—the political objective. Fortunately, the resolution failed due to Bhutto's denouncement of the UN for his ulterior motives.⁵¹ Left with no option, the Pakistan Army surrendered—92,208 Pakistani soldiers, sailors, airmen, paramilitary personnel, police personnel, and civilians were taken as prisoners of War (PoWs).⁵²

The PM informed the Lok Sabha about the Pakistani Forces' surrender in Bangladesh and announced a unilateral ceasefire on the Western Front, which Pakistan accepted the next day. On December 17, 1971, the 14-day India-Pakistan War came to an end with India's decisive victory over Pakistan. Besides the liberation of Bangladesh and more than 92,000 PoWs, it captured 5,620 square miles of Pakistani territory against the loss of 120 square miles on the Western front.⁵³

The Indian PM and Pakistani President signed the Simla Agreement on July 2, 1972. The agreement, underscoring the principle of bilateralism

between the two countries, provided for the return of PoWs, conversion of the Ceasefire Line into the Line of Control, and vacation of the territory captured in the West across the International Border.⁵⁴

PART II: ANALYSIS OF DECISION-MAKING

The Paradigm of War

The paradigm of war typically follows the sequence: Confrontation-Crisis-Conflict-War-Resolution.⁵⁵ The 1971 India-Pakistan War generally followed this pattern. The India-Pakistan confrontation pattern, being well-known, does not form part of this paper's discourse; however, its unambiguous manifestation is apparent. India's decision to resolve the unprecedented refugee crisis finally culminating in war evolved progressively as per the following timelines:

- The Crisis and the Policy Formulation : March–May 1971
- Diplomacy : June–August 1971
- Coercion, Conflict, and Decision for War : September–November 1971
- The War, Surrender, and Ceasefire : December 1971
- The Peace Resolution : June–July 1972

The Crisis and the Policy Formulation: March–May 1971

The unabated influx of refugees precipitated the crisis for India. A crisis is a “situational change in the external or internal environment of the nation-state that creates in the minds of the incumbent decision-makers a perceived threat from the external environment to basic values to which a decision is deemed necessary”.⁵⁶ A crisis contains three necessary conditions: “threat to core values, finite time for response to the threat, and the perception that the nation-state is highly likely to become involved in military hostilities”.⁵⁷ The refugee crisis exerted a destabilising influence on India's fragile socio-economic and security structure. India feared the reignition of insurgency by Bengali radicals to establish East Pakistan as an independent state under the aegis of left extremists. It was ‘indirect aggression’ to India's core values, which, if not resolved through peaceful means, warranted the application of military force as a last resort. However, the peculiar circumstances created immense political and public enthusiasm to recognise Bangladesh's government-in-exile, in April 1971 and employ the last resort of military intervention first. The Government, however, proceeded cautiously on both these interlinked issues.

Military Intervention

The then COAS General Manekshaw, highlighted the constraints of immediate military intervention in the Cabinet meeting held on April 25. He again advocated conducting a military campaign after the monsoons, ideally late November, as that would eliminate the Chinese threat.⁵⁸ Dr. K Subramanyam, the well-respected analyst, stated: “the breakup of Pakistan is in our interest and we have an opportunity the like of which will never come again” and suggested, “intervention on a decisive scale sooner than later is to be preferred”.⁵⁹ Some historians and scholars, in hindsight, too alluded to this standpoint. Raghavan wrote, “Had such an intervention been successfully undertaken, it would have mitigated the brutalities visited upon the Bengalis, and the incalculable loss of life and violation of human dignity”.⁶⁰ Air Vice Marshal Patney felt that the Army Chief was excessively cautious. Three months from April to the onset of monsoon in early June would have been adequate to secure victory even if India had to go in through only one or two fronts in the East.⁶¹ An American scholar, Professor Gary J. Bass, suggested that India could have militarily intervened as early as April-May to cut Pakistan to size.⁶²

On balance, the COAS's reasoning for not undertaking military operations in East Pakistan in April-May 1971 was most professional, logical, and prudent. A military campaign at the time of India's choosing was justifiable to ensure superior concentration of forces for assured success, minimise the possibility of the Chinese threat, and avoid the impending monsoons. This was not possible in April-May 1971 due to three Indian divisions' dispersed deployment for election duties in the North-East. Also, Pakistan enjoyed a better force-ratio than India, having built up nearly four divisions and the paramilitary forces in East Pakistan by May.⁶³ There was no contingency offensive operational plan for East Pakistan except for defending the vulnerable Siliguri Corridor. A stalemate would have resulted in a UN-sponsored ceasefire with India failing to achieve any political objective. The postponement, on the other hand, enabled the Indian Army to train itself effectively.

The PM was apprehensive of the Indian Army's vulnerability to Pakistan Army's forceful response in the West—should it decide to intervene militarily in East Pakistan in April-May. Secretary R&AW had briefed the PM on the threat assessment from Pakistan in January 1971. The evaluation underscored Pakistan's quantitative and qualitative enhancement of its military might since 1965. It concluded, “Pakistan's military preparedness is such that she could launch a military attack against India on the Western front or an infiltration campaign into J&K with the ultimate objective of the annexation of J&K”.⁶⁴ As highlighted earlier, India enjoyed a quantitative edge over Pakistan in the East

while it was near parity in the West with a marginal qualitative advantage. Though Pakistan had shifted forces from the West to the East, the threat was still credible, though depleted. Regarding the Pakistan-China collusion, it appreciated, "China would unlikely get involved militarily in an Indo-Pakistan conflict, but could adopt a threatening posture on the border to prevent diversion of troops to the theatre of war with Pakistan".⁶⁵

The PM was also very wary of the correlation of the developing situation in East Pakistan to the one existing in Kashmir due to their similarities. She stated, "India had consistently maintained in respect of Kashmir that we cannot allow its secession and that whatever happens there is a matter of domestic concern and that we shall not tolerate any outside interference".⁶⁶ Quoting the lack of support for the secessionist movement in Biafra in Nigeria,⁶⁷ she cited the international law, "where a state of civil war does prevail, international law and morality accord legitimacy to a successful rebellion".⁶⁸ But there was scope and justification for military intervention, albeit with a caveat. Morality, at least, is not a bar to unilateral action so long as there is no immediate alternative available.⁶⁹ Morality does permit unilateral action but only after exploring the other available alternatives. India had not explored any other option in April-May 1971, and its military intervention would not have withstood the morality prism.

The intense UN pressure and diplomatic isolation were unavoidable. The Foreign Minister, Mr. Swaran Singh, felt that India should not face collective international opposition from the Superpowers and the UN for interfering in Pakistan's internal affairs to divide it ultimately.⁷⁰ Mr. DP Dhar argued that military intervention before establishing the necessity to do so could prove counterproductive, mainly if most countries refused to recognise Bangladesh.⁷¹ He wrote, "We should not plan for the immediate defeat of the highly trained Pakistan Army. Let us think in terms of a year or two, not in terms of a week or two".⁷² The possibility of non-recognition of the newly created Bangladesh by most nations loomed large upon the Indian decision-makers as these countries considered it an internal affair of Pakistan. The need for political consideration of external recognition and domestic political visibility of Bangladesh on becoming independent was critical.⁷³ India's decision not to exercise the military option in April-May was justifiable and necessary to explore all other alternatives, particularly diplomacy and engagement with the international community, to shape the world opinion. It also fitted well with India's policy to calibrate Bangladesh's indigenous freedom movement and train the Mukti Bahini to act as a force-multiplier in the event of a war. Thus, the Government ruled out the military option in April-May 1971 on military and politico-diplomatic considerations. However, the narrative built

over the years ascribed “military consideration” being the dominant reason—perhaps, it suited all the stakeholders.

The common belief that the PM had favoured military intervention in April-May 1971, while the COAS dissuaded her from doing so, is not valid. Raghavan commented aptly, “the story about differences between the PM and COAS is perhaps the most tendentious of all myths about the 1971 crisis”.⁷⁴ The misunderstanding possibly occurred as the PM had asked the COAS to directly explain the reasons for not exercising the military option in the Cabinet meeting held on April 25, 1971, as some of the members were critical of the Government’s cautious policy and demanded immediate intervention.⁷⁵ The explanation was possibly misinterpreted as differences between the PM and the COAS. Lieutenant General Depinder Singh stated that there were rumours about the Army having developed cold feet. He clarified that the COAS separately met the PM regarding these stories and asked her whether he should claim insanity and resign, to which the PM told him that he was right.⁷⁶ The COAS’s advice suited the PM’s cautious approach, who believed that India had to “tread our path as a state, with a great deal of circumspection and not allow our feelings to get the better of us”.⁷⁷ Sisson and Rose, too, felt that the initial response of the Indian Government to military action in East Pakistan was circumspect—it wanted neither to arouse more hostility in Pakistan against India nor to encourage demands for immediate action from political groups in India.⁷⁸ The PM’s tentative and cautious response was understandable due to the complex nature of decision-making for war—this being the first proactive decision for war by India. In contrast, the earlier decisions in 1947, 1962, and 1965 were thrust upon the country to defend its territorial integrity.

Recognition to the PGB

Like the early military intervention, there was immense pressure on the Indian Government to accord recognition to the PGB-in-exile. India had publicly ignored the declaration of independence by the Bangladesh government-in-exile.⁷⁹ It rightfully appreciated that granting recognition to the PGB in the absence of military intervention would be premature. It would enable Pakistan to project it into an Indo-Pak War, seeking UN intervention, thereby harming the cause of East Pakistan and drawing an adverse international reaction. The Mukti Bahini, by mid-April 1971, was not adequately trained, oriented, and capable of executing sustained operations against the ‘better trained and equipped’ Pakistan Army. There were also fissures in the leadership of the liberation movement. Accordingly, India extended only general support. The grant of refuge to political leaders, its cadres, and military/paramilitary

personnel of East Pakistan forces was in line with the Indian policy in a similar development in a neighbouring state.⁸⁰ India had granted political asylum to the Dalai Lama and his followers in the Tibetan Uprising in 1959. Instead of giving recognition to the PBG, India decided to support the guerrilla movement led by Mukti Bahini to weaken the Pakistan Army, which would also assist the Indian Army in its subsequent military intervention, if the need arose. India preferred that its military action, if necessary, should be seen as supporting a Muslim-led East Pakistani liberation movement rather than just another India-Pakistan conflict.

Engagement with the World Community

The unwillingness and inability of the foreign powers, including the USA and USSR, to pressurise Pakistan for a political settlement with the Awami League, encouraged it to continue its atrocities in East Pakistan. India, accordingly, calibrated its diplomacy so that it did not evoke any earnest enthusiasm for restraining Pakistan from ending the crisis. It worked. From this point on, a vicious circle took over: “the more international pressure proved ineffective, the closer Indian thinking moved to the only alternative—war; the more India thought of war, the more she alienated official thinking in other countries”.⁸¹ The international community’s response suited India’s objectives and made it easier to decide the best possible option on its own.

Formulation of the Political Objective

By the end of May 1971, the continued refugee deluge and, more importantly, their composition became extremely worrisome for India. The change in refugees’ configuration from 20% to 80% of Hindus made India concerned that they might not return even after a political settlement. There were also apprehensions of the Awami League government in future not welcoming back the Hindu refugees. India concluded, “Apparently, Pakistan is trying to solve its internal problems by cutting down the size of its population in East Bengal and changing its communal composition through an organised and selective programme of eviction”.⁸² The PM stated in the Parliament on May 24, 1971, “if the world does not take heed, we shall be constrained to take all measures as may be necessary to ensure our security”.⁸³ It was not merely a political statement by the PM; it reflected the Government of India’s policy that it would follow after that.

India formulated the return of refugees as the political objective and the end-state. The continued refugee influx was ‘indirect aggression’ against India. Implicit in the political aim was the ‘liberation of Bangladesh’ as the unstated desired end-state. The return of refugees to their native place after displacement triggered by military genocide was a humanitarian and just cause.

It fulfilled the first tenet of the 'Just War Theory'.⁸⁴ Their return would preserve the sociocultural identity of India that was a vital national interest. It also fitted well with the local populace demand for complete independence. Sending back the refugees was the single homogeneous good to be achieved that afforded maximum utility as given in the "Utility Maximization Theory," also known as the "Rational Model for Decision Making".⁸⁵ The PM's policy statement of May 24, 1971, targeting multiple audiences, implicitly spelled out the means to be adopted to achieve the end-state. The policy focussed on three main issues: "the end to be achieved, the way it is to be achieved, and the means allocated to achieve the desired end".⁸⁶ The PM's discreet and the first official threat to the possible use of force to achieve the political objective is significant. Dr. Subrahmanyam called it "a shift from the diplomacy of persuasion to the threat of force to avoid a compulsive drift into a war later on".⁸⁷ The strategy is the bridge that connects the means with the ends. India strategised to orchestrate the refugee crisis into achieving a strategic political objective by a deft exploration of all available means. It included diplomacy to garner international support for a political solution in East Pakistan that should lead to the formation of the moderate Awami League led Government. It also implied calibrated indirect military assistance to the Mukti Bahini. If that proved unsuccessful, then direct military intervention at an appropriate time was the last resort. War, after all, is an act of policy to attain a political purpose.

Diplomacy: June - August 1971

Though belonging to two different realms, military and diplomacy are considered two sides of the same coin. As the military is the last resort to wage war, diplomacy is the first line of engagement to avert it. India put in sustained effort to engage the world community to highlight the human tragedy unfolding in East Pakistan; restrain Pakistan from its repression policy, and garner international support for its actions. It approached the US, USSR, Britain, France, Germany, Canada, the Islamic World, and the UNO to pressure Pakistan to work out a political settlement.

India failed to elicit support from the USA, which mattered the most. The US national interest dictated its non-cooperative approach. To "buy time and deter India from embarking on the war at least until Nixon's trip to Beijing"—was the US's primary objective.⁸⁸ Nixon and Kissinger believed that "if they allowed India to humiliate Pakistan, then their reputation in the eyes of China would suffer irreparable damage".⁸⁹ India apprehended that UN observers' deployment would label the ongoing crisis as an India-Pakistan dispute and divert attention from the real issue of military oppression and the return of

refugees. Accordingly, it rejected the proposal, which made the world believe in Pakistan's accusations of India instigating the rebellion in East Pakistan. It hardened the stance of the international community against India and softened for Pakistan. The possibility of any international pressure against Pakistan further receded. The UN wanted to focus on the consequence while India desired to address the root cause of the political problem. Sisson and Rose aptly stated, "An inherent contradiction existed; between the efforts of India to 'internationalize' the emerging crisis insisting that this was solely a Pakistani affair whose suppressive policies in East Pakistan constituted 'indirect aggression' against India by pushing millions of refugees into its territory".⁹⁰

China began to believe in the inevitability of Bangladesh's secession due to Pakistan's continued atrocities and assiduously recalibrated its policies vis-à-vis Pakistan and India. The letter from China of April 11, 1971, supporting the Pakistan Government for safeguarding national independence and state sovereignty in case of India's military offensive, had also urged Yahya to announce political measures to forestall separatists' demands and external aggression.⁹¹ The sentence "the question of East Pakistan should be settled according to wishes of its people" was deleted from Zhou Enlai's April 11 letter to Yahya by the Chinese News Agency and the Pakistani Government.⁹² Subsequent intelligence inputs confirmed the Chinese stance. By July 1971, the Indian government had obtained copies of this hidden part, and also the letters exchanged between Beijing and Rawalpindi in April in which the Chinese government had explicitly stated that its military force would not intervene in another Indo-Pakistani War.⁹³ China, thus, did not give any commitment to Pakistan to ensure its territorial integrity. In September 1971, there was a coup attempt by Mao's designated successor Lin Bao supported by some elements of the Air Force and Army, which led to the grounding of AF for some time.⁹⁴ This further reinforced India's appreciation of China unlikely to intervene militarily. China was concerned about the developing strategic cooperation between Russia and India and did not want to push India further close to the Soviet Union—China's adversary. It intended to keep Bangladesh, on becoming an independent nation, in its sphere of influence as a counterweight to India and Russia. Despite its disapproval of the military crackdown in East Pakistan, China continued to supply Pakistan with military hardware.⁹⁵

Several analysts and political observers believed that the Indo-Soviet Treaty had set the stage for India's armed intervention, as it had achieved the requisite deterrence against China, which is not the right inference. China's stance had crystallised long before the treaty was concluded.⁹⁶ The Treaty with the Soviet Union intended to neutralise the growing US-Pakistan-China

relationship and solicit USSR support in the UN. India appreciated that both the US and China would support Pakistan in any UN Resolution on Bangladesh; the USSR veto was, therefore, crucial.⁹⁷ India was equally concerned about the USSR's ambivalence to keep Pakistan in its sphere of influence to counter the dominant Chinese influence through its aid programme.⁹⁸ The Treaty stipulated both sides "to abstain from providing any assistance to any third party that engages in armed conflict with the other party."⁹⁹ This stipulation was to pre-empt Soviet military support to Pakistan in the event of war. The Treaty also stipulated, "In the event of either party being subjected to an attack or a threat thereof, the parties shall immediately enter into mutual consultations in order to remove such threat and to take appropriate, effective measures to ensure peace and security of their countries".¹⁰⁰ With this, India achieved additional safeguards against Chinese intervention. The Treaty envisaged assistance only if the country is subjected to aggression by another country, not if it launches an attack against another state. Having addressed its two main concerns, India strove to suitably calibrate its military strategy in a manner that would provoke Pakistan to attack first, and it retaliates in defence.

Coercion, Conflict, and Decision for War:

September–November 1971

The factors that emerged in the last three months catalysed a strategic shift in India's approach. The announcement of Mujib Rahman's trial and other stringent measures adopted by Pakistan, convinced India of the unlikelihood of the emergence of any political solution. The number of refugees, totalling two million, published district-wise in August in its White Paper, nearly equalled the number of Muslim refugees. This reinforced India's apprehension that the Pakistan government would not allow the Hindus to return to their homes. From the last week of August 1971, India shifted to a coercive strategy to compel Pakistan to seek a negotiated settlement for the East Pakistan crisis. A negotiated settlement with Mujib would be better than persisting with its present course.¹⁰¹ Military intervention was becoming probable, but India projected itself amenable to any political solution, which should lead to establishing a conducive environment for refugees' return.

India concurrently strategised to escalate military operations in East Pakistan with a sophisticated combination of 'employing the regular troops along the border' to drive the Pakistan Army away from the hinterland and tasking the Mukti Bahini to establish its control there. The strategy worked brilliantly. It made Pakistan apprehensive of India's military intervention in East Pakistan. Still, it was not clear about the possible military objectives—

whether it would capture limited territory close to the border to install a puppet Bangladesh government and recognise the same internationally or a well-planned military offensive to defeat and secure surrender of its Army. Pakistan appreciated that “India should adopt the first option and feared that such an attack would aim to carve out a liberated zone inside East Pakistan to establish a Bangladesh government”.¹⁰² A Pakistani Commanding Officer confirmed the same, “our intelligence evaluators appear to have concluded that India would attempt to secure a small chunk of East Pakistan where the Bangladesh government would be installed; we modified our plans to adopt a forward defensive posture”.¹⁰³ The Pakistani Army, accordingly, moved out in strength to build up robust defences around major towns away from Dacca. The denuding of the hinterland enabled the Mukti Bahini to dominate the geographical space.

Pakistan responded to the East’s intensified activities by ordering mobilisation in the West to deter India from the war in the East. Overestimating its technological armour edge over India, it considered its offensive capability in West Pakistan to be the best defensive policy for East Pakistan.¹⁰⁴ It also appreciated that world pressure, particularly the USA, would prevent India from launching an offensive in East Pakistan. India did not carry out counter-mobilisation in the West, except for deploying essential troops for defensive purposes to avoid any provocation to Pakistan.

India and Pakistan adopted compellence and deterrence strategies, respectively, against each other to induce a policy change. India employed compellence strategy with the explicit aim to coerce Pakistan to seek a political settlement with East Pakistan, thus averting war, but implicitly to set the stage for executing its operational strategy. On the other hand, Pakistan strove to deter India from the war in East Pakistan by mobilising in the West. From October onwards, Pakistani President Yahya Khan created a war psychosis to deter India. Bhutto’s claim of Chinese assurance for support in the event of war with India after his visit was part of the deterrence strategy.

Compellence and deterrence are two major subsets of Strategic Coercion.¹⁰⁵ Compellence is active and attempts to alter the status quo, while deterrence is passive, seeking to maintain the status quo.¹⁰⁶ Both strategies rely on threats to persuade each other’s hostile behaviour. For compellence to succeed, the coercing power’s threat must be credible enough to convince the adversary of its firm political resolve and military capacity. The Indian Armed Forces had a favourable force-ratio of 1.4:1 over Pakistan—adequate not to get deterred by Pakistan’s strategy in the West, and simultaneously execute offensive operations in East Pakistan. However, it lacked the overwhelming conventional military capability to compel Pakistan

to accede to India's demand for a political settlement. The Indian Army had a distinct quantitative advantage over the Pakistan Army in the Eastern Theatre, while it was near parity in the Western theatre. The well-trained and equipped Mukti Bahini was a force-multiplier. The IAF enjoyed a qualitative and quantitative advantage over the PAF, while the IN was considerably more robust, having an aircraft carrier. Its indigenous military-industrial complex was adequate to support operations, while Pakistan depended on foreign support. With both the compellence and deterrence strategies failing to achieve the desired political aims, India's propensity towards a military option strengthened. Pakistan underestimated India's intention and capability in the East and overestimated itself in the West. Military activities after that picked up momentum.

Conflict. Conflict results when the states' crisis or disputes cannot be resolved through diplomacy and by threats of war or coercion¹⁰⁷ and it necessitates the application of force to attain the desired objective at the tactical, operational, or strategic level. Strategic level conflict results in an all-out war.¹⁰⁸ India's intensification of military operations along the border, from the second week of October 1971 onwards, provoked Pakistan to use airpower and tanks. India responded forcefully, employing the same weaponry. It progressively calibrated the intended escalation at the tactical level to coincide with the war's strategic level timing. Indian troops remaining deployed inside the East Pakistan territory from November 21¹⁰⁹ was part of the intended escalation matrix.

The Decision for War. India finalised the plan for the military invasion of East Pakistan soon after the failure of Mrs. Gandhi's meeting with Nixon in the first week of November 1971.¹¹⁰ Some high American officials felt that the "Indian Government had decided to dismember Pakistan by force before Mrs. Gandhi came to Washington and that the discussions there had been an exercise in futility".¹¹¹ There is merit in their conviction. India was fully convinced of the inability and futility of international mediation to resolve the crisis. Still, it sought to convey to US their failure to work out any concrete proposals to defuse the crisis before employing military force as a last resort. There is a finite time as one of the necessary conditions to resolve the crisis through peaceful means. The purpose of the Indian Government's diplomatic campaign was explicitly to impress upon the international community, including the UN, to pressurise Pakistan to work out an amicable political solution in East Pakistan, failing to expose their inability to do so implicitly.

War should be the last resort after having exhausted the effective alternatives.¹¹² When the UN—the world body, the US and China—the close allies of Pakistan and the global community failed to convince Pakistan to stop

its repression policy and seek a political settlement, India undertook the last resort criteria to wage war. Its decision to launch a full-scale attack on East Pakistan on December 4, 1971, was fully justified. Sisson and Rose summed up aptly, "The escalating threat of war narrowed expectations of peacefully arranged outcomes; indeed, the field of expectation became so narrow that it excluded the contemplation of alternatives".¹¹³ The Indian Army's escalated military activities alongside Mukti Bahini and remaining deployed inside East Pakistan territory coincided nicely with early December's already planned timing. It optimally exploited geography and weather as essential determinants of deterrence against any possible Chinese interference to quickly achieve India's objectives. This time, however, coincided with the UN General Assembly session. India relied on the USSR's veto power to forestall or delay any action by the UN Security Council. To avert war, Pakistan hoped for the UNSC's intervention and considered installing a civilian government in Dacca. But it was too late.

The War, Surrender, and Ceasefire: December 3–17, 1971

Pakistan's pre-emptive airstrikes on major Indian airbases in the Western sector on December 3, 1971, followed by India's immediate retaliation, signalled the commencement of the 1971 Indo-Pak War. However, Sisson and Rose observed, "In more realistic terms, the war began on November 21, 1971, when Indian military units occupied East Pakistan territory".¹¹⁴ The observation is partially correct. Before December 3, 1971, both sides were routinely engaged in tactical-level conflict, wherein the Indian Army crossed the International Border and occupied territory. It was a prelude to the impending offensive; the IAF was not employed, except once, and that too in response to Pakistani air attacks. It wasn't at the scale at which Pakistan launched the pre-emptive airstrikes on December 3, 1971. Indian military actions were part of the overall strategy intended to provoke Pakistan.

The Pakistani airstrikes on December 3, 1971, was a welcome surprise to India.¹¹⁵ Mr. DP Dhar, when informed of the airstrikes tersely, remarked: "The fool has done exactly what one had expected".¹¹⁶ The statement signified the success of India's provocative strategy to compel Pakistan to initiate the war, thereby facilitating its decision for war. India preferred not to be seen as an aggressor by the world. It also enabled compliance with the provisions of the Friendship Treaty with the USSR. Pakistan, although intending to avoid war, came under intense pressure from its officers to declare war on India as a matter of pride, prudence, and necessity.¹¹⁷ The officers felt incensed at India's occupation of East Pakistan territory and the nation not doing anything except making empty statements. Yahya still was reluctant. Bhutto added

fuel to the fire. He declared in a meeting with Yahya that if he did not react forcefully to India's aggression, then he would be "lynched by the people".¹¹⁸ India naturally welcomed the decision of pre-emptive airstrikes.

By December 10, 1971, India's military offensive progressed rapidly. The multiprong land offensive occupied significant territory with the Army inducting two additional brigades from the Northern borders to hasten up the operations towards Dacca. The Indian Navy carried out an effective blockade of the sea, and the IAF achieved total air superiority. The Army encircled Dacca by December 14, 1971. While India intensified psychological pressure on the Pakistan Army to surrender, the UNSC's negotiations for a ceasefire were also progressing at a hectic pace. Time was of utmost essence. The Polish resolution tabled in the Security Council on December 15 asked India and Pakistan to accept an immediate ceasefire, withdraw forces from each other's territory, renounce claims to any occupied territories, and transfer power in East Pakistan to the representatives elected in December 1970.¹¹⁹ The resolution backed by its closest ally Russia naturally caused immense distress to India as its passage in the Security Council would have been hugely disadvantageous. A ceasefire followed by the withdrawal of its forces before the capture of Dacca would have deprived India of securing the Pakistan Army's surrender. Its capacity to assist Awami League in establishing a stable government would have been severely curtailed. The failure of the resolution on December 15, 1971, left the Pakistan Army with no choice but to surrender unconditionally. The surrender reflected the magnitude of India's decisive strategic victory that gave birth to a new nation i.e. Bangladesh, by breaking its arch-rival Pakistan.

India's Military Strategy

India's military strategy replaced the political strategy in a graduated manner. Before the end of May 1971, the PM and her closest advisors had mentally accepted the possibility of war, and by the middle of July, they saw it as probable. What was only a contingency military plan at the end of July became a subordinate alternative by the end of August, a senior alternative by the end of September, and by the end of November, it was the only way.¹²⁰ However, India's operational strategy for a swift offensive in East Pakistan was extraordinarily cautious. Dacca—the capital and the geopolitical centre of power of East Pakistan—was not specified as a military objective as the Indian planners considered its capture an ambitious proposition. Major General KK Singh, the Director of Military Operations during the planning stage, felt, "the Indian Army with its inherent inhibitions against anything unorthodox and a more speedy type of manoeuvre was ill-suited for attempting the capture of Dacca".¹²¹ Crossing one of the three rivers—Padma, Jamuna, and Meghna—in

the face of enemy opposition to attempt to attack Dacca was considered a tall order, which progress of the war proved wrong. During the planning stage in August 1971, the Eastern Command had proposed to keep Dacca as the final objective, but the COAS overruled it. According to Lieutenant General Jacob, the COAS felt that by capturing Khulna and Chittagong, Dacca would automatically fall, and there is no need to take it.¹²² Both Khulna and Chittagong did not fall until December 16—the day the Pakistani Forces surrendered.

India did not expand its strategic aim to secure Dacca, despite achieving significant success in the first week of the war. On December 9, 1971, a note issued by the PM's Secretariat stated: "A mere ceasefire without going into the basic causes of the conflict will prove illusory".¹²³ The rapid progress of the military operations was expected to render the Pakistani position politically untenable. India was unduly apprehensive of international pressure imposing an early ceasefire that would have ended the war with neither capturing vast territory nor Dacca. It opted to secure a vast area only, appreciating that its military operations' progress would render Pakistani positions and that of Dacca untenable by the time ceasefire came into effect. India could have avoided capturing Hilli, Khulna, Jhenida, Rangpur, and Mynamati. These tactical objectives were captured to have substantial territory in its control should the UN-sponsored ceasefire be imposed early. Lieutenant General Sagat Singh, the 4 Corps Commander, believed that his forces could swiftly advance to the Meghna and then to Dacca.¹²⁴ He proved the same by lifting substantial troops through helicopters and undertaking river crossing operations across the Meghna to encircle Dacca. In the final analysis, the threat posed to Dacca by more than five brigades across the Meghna river, made the Pakistani position militarily untenable.

Despite the Indo-Soviet Treaty's deterrence and that of weather, the Indian Army did not pull out any forces from the Chinese border till December 8, 1971. It is not clear whether the COAS was aware of the Chinese secret letter in India's possession, in which China had ruled out any military intervention. The Indian Army did not optimally exploit the brilliant success of its strategy during the Conflict stage in October-November 1971, which compelled Pakistan to relocate its forces from the hinterland to the border. It allotted the least amount of troops to the Northern approach to Dacca, which was without any river obstacle.

The cautious approach was visible in the Western theatre, too. India deployed its defensive formations in the Western theatre quite late, so as not to provoke any Pakistani offensive, but was fraught with inherent dangers. The Western Army Commander Lieutenant General KP Candeth's remark is pertinent: "Until the third week of October, the Western border was virtually

open and had Yahya Khan attacked before the middle of October 1971, he would have certainly succeeded in overrunning a large part of Punjab".¹²⁵ India thwarted Pakistan to achieve its objectives in the Western theatre, but it could have made substantial gains had the strategy been more vigorously implemented.¹²⁶ The Western theatre could have pre-empted a Pakistani attack in the Jammu sector by launching an offensive in the Punjab sector, but remained initially on the defensive and went in for the counteroffensive later.

There was a view that, after the liberation of Bangladesh, India intended to continue the war to dismember West Pakistan but was deterred by the presence of the US Seventh Fleet in the Bay of Bengal and diplomatic pressure exerted by the US through the Soviet Union.¹²⁷ Anatoly Dobrynin, a former Soviet diplomat, stated in his memoirs, "that the Soviet Union had diplomatically intervened and obtained assurance from India that it would not carry out a major offensive in West Pakistan, which was informed to the US".¹²⁸ Henry Kissinger also wrote that "by using diplomatic signals and behind the scenes pressures we (implying the USSR) had been able to save West Pakistan from the imminent threat of Indian aggression and domination".¹²⁹ These assertions are however, not valid.

India had not considered dismemberment of West Pakistan in its planning, despite pressures from some political leaders and strategic experts. India, before the war, was extremely careful not to give an impression of severe military conflict on the Western Front. It maintained the same strategy even after the surrender of Pakistani forces in the East. After Pakistan Army's capitulation in the East, the Indian decision-makers deliberated on the merits and demerits of continuing military operations in West Pakistan. The Defence Minister, supported by the Finance Minister, argued for a major offensive against West Pakistan in the PAC meeting held on December 14, 1971, suggesting the "liberation of Kashmir's Pakistan-held sections as the minimum goal".¹³⁰ The PM held on to her earlier decision to continue an offensive-defensive strategy on the Western front.¹³¹ The Government considered the political advantages of international prestige and goodwill, accruing out of a unilateral ceasefire, of far greater significance than inflicting additional attrition on the enemy and capturing some crucial territory. India could have posed a grievous threat to the Green Belt in Sind, where the Army had already penetrated nearly 45 kilometres inside Pakistani territory. I Armoured Division was available just 800 kilometres away from Barmer near Ferozepore in Punjab. It was positioned to cater to any Pakistani threat, which didn't materialise. Nor did it pose any threat to Pakistan. By not doing so, India did not create the long-term strategic deterrence on any futuristic Pakistani misadventure. The Clausewitzian theory of suppressing the will

of the enemy was, perhaps, overlooked. If our opponent is to be made to comply with our will, we must place him in a situation which is even more oppressive to him than the sacrifice which we demand.¹³²

The theory of dismemberment of West Pakistan by India and its subsequent backing down due to the US Seventh Fleet's presence was a falsehood spread by the USA, based on some invented CIA inputs of an Indian Cabinet meeting decision. The story of an Indian plan to launch an offensive in West Pakistan was invented to justify the sending of Enterprise mission; this kind of disinformation is standard practice in intelligence operations.¹³³ Nixon and Kissinger overplayed the intelligence input to suit them and rationalise their desire to demonstrate resolve to China and the Soviet Union.¹³⁴ The despatch of Seventh Fleet was to up the ante for a global conflict should India decided to execute operations vigorously in West Pakistan and thus deter it. As the loss of East Pakistan had become a reality, the US sought to regain its prestige as a Superpower to prevent further dismemberment of its ally Pakistan in the West by India supported by its arch-rival, the USSR. The US's arm-twisting tactics manifested in the UN Security Council resolution tabled by Poland, which would not have been vetoed by the USSR.

The Peace Resolution

The establishment of lasting peace after the war is an essential ingredient of the paradigm of war. However, it has rarely happened. If we go by the Clausewitzian dictum that the object of war is not victory but peace, most wars would fall short of the standards.¹³⁵ The same is true for the India-Pakistan War, 1971.

Through the Peace Resolution, India sought to strengthen civilian democracy and end military dictatorship in Pakistan to usher in enduring peace and cooperation. The Indian PM, hoping that Bhutto would restore democracy in Pakistan, ensured he did not return an embittered man as it would make the task of Indian diplomacy much more challenging to handle.¹³⁶ Concomitantly, India, despite the leverages it had held over Pakistan, did not spell out the resolution of the Kashmir issue explicitly in the agenda for the peace resolution, but made only an implicit mention. It did not propose converting the ceasefire line into an International Border, fearing it could be objected by Pakistan and considered doing so if a settlement was in sight.¹³⁷ In contrast, Pakistan focused on the repatriation of the Prisoners of War (PoWs) and the withdrawal of forces.¹³⁸ It succeeded in getting the Kashmir issue delinked from the Simla Agreement by not making any commitments for its resolution and no precondition for recognising Bangladesh. It recognised Bangladesh only in February 1974, and Bhutto reportedly dissuaded various Arab countries from doing so.

India's adoption of an accommodating approach against a weaker neighbour was well-intentioned and reflected its desire for enduring peace. It, however, proved to be short-sighted. India overlooked the belligerent and untrustworthy personality of its leader and the strategic culture of Pakistan. How could India trust Bhutto, who for grabbing political power, worked towards its Army's ignominious surrender instead of an honourable ceasefire in the UN Security Council in December 1971?

India's political decision of not imposing an unambiguous solution to the Kashmir problem from a position of strength failed to achieve any credible deterrence against future Pakistani misadventures. In a speech to the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs in Karachi on July 31, 1972, Bhutto stated that the "Agreement was not a 'No-War Pact' and asserted that it was entirely different from the phrase 'refrain from the use of or threat of force' used in the Simla Agreement".¹³⁹ However, Raghavan felt, "Had India rammed through a final settlement on Kashmir, it is quite likely that the Pakistan Army would have deposed Bhutto even earlier than it did; the Simla accord allowed Bhutto to introduce a new constitution in 1973 that remains a light of hope for Pakistani democrats".¹⁴⁰ The author disagrees with this assertion. Whatever be the vintage of the Constitution and whether there is a civilian democratic leader or not, the Pakistan Army would dictate the terms on all important security-related matters, particularly about India and specifically J&K. India's political failure on the negotiating table to exploit the strategic gains of the battlefield allowed Pakistan to initiate the proxy war in J&K in 1990. Its strategy of 'bleeding India by a thousand cuts' is prominently manifesting, particularly in Kashmir.

India's Decision-Making Process

India's decision-making process for the 1971 War, comprising a small informal core group of experienced and trusted bureaucrats, functioned exceptionally well within the formal decision-making mechanism's overall framework, i.e. the PAC. The PM exercised the final decision-making authority, but she always took care to keep the Parliament informed of the critical decisions. The core group had emerged as a standardised body, and with PAC getting relegated to only a formal structure without authority and power, caused some dissonance in decision-making. India's military activities in East Pakistan during October and November 1971 were usually not deliberated in the Cabinet. The hostilities on the Western front were the only serious subject debated in the PAC meeting on December 4, 1971. Moreover, according to unwritten norms, the Indian PM enjoys greater autonomy in foreign policy decisions. This small homogeneous group of the PM, operating informally

within a formalised structure, was the critical element in decision-making on East Pakistan in 1971. However, the same prudent decision faltered during the negotiations for the Peace Resolution. Mrs. Gandhi was perhaps convinced by Haksar's observation that "the humiliating conditions imposed on Germany after its defeat in the First World War led to the rise of Nazism and the Second World War".¹⁴¹ This advice of Haksar, unlike his previous ones, lacked the practical reality of Pakistan. In a moment of triumphant magnanimity, Indira Gandhi lost a golden opportunity to remove the Kashmir thorn from India's flesh.¹⁴²

India and Pakistan did not negotiate or communicate directly. Each side communicated through public statements and sometimes through the offices of other countries. They viewed each other's intentions and declarations as fundamentally hostile with no attempts to explore possibilities.¹⁴³ All these actions militated against any compromise political solution. "Statements of resolve by one side were perceived by the other as a commitment to resist any resolution of the crisis."¹⁴⁴

By the end of May, Indian leadership formulated a clear political objective that enabled the Armed Forces to evolve an effective military strategy. India applied all the tenets of just war theory in letter and spirit for Bangladesh's liberation in the 1971 India-Pakistan War. Just war should be dictated by a right intention, for an injury received, not for territorial conquests or for any secular or religious crusades.¹⁴⁵ India's intervention did fulfil these requirements. India did receive an injury in the form of a massive refugee problem and did not seek to wrest territorial control of East Pakistan or foist any religious order.¹⁴⁶ The Indian Army moved out of East Pakistan quickly after securing the surrender of the Pakistani Army. Just War theorists are much more disposed to accept India's military action as a case of humanitarian intervention.¹⁴⁷ Arguing that rarely do countries put their soldiers at risk for others, Walzer aptly stated, "Indian involvement was a better case of humanitarian intervention not because of the singularity and purity of the government's motives but because its various motives converged on a single course of action that was also the course of action called by the Bengalis".¹⁴⁸

The decision-making process within the Armed Forces, too, functioned very smoothly with the three services exhibiting utmost cooperation and synergy. However, there was avoidable caution in the execution of the military plans at the operational level. A bolder approach could have hastened the operations in East Pakistan and inflicted more significant losses on Pakistan in the Western Theatre.

The media helped India, to a great extent, to shape international opinion in her favour. Anthony Mascarenhas's story showcased the systematic

character of the Pakistan military's murderous campaign in East Pakistan.¹⁴⁹ Similar reports on the atrocities committed by the Pakistan Army in East Pakistan was published by numerous international journalists, which led to the world community favouring India's cause for war.

Leadership

The political leadership led by Mrs. Gandhi, and comprising the Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram, and Foreign Minister Swaran Singh acted firmly and boldly. The PM, keeping the national interests supreme, synchronised the entire political, diplomatic, and military machinery with profound maturity, intelligent judgment, and, more importantly, did not succumb to the intense US pressure. She conveyed to the US Ambassador that India's patience was running out, and it would take any action that it found necessary for safeguarding her national interests and security. She brilliantly transformed the crisis thrust on the nation into a strategic achievement of liberating Bangladesh with an unprecedented military victory.

Field Marshal SHFJ Manekshaw provided decisive military leadership before and during the war. He displayed great moral courage to withstand political pressure and unambiguously elaborated the military's intervention constraints and limitations in East Pakistan in April-May 1971. As the COSC, Manekshaw very efficiently coordinated the operations in different theatres that spanned over three Army Commands, two Air Commands, and two Navy Fleets. Air Chief Marshal PC Lal, and Admiral SM Nanda, worked in unison to strategise and execute the plans.

Conclusion

Decision-making for war is a function of political resolve and military capability. India exhibited both in abundant measure, while maintaining focus on the political objective of refugees' return. The Indian leadership displayed tremendous dynamism in blending 'realpolitik' with true compassion for the refugees. It was superbly orchestrated through diplomacy's skilful conduct, brilliant execution of coercive strategy escalating to conflict, and ultimately the war, without succumbing to US pressure. With the flawless execution of a swift military campaign, India transformed a humongous refugee crisis into a significant strategic victory. There was strong and consistent control in democratic India during the Bangladesh crisis, but relatively weak and inconsistent control in authoritarian Pakistan; democratic India was the hard State; authoritarian Pakistan the soft.¹⁵⁰ The statement signifies the growth of India's strategic decision-making, capable of making hard decisions. The 1971 War was a "War of Necessity" for India for a just cause to serve the national interest of maintaining its socio-cultural identity.

Notes

1. Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), p. 122.
2. Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
3. Srinath Raghavan, *1971 A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2013).
4. PN Haksar Papers (II and III Instalment), Nehru Museum and Memorial Library (NMML), New Delhi.
5. SN Prasad and U. P. Thapliyal, *The India-Pakistan War of 1971 A History* (Dehradun: Natraj Publishers, 2014) p. 14. The book provides a detailed account of the Indo-Pak War of 1971 as maintained in the Indian government's military history records. Also see General KV Krishna Rao, PVSM (Retired), *Prepare or Perish: A Study of National Security* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, Pvt. Ltd., 1991), p. 157.
6. This core group was comprised of PN Haksar, Principal Secretary to the PM, P. N. Dhar, Secretary in PM's Office, D. P. Dhar, former ambassador to the USSR, and Chairman of the Policy Planning Committee, R. N. Kao, Director of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), T. N. Kaul, the Foreign Secretary and some other administrative secretaries like G. Ramchandra, M. Malhotra, Sharada Prasad, and B. N. Tandon. At the Cabinet level, Swaran Singh, the Foreign Minister, Jagjivan Ram, the Defence Minister and Y. B. Chavan, the Finance Minister were the principal advisors. Mr. Haksar and D. P. Dhar were close advisors and confidants of the PM. See Sisson and Rose, op cit., p. 138 and J. N. Dixit, *India-Pakistan in War and Peace* (New Delhi: Books Today, 2002), p. 181.
7. Lok Sabha Debate (LSD): I:10, March 31, 1971 and Rajya Sabha Debate (RSD): LXXV; 8, March 31, 1971.
8. Lieutenant General Depinder Singh, PVSM, VSM (Retired), *Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, MC, Soldiering with Dignity* (Dehradun: Natraj Publishers, 2002), pp. 128-29. Lieutenant General Depinder Singh, then as a Colonel, was Military Assistant to General Manekshaw during the 1971 War. Also see Pran Chopra, *India's Second Liberation* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1973), pp. 78-79 and Arjun Subramaniam, *India's Wars: A Military History 1947-1971* (HarperCollins Publishers, Noida, India 2016), pp. 340-43.
9. Prasad and Thapliyal, op. cit., p. 35, quoting "Eastern Railways Role Before, During and After the Indo-Pak Conflict," Public Relations Office, Eastern Railway, Calcutta.
10. PN Haksar Papers, "Haksar's Note to Indira Gandhi on meeting with opposition leaders on 07 May 1971" (III Instalment), Subject File 227, NMML.
11. Prasad and Thapliyal, op. cit., p. 46. Also see Raghavan, op. cit., p. 72. Mukiti Bahini was the military wing of Bangladesh Liberation Movement created in April 1971 and comprised officers and men of the East Bengal Regiment and Rifles as the nucleus plus several civilian volunteers.
12. Raghavan, op. cit., pp. 62-63.
13. Prasad and Thapliyal, op. cit., p. 73.
14. Ibid., p. 47. Also Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 145 and Government of India, *Bangladesh Documents*, vol. I, p. 675.
15. Ibid., p. 37. Also see Raghavan, op. cit., p. 76.
16. Lok Sabha Debate, PM's Statement in Lok Sabha, May 24, 1971, p. 187.
17. Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 187. Also see Raghavan, op. cit., pp. 77-79.
18. The PM visited the USA, USSR, UK, France, Germany and Canada.
19. Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 190.
20. J. N. Dixit, *Liberation and Beyond: India-Bangladesh Relations* (New Delhi: Konark Press, 1999), p. 184, and Gol, *MEA Bangladesh Documents*, vol. I, p. 703-10 quoted in Prasad and Thapliyal, op. cit., p. 42.

21. The Government of Pakistan published a White Paper on August 5, 1971 that contains the explanation and description of the actions taken by the military government from March 25, 1971 onwards. Available on Internet, en.bangladesh.org/index.php?title=White_Paper_1971 (accessed on July 25, 2020), quoted in Raghavan, op. cit., p. 208. Also see *New York Times*, August 8, 19 and 20 and September 20, 1971.
22. Raghavan, op. cit., p. 209. Also see Agha Shahi to U Thant, September 2, 1971, S-0863-0001-02, UNSG U Thant Fonds, UN Archives, New York. Fonds are the records of U Thant, UN Secretary General relating to his responsibilities as chief administrative officer of the Secretariat and as chief coordinator of the Legislative, Political, Socio-Economic, and Military Bodies of the UN. The name of the document is listed under S-0863-Peace-Keeping, India and Pakistan 1962-1973 under the heading 'Pakistan—Correspondence with the Permanent Representative of Pakistan'. Available on Internet, search.archives.un.org/downloads/secretary (accessed on July 25, 2020).
23. Ibid., pp. 206-9.
24. PN Haksar Papers, "Note on 'Economy under Conditions of Crisis' prepared by Mr. PN Dhar, Economist and Secretary to the PM, July 21, 1971" (III Instalment), Subject File 260, NMML.
25. Dr. K Subrahmanyam, *Bangladesh and India's Security* (Dehradun: Palit and Dutt Publishers, 1972), p. 106.
26. Rao, op. cit., p. 158.
27. Interview with Colonel Harjeet Singh—a renowned military historian on January 12, 2019. Also see Prasad and Thapliyal, op. cit., 2014, pp. 71, 109, 110, 111, 271, and Major General Lachhman Singh Lehl (Retired), PVSM, VrC, *Victory in Bangladesh* (Dehradun: Natraj Publishers, 1981), p. 33.
28. These personnel were from Paramilitary personnel of East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces (EPCAF) Scouts, Mujahids and Razakaars. See Major General Fazal Muqem Khan, *Pakistan's Crisis in Leadership* (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 1973), pp. 276-91.
29. Rao, op. cit., p. 170. Also see Subramaniam, op. cit., p. 361, and Prasad and Thapliyal, op. cit., pp. 105-6.
30. Prasad and Thapliyal, op. cit., p. 105. Also see Raghavan, op. cit., p. 238.
31. Lieutenant General JFR Jacob, *An Odyssey in War and Peace* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2011), pp. 79-80. Also see Raghavan, op. cit., p. 238.
32. Rao, op. cit., p. 171.
33. Interview with Colonel Harjeet Singh (Retired). Also see Rao, op. cit., pp. 170-71, and Prasad and Thapliyal, op. cit., pp. 109 and 273. 2 Corps comprised 4 Mountain Division and 9 Infantry Division, 4 Corps had 8, 23, and 57 Mountain Divisions while 33 Corps comprised 20 Mountain Division and 71 Mountain Brigade of 6 Mountain Division (Army HQ reserve). 101 Communications Zone comprised 95 Mountain Brigade and FJ Sector (ad hoc force of two battalions). 2, 5, 17 and 27 Mountain Divisions remained deployed along the Chinese border.
34. Subramaniam, op. cit., p. 361. Also see Rao, op. cit., p. 209.
35. 15 Corps had 3, 10, 19, 25, and 26 Infantry Divisions, 121 (Independent) Infantry Brigade Group and 3 (I) Armoured Brigade. 11 Corps comprised of 7, 14 and 15 Infantry Divisions, Foxtrot Sector and 14 (Independent) Armoured Brigade. 1 Corps comprised of 36, 39 and 54 Infantry Divisions, 2 and 16 (Independent) Armoured Brigades. 1 Armoured Division consisted of 1 Armoured Brigade and 43 Lorried Infantry Brigade. 11 and 12 Infantry Divisions were part of Southern Command. "I thank the Peer Reviewer for drawing my attention to details of the orbat."
36. Dixit, op. cit., 1999, pp. 183-206.
37. Raghavan, op. cit., pp. 212-13.
38. Ibid., p. 232. Also see Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 213.

39. General Yahya Khan's interview with *Le Figaro* [Paris] in BD Documents (New Delhi: Gol, 1972), 2: 136-
37. quoted in Raghavan, op. cit., p. 222.
40. *Asian Recorder*, December 17-23, 1971 quoted in Raghavan, op. cit., 2013, p. 222.
41. Raghavan, op. cit., p. 232. Also see Gul Hassan Khan, *Memoirs of Lt Gen Gul Hassan Khan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 322.
42. Ibid., quoting personal interview with P. N. Dhar, November 24, 2009. Also see Katherine Frank, *Indira: The Life of Indira Gandhi* (London: HarperCollins, 2001) p. 338; Depinder, op. cit., p. 157 and S. Muthiah, *Born to Dare: The Life of Lt Gen Inderjit Singh Gill, PVSM, MC* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2008), p. 186.
43. Ibid., p. 233. Also see Shuja Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army, and the Wars Within* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 295; Hasan Zaheer, *Separation of East Pakistan: The Rise and Realisation of Bengali Muslim Nationalism* (Dhaka: University Press, 2001), p. 360; Osman Mitha Aboobaker, *Unlikely Beginnings: A Soldiers' Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 353.
44. Jacob, op. cit., p. 83.
45. Subramaniam, op. cit., p. 386.
46. Siddiq Salik, *Witness to Surrender* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 199.
47. Rao, op. cit., p. 195.
48. The sinking of PNS *Ghazi* still remains shrouded in mystery. Also See Subramaniam, op. cit., p. 378, and Jacob, op. cit., p. 98.
49. Prasad and Thapliyal, op. cit., p. 412. Also see Rao, op. cit., p. 196.
50. Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 219.
51. Bhutto—the head of the Pakistani delegation to the UN—while speaking in the Security Council proceedings on December 15, denounced the UN for its failure to act promptly. He tore up a copy of the Polish resolution, and stormed out of the session, halting all consideration of the subject. The previous day, he pretended not hearing the advice of its President General Yahya. He calculated that an ignominious surrender of the Pakistan Army would lead to his political ascendancy. Also see Raghavan, op. cit., p. 261, and Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 220.
52. Prasad and Thapliyal, op. cit., p. 415.
53. Ibid., p. 202.
54. Rao, op. cit., pp. 240-24. Also see Prasad and Thapliyal, op. cit., pp. 434-35.
55. General Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), p. 183.
56. Steven A. Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 259. Also see Michael Brecher, "Theoretical Approach to International Behaviour," in Brecher (ed.) *Studies in Crisis Behaviour* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1978), p. 6.
57. Ibid., pp. 259-60.
58. Depinder, op. cit., p. 129.
59. PN Haksar Papers, "Bangladesh and our Policy Options by K. Subramanyam" (III Instalment), Subject File 276, NMML.
60. Raghavan, op. cit., p. 272.
61. Subramaniam, op. cit., pp. 343 and 517.
62. Ibid., p. 340, quoting Gary J. Bass, *Blood Telegram: India's Secret War in East Pakistan* (New Delhi: Random House, 2013).
63. Rao, op. cit., p. 166.
64. PN Haksar Papers, "Threat of a Military Attack or Infiltration Campaign by Pakistan, Secretary R&AW to Cabinet Secretary, 14 January 1971" (III Instalment), Subject File 220, NMML.

65. Ibid.
66. Raghavan, op. cit., p. 60.
67. Biafra was a secessionist State in West Africa that existed from May 30, 1967 to January 1970. Biafra's attempts to secede from Nigeria resulted in the Nigerian Civil War.
68. Raghavan, op. cit., p. 60.
69. Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 106.
70. Dixit, op. cit., p. 182. Also see Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 151.
71. Chopra, op. cit., p. 79.
72. PN Haksar Papers, "D. P. Dhar to Haksar, 18 April 1971" (III Instalment), Subject File 220, NMML.
73. Chopra, op. cit., p. 79.
74. Raghavan, op. cit., p. 67. Also see Pupil Jayakar, *Indira Gandhi: A Biography*, Revised Edition (New Delhi: Penguin, 1995), p. 223 and Depinder Singh, op. cit., p. 129.
75. PN Dhar, *Indira Gandhi, Emergency, and Indian Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 157, quoted in Raghavan, op. cit., p. 70. Raghavan carried out personal interview with P. N. Dhar in Delhi on November 24, 2009.
76. Interview with Lieutenant General Depinder Singh on September 21, 2018. Also see Depinder, op. cit., p. 129.
77. Raghavan, op. cit., p. 60.
78. Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 141.
79. Ibid., p. 143.
80. Raghavan, op. cit., p. 142.
81. Chopra, op. cit., p. 81.
82. P.N. Haksar Papers, "Haksar to Sikri, 13 May 1971" (III Instalment), Subject File 166, NMML.
83. Lok Sabha Debate, "PM's Statement in Lok Sabha, 24 May 1971," p. 187.
84. The six tenets of Just War Theory are "just cause, last resort, competent authority, proportionality between harm inflicted to good achieved, limited ends, and protection of non-combatants."
85. A Rational Model or Utility Maximization Theory selects a single homogeneous good as the desired end-state. A set of well-defined and mutually exclusive alternatives are examined, from which the decision-maker chooses the one that affords the maximum utility in attaining the desired end state and minimises the costs of possible failure.
86. Smith, op. cit., p. 262.
87. Subrahmanyam, op. cit., pp. 72, 75.
88. Raghavan, op. cit., p. 227.
89. Ibid.
90. Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 188.
91. Raghavan, op. cit., p. 188, and Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 203. Also see Zhou to Yahya, April 11 in J. A. Naik, *India, Russia, China and Bangladesh* (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1972), p. 138, and *Pakistan Times*, April 13, 1971, for the text of Zhou En-lai's letter as circulated by the Pakistani government.
92. Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 203, quoting interviews, Bangladesh 1982 and Pakistan 1979. Anwar Hossain, the Bengali foreign language expert at Peking Radio from 1966 to 1972, claimed that he had translated Zhou's letter into Bengali for Peking Radio and that it had included the last sentence that was omitted from the Pakistani version of the text. "A Bengali Grandstand View," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 11, 1974.
93. Ibid., p. 203. The source of this information includes one former official of the Pakistan Foreign Service who provided copies of the Sino-Pakistani correspondence to Indian intelligence services at the home of a well-known Indian journalist in New Delhi.

94. Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 252.
95. General Yahya Khan's interview in *Newsweek*, November 8, 1971 quoted in Prasad and Thapliyal, op. cit., 2014, p. 75.
96. Raghavan, op. cit., p. 201.
97. Subramaniam, op. cit., p. 344.
98. Sisson, and Rose, op. cit., p. 196.
99. Prasad and Thapliyal, op. cit., p. 467.
100. Ibid.
101. Raghavan, op. cit., p. 210, quoting a personal interview with P. N. Dhar, November 24, 2009. Also see P. N. Dhar, *Indira Gandhi, the Emergency and Indian Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 175, and Dixit, op. cit., pp. 64-65.
102. Ibid., p. 222.
103. Major General Hakeem Arshad Qureshi, *The 1971 Indo-Pak War: A Soldier's Narrative* (Karachi: Oxford University Press 2002), p. 124. The General was commanding Pakistani Infantry Battalion 26 Frontier Force in North-Western Sector.
104. Rao, op. cit., p. 207. Also see Raghavan, op. cit., p. 222, and Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 211.
105. S Kalyanaraman, "Operation Parakram: An Indian Exercise in Coercive Diplomacy," *Strategic Analysis*, vol. 26, issue no. 4, October-December 2002, Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, p. 479.
106. Alexander L. George, "Coercive Diplomacy" in Art J. Robert and Kenneth N. Waltz (eds.), *The Use of Force: Military Power and International Politics* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2003), p. 71.
107. Smith, op. cit., p. 184.
108. Ibid.
109. Raghavan, op., p. 232. Also see Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 213
110. Chopra, op. cit., p. 80.
111. Sisson and Rose, op. cit., pp. 195-96.
112. AJ Coates, *The Ethics of War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 189.
113. Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 280.
114. Ibid., p. 214.
115. Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 214.
116. Dixit, op. cit., p. 89, quoted in Raghavan, op. cit., p. 234.
117. Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 228.
118. Ibid., p. 230.
119. Raghavan, op. cit., pp. 257-59. Also see Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 220.
120. Chopra, op. cit., p. 80.
121. Raghavan, op. cit., p. 236.
122. Jacob, op. cit., p. 80.
123. PN Haksar Papers (III Instalment), Subject File 173, NMML.
124. Major General Sukhwant Singh, *India's Wars since Independence: Liberation of Bangladesh* (New Delhi: Lancer, 1980), p. 150-51.
125. Lieutenant General K. P. Candeth, PVSM (Retired), *The Western Front: Indo-Pakistan War 1971* (Dehradun: The English Book Depot, 1997), p. 12.
126. Rao, op. cit., p. 244.
127. Robert Jackson, *South Asian Crisis, India-Pakistan-Bangladesh* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1975), p. 140, quoted in Prasad and Thapliyal, op. cit., p. 416. In an interview in *Time*, published on December 26, 1971, Nixon hinted at it while saying that there was no difference between the Soviet Union and the US at the end of the Bangladesh crisis. The Soviet restraint helped to bring about "the ceasefire that stopped what could have been the conquest of West Pakistan as well."

128. K. Subramanyam, with Arthur Monteiro, *Shedding Shibboleths India's Evolving Strategic Outlook* (Delhi: Wordsmiths, 2005), p. 328.
129. Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), p. 530, quoted in Raghavan, op. cit., p. 262.
130. Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 215, quoting interviews with the Prime Minister's office, Cabinet, Secretaries, Government and Military officials in 1978 and 1981.
131. Ibid.
132. Colonel JJ Graham, *Clausewitz: War as Politics By Other Means*, retrieved from Internet, <https://oll.libertyfund.org/pages/clausewitz-war-as-politics-by-other-means> (accessed on April 11, 2020).
133. Subramanyam with Monteiro, op. cit., p. 330.
134. Raghavan, op. cit., pp. 244-46.
135. Lieutenant General VR Raghavan, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM (Retired), "Wars Old and New: Structural Changes." Adapted from the Field Marshal Memorial Lecture delivered on Infantry Day, October 27, 2015 and published in *USI Journal*, vol. CLXV, no. 602, October-December 2-15, p. 463.
136. Chopra, op. cit., p. 254.
137. PN Haksar Papers "Agenda Items Proposed by India on 28 April 1972 for the Summit Talks between the Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan" (III Instalment), Subject File 92(a) to 92(d), NMML.
138. Ibid.
139. Prasad and Thapliyal, op cit. p. 437
140. Raghavan, op cit. p. 269
141. Ibid, p. 268.
142. Subramaniam, op. cit., p. 427.
143. Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 275.
144. Ibid., p. 279.
145. David Fisher, *The Just War Tradition* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1985), p. 23.
146. Dinesh Kumar, "Essay on Conflict Resolution," *Assess the Applicability of the Just War Criteria to the 1971 India-Pakistan War Leading to the Creation of Bangladesh* (University of Bradford, UK, 2005).
147. Coates, op. cit., p. 161.
148. Walzer, op. cit., p. 105.
149. Mr. Anthony Mascarenhas was a Pakistani journalist, of Goan Christian descent, who was working for the *Morning News* in Karachi and was one of the eight journalists taken on an officially-sponsored trip to East Pakistan in the first week of April 1971. Due to prevailing censorship he did not publish the story in the newspaper he was serving and instead had it published in London. His 5,000-word story published in *The Sunday Times* on June 13, 1971 under the heading "Genocide" received world-wide attention. Raghavan, op. cit., p. 132.
150. Sisson and Rose, op. cit., p. 277.

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Decision-making for war is a function of political resolve and military capability to uphold the vital national interests. The 1971 India-Pakistan War was the first war in which India displayed its firm political will and robust military capability. The decision to employ the last instrument to achieve a political objective evolved progressively from a cautious response to a firm decision without succumbing to the international pressure. India adroitly synchronised the essential elements of comprehensive national power to transform a humongous human crisis into a decisive strategic victory. It calibrated a sustainable indigenous resistance movement and concurrently launched a diplomatic outreach campaign to shape the environment in its favour. The timing of the military intervention exploited geography as an essential determinant of deterrence. India outmanoeuvred Pakistan to compel it to launch pre-emptive airstrikes on December 3, 1971, in order not to be seen as an aggressor. It brilliantly executed the synergised military strategy to encircle Dacca—the centre of political power. Yet the strategic outcome of the war was determined in New York.



Lieutenant General (Dr.) **J S Cheema**, PVSM, AVSM, VSM superannuated from the Indian Army as Deputy Chief of the Army Staff in November 2017.

He has vast operational and administrative experience, having served in critical command and staff assignments along the entire spectrum of conflict. Commissioned in June 1979, the General commanded 10 SIKH—his parent battalion, an Infantry Brigade along the Line of Control, a strategic reserve formation in Central India, and a pivot Corps in the Western Sector. An alumnus of the DSSC, CDM, and the NDC, he has done his Doctorate from Punjab University in Defence and National Security Studies on *“Deterrence and Decision Making for War in the Indian Context: An Analytical Study”*. While in service, he compiled two thoroughly researched documents, *“15 Corps: Turbulence to Stabilization”*, an analytical account of the ongoing Proxy War, and *“Shyraunjali”*—a Coffee Table Book on the 1965 India-Pakistan War. The General Officer is now the Vice-Chancellor of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh Punjab Sports University.

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