Disconnect, Distrust, and Dissent

Structural Issues in American Foreign Policy during the Bangladesh Liberation War, 1970-71

by

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Dedicated to Mamoni, Bappi and Jayan Bhaia
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Introduction

Our government has failed to denounce the suppression of democracy. Our government has failed to denounce atrocities. Our government has failed to take forceful measures to protect its citizens while at the same time bending over backwards to placate the West Pak dominated government and to lessen likely and deservedly negative international public relations impact against them. Our government has evidenced what many will consider moral bankruptcy… in which unfortunately the overworked term genocide is applicable... We, as professional public servants express our dissent with current policy and fervently hope that our true and lasting interests here can be defined and our policies redirected in order to salvage our nation’s position as a moral leader of the free world.

-“Dhaka Consulate Dissent Cable”, Dhaka, April 6,1971.

In 1971, West Pakistan engaged in a brutal military crackdown of East Pakistani Bengalis. This repression was in response to the decisive victory of the Awami League, East Pakistan’s political party, in the country’s first free elections held in 1970. During the military crackdown, American diplomats stationed in East Pakistan’s Dhaka Consulate, led by their Consul-General Archer Blood, reported on the atrocities. These officials became increasingly appalled that the American government in Washington refused to publicly condemn the West Pakistani atrocities — despite the numerous detailed reports the Consulate filed. Shocked and frustrated, the Dhaka Consulate finally sent a cable to Washington expressing its dissent against American policy. The cable came to be called the

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2 Refer to Appendix A for a map of Pakistan in 1971.
3 For the purposes of consistency and orthographic accuracy, I use the spelling “Dhaka” to refer to Bangladesh’s capital city. However, throughout the thesis I quote various documents that use the old British-Indian spelling, “Dacca”.
“Dhaka Consulate Dissent Cable” or the “Archer Blood Dissent Telegram.”\(^4\) My aim in this thesis is to explore the origins and context of the Dissent Letter, and to shed light on the larger structural problems of American foreign policy in the years leading up to 1971. In doing so, I also aim to illustrate how these structural problems contributed to the frustration experienced by the diplomats in the Dhaka Consulate.

**Historiography**

The literature that surrounds the Dhaka Consulate Dissent Letter can be grouped into three categories: 1) political history of the U.S. response to the India-Pakistan war of 1971; 2) history of the Bangladeshi Liberation War; and 3) history of Nixon and Kissinger’s foreign policy. The literature does not connect these histories to the history of U.S. foreign policy bureaucracy. As a result, scholars have not addressed the structural conflicts that are central to understanding the Dissent Letter’s origins. Historiographically, the goal of my thesis is to connect the literature that discusses the structural problems of foreign policy bureaucracy to the aforementioned treatments of the Dissent Letter. It is my contention that the structures set up to conduct foreign policy had an enormous impact on the American response to Pakistan in 1971, and I aim to draw out this connection throughout the narrative.

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\(^4\) Many also refer to the cable as just the “Blood Telegram.” However, Blood did not draft the letter, but only approved to send it. For the purposes of consistency and accuracy, I mostly use the phrase “Dhaka Consulate Dissent Letter” or just “Dissent Letter” to refer to the cable.
The history of U.S. foreign policy in South Asia during the Bangladesh crisis focuses mostly on the U.S. reactions to the India-Pakistan War, giving minimum treatment to the Bangladesh Liberation War. It consists of political analyses done by Philip Oldenburg, Christopher Van Hollen, and William Barnds, all American scholars of South Asian affairs who founded this field of literature starting in 1971.

These scholars come to broadly similar conclusions about the India-Pakistan war. They contend that the war came about because the West Pakistani President Yahya Khan’s ordered a military crackdown in East Pakistan on March 25, 1971, causing millions of East Pakistani Bengalis to flee the country and seek refuge in India. Faced with this humanitarian crisis on its border, India sought to help the East Pakistani Bengalis by allowing the Awami League to set up a government-in-exile in Calcutta and providing training and military equipment to East Pakistan’s army, the ‘Mukti Bahini’ or ‘Liberation Army’. These actions escalated tensions between India and Pakistan that finally broke out into war on December 3, 1971, when the West Pakistani Air Force bombed Indian airfields in Western India.

Oldenburg, Van Hollen, and Barnds have argued that West Pakistan was mostly responsible for the events that led up to the war. Additionally, they argue that the realpolitik approach that the American government adopted was flawed because both President Nixon and Henry Kissinger based their policy on incorrect underlying assumptions. Nixon and Kissinger believed that India instigated the war in support of the East Pakistani Bengali cause. However, as
Oldenburg, Van Hollen and many others have pointed out, the President and his National Security Advisor turned a blind eye to the brutal military campaigns the West Pakistanis orchestrated in East Pakistan. Moreover, both Nixon and Kissinger were deeply concerned with interfering in Pakistan’s affairs because Yahya Khan provided a secret channel that orchestrated the Nixon-Kissinger initiative to “open up” relations with China.⁵

Responding to the above literature, Henry Kissinger defended U.S. policy in 1971 in his memoir, *The White House Years*, published in 1979. Kissinger recounts in great detail the rationale he and President Nixon adopted to justify America’s policy. He stated that while America could not support a brutal military repression, it also could not condemn Yahya Khan’s actions publicly because Pakistan served as “the sole link to China.” Kissinger acknowledged the Dissent Letter’s charges against American policy as he stated, “there was some merit to the charge of moral insensitivity.”⁶ The overview of the history of U.S. foreign policy reveals that the scholarship has revolved around the India-Pakistan War, leaving much to be explored in the U.S. response to the Bangladeshi Liberation War.⁷

A closer examination of the events on the ground in East Pakistan/Bangladesh during 1970-71 make it clear that the official U.S. policy to

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⁷ The Bangladesh Liberation War began with the military crackdown on March 25, 1971. The India-Pakistan war officially commenced on December 3, 1971, although tensions between the two nations were escalating throughout the year.
turn a blind eye to West Pakistani atrocities was far more perilous than policymakers in Washington realized. Understanding this requires attending to the literature on the crisis itself, particularly the election, the crackdown, the war of liberation, and the India-Pakistan conflict that ensued. This literature is varied and reflects, especially in its early phase, the subject positions of its authors. Beginning in 1974, the West Pakistani view of the disintegration of Pakistan was illustrated by G.W. Choudhury’s book *The Last Days of United Pakistan*, in which he outlined Yahya Khan’s rationale for the military crackdown and the ensuing Pakistani policy that led to war with India. However, many scholars have challenged G.W. Choudhury’s text, pointing out his biased account of the events resulting from his position as a close aide to Yahya Khan.

Contrasting G.W. Choudhury’s accounts, Subrata Roy Chowdhury and Peter O’Donnell asserted that Yahya Khan’s brutal tactics caused the breakup of Pakistan. However, both these works are limited by the scope of their studies. Subrata Roy Chowdhury’s book, *The Genesis of Bangladesh*, published in 1972, presents the events of 1971 within the framework of international law. Essentially, his book acts to justify Indian involvement in the war. On the other hand, Peter O’Donnell’s book, *Bangladesh: Biography of a Muslim Nation*, published in 1984 seeks to write a broad history of Bangladesh beginning in the sixth century. While O’Donnell’s text presents a unique analysis from the perspective of a former U.S. diplomat, his work’s broad focus prevents him from delving deeply into the day-to-day events of the Bangladesh Independence War.
Complementing O’Donnell’s work, Badruddin Umar published *The Emergence of Bangladesh* in 2004, an extensive two-volume account of the war. His book provides perhaps the most in-depth social, cultural and political account of Bangladesh under Pakistani rule starting in 1958.

However, starting in 1990, a different strand of analysis originated within the field of South Asian History. In 1990, Richard Sisson and Leo Rose published *War and Secession*, which proclaimed that the Bangladeshi Independence War was caused by the uncompromising attitudes of both East and West Pakistani political leaders. In essence, Sisson and Rose’s work disagreed with the assessments of earlier authors such as Subrata Roy Chowdhury, Oldenburg and Barnds — that the war was primarily caused by West Pakistani aggression.

Following Sisson and Rose, a recent book by Sarmila Bose *Dead Reckoning: Memories of 1971 Bangladeshi War* was published in 2010. Bose provided the first comprehensive social and political history written from the perspective of a person who is a generation removed from the war. Her work sought to present a balanced view of the war narrating the accounts of both the East and West Pakistani sides. However, her book came under severe scrutiny due to some of its questionable premises. In backing away from ethical issues, Sisson and Rose, and Bose seem to take positions that offer cover to Nixon-Kissinger. Like Nixon-Kissinger, they seem to turn a blind eye to the atrocities by arguing the well-established causes of the conflict.

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The literature on the Bangladeshi Liberation War is essential to understanding the flawed assessments Nixon and Kissinger made during the crisis. It portrays the undeniably brutal and massive scale of atrocities that the West Pakistani government enacted in East Pakistan. Faced with these facts, my thesis uses this literature to highlight how Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy ignored the realities on the ground and relied on biased positions to formulate foreign policy for the U.S.

Furthermore, the Dissent Letter is most often discussed in the literature discussing Nixon and Kissinger’s foreign policy history. The literature reveals that Nixon and Kissinger’s accounts of the war — presented in their memoirs — were flawed in many aspects. Both men perceived the India-Pakistan War to be more crucial to U.S. interests than the Bangladeshi Liberation War that commenced in March of that year, their assessments essentially ignored the atrocities occurring in East Pakistan that year.

Because Nixon and Kissinger made the final decisions regarding U.S. foreign policy, it is essential to consider their positions on the overall crisis. Both men claimed that they wanted the crisis to be solved through political means to avoid an India-Pakistan war. They argued that India, acting in the interests of Soviet Union, was responsible for the start of the war. Their narrative selectively ignored the atrocities West Pakistan had committed in East Pakistan that had caused millions to flee to India that caused a massive refugee crisis and led to increasing tensions between India and Pakistan. They ignored the fact that West Pakistan started the war in December and instead blamed India for the war.

Summarizing the scholarship in 1999, William Bundy stated, “Nixon and Kissinger’s policy on the Indo-Pakistan war was replete with error, misjudgment, emotionalism and unnecessary risk taking.” The scholarship on Nixon and Kissinger’s policy on the South Asian crisis presents an overwhelmingly critical evaluation of their position and questions the rationale used to justify their actions. It overwhelmingly contradicts the narrative that Nixon and Kissinger presented in their memoirs.

Interestingly enough, the scholarship on Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy contains some of the most evocative passages written to date on the Dhaka Consulate’s Dissent Letter. For example, in *Uncertain Greatness*, Roger Morris

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exclaimed that “Blood and his mission found a rare bureaucratic courage and clarity of national interest...[however] their dissent fell among capricious personal politics in the State Department as well as the White House.”

Also, a journalist named Jack Anderson wrote, “Blood was admired by many other Foreign Service officers who were aware of his courage and honesty in the face of top-level deception.”

My thesis takes Morris’ powerful assertions as both its methodological and argumentative point of departure, by exploring the conflicts of the State Department and White House in the context of the events in Bangladesh in 1971—and vice versa.

To investigate the structural problems I explore the literature on the U.S. foreign policy bureaucracy, specifically the State Department, in which the Dissent Letter is never addressed in great detail. In this field, the literature consists mostly of the analyses presented by Richard Holbrooke, Smith Simpson, William Bacchus, and John Franklin Campbell, who present the problems of the foreign affairs bureaucracy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. All of these authors were career State Department employees who examined their department critically. I rely mostly on the literature written in the 1970s because most foreign affairs literature reflects problems of the era, and therefore anything beyond the timeframe of the 1970s falls outside the scope of my thesis.

Any review of the scholarly literature on State Department bureaucracy must begin with the seminal article written by Richard Holbrooke in 1970 called,

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“The Machine that Fails.” Holbrooke argued the biggest problem with the State Department was its enormous size. Campbell and Smith expanded on Holbrooke’s arguments and outlined the many conflicts that come about due to the enormous size of the bureaucracy. They described the problems involving coordination of foreign affairs among different agencies, the problems of communication within the State Department, the problems associated with the politics of promotions, and the problem of lack of Presidential will to reform the bureaucracy. The literature on the bureaucracy is essential to understanding the Dhaka Consulate Dissent Letter, which originated because of the State Department’s inability to respond to their cables.

Moreover, closer inspection of the foreign affairs bureaucracy literature provides some insight on the role “cliency,”—or adopting one’s view to align them with the host country — and dissent played within the foreign affairs bureaucracy. Dissent and “cliency” are pivotal to understanding the Dissent Letter, as the Dhaka Consulate was accused of “cliency” and their dissent occurred through a specific State Department channel created by Nixon. This literature is mostly confined to the Foreign Service Journal (FSJ) where Roger Morris portrayed the problem of “cliency” as being ever present in the State Department’s Foreign Service. In addition, Herz and Lenderking discussed the role dissent should play within the foreign affairs community.

This literature is tied together by Hannah Gurman, who wrote, “The Other Plumbers Unit: The Dissent Channel of the U.S. State Department” in 2011.

15 The words “cliency” and “clientelism” refers to the same idea. I use these words interchangeably throughout this thesis.
Gurman discussed the role of the dissent channel created in 1969 and how it both institutionalized dissent and provided a political tool for Presidents who wanted to seem more attuned to the concerns of their subordinates. I refer to Gurman’s analysis and the FSJ articles throughout my thesis, since the issues of “clidency” and dissent continually appear in discussing the Dissent Letter.

The overview of the literature suggests that the Dissent Letter fits into four specific areas of analysis: 1) political history of the U.S. response to India-Pakistan war of 1971; 2) history of the Bangladeshi Liberation War; 3) history of Nixon and Kissinger’s foreign policy; and 4) history of the structural problems of the State Department in 1970’s. The overview reveals that the Dissent Letter needs to be better understood in the context of the Bangladeshi Liberation War, instead of only U.S. policy towards the India-Pakistan War.

Moreover, it portrays the need for examining the structural problems of the State Department that play a direct role in the origins the Dissent Letter. These differing fields of scholarship all leave room for my thesis’s focus on the Dhaka Consulate Dissent Letter, since none of the scholarship discusses how the narrative of the Dissent Letter illustrates the larger structural problems of U.S. policy in the Bangladeshi Liberation War.

**The Problem, Approach, and Chapter Outlines**

Informed by the literature mentioned above, my thesis aims to answer the following three questions: Why and how did the Blood telegram come about? What are the structural forces that shaped the Dissent Letter? How did the
Nixon-Kissinger leadership style affect American foreign policy implemented in the Dhaka Consulate?

To answer these questions, I contend that there are three layers or arenas that need to be investigated: the State Department bureaucracy, the U.S. Embassy presence in Pakistan, and the Nixon-Kissinger method of devising and conducting foreign policy. My chapters are organized to reflect these three layers of conflicts.

In Chapter One, I explore the bureaucratic and structural problems of the State Department as well as the U.S. diplomatic missions in Pakistan. The analysis of Chapter 1 is primarily based on the reflections of various scholars and diplomats in the 1970s that examined the structural problems that confronted the State Department. In addition, it brings to the conversation more pointed works by Bacchus, Franklin and Simpson focused on the problems in the State Department’s handling of the 1971 conflict. It also draws upon essays in the *Foreign Service Journal* on the issue of “cliency” or “clientelism”, the tendency of diplomats to adopt the interests of a client state as their own.

Chapter One also serves to introduce the reader to overall trends in U.S. policy towards Pakistan. This chapter relies on the works of McMahon and Gould to detail the two countries’ relationship. Also, it details the conflicting interests present in the Dhaka Consulate’s subordinate role to the Islamabad Embassy. Here, I utilize primary source materials such as published interviews with Archer Blood, Archer Blood’s memoir, and my interview with Scotty Butcher, another officer of the Dhaka Consulate present during the Dissent Letter, to
illustrate the conflict of interest and “cliency” that took place in both Dhaka and Islamabad among U.S. diplomats stationed there.

Chapter Two then turns to the unique approach that Nixon and Kissinger undertook to conduct foreign policy. The analysis in this chapter brings together the scholarly literature on Nixon and Kissinger, as well as their own memoirs, with the analysis of the State Department presented in the first chapter. I highlight here the mechanisms by which Nixon and Kissinger marginalized the State Department’s role in the conducting foreign policy. Also, Chapter Two emphasizes Nixon’s visits to Pakistan prior to taking office and the priority he and Kissinger gave to opening up China. This chapter presents the nuances of the Nixon-Kissinger approach that exacerbated the already present structural problems of the State Department.

After exploring the State Department and the White House arenas, Chapter Three turns to the Dhaka Consulate. The narrative begins in November of 1970, with the prominent (and widely praised) U.S. role in the relief efforts after a cyclone struck East Pakistan, and concludes on June 6, 1971, with Archer Blood’s removal as U.S. Consul-General in Dhaka. The focus on the Dhaka Consulate’s perspective, including the circumstances that led to the crafting of the Dissent letter, demonstrates how the structural problems inherent to U.S. foreign policy described in the previous chapters manifested themselves on the ground in Pakistan—especially in East Pakistan during its transition to Bangladesh. Chapter Three utilizes Archer Blood’s memoir and my interview with Scotty Butcher to highlight the frustration that Foreign Service Officers felt
in Dhaka as political events escalated tensions between East and West Pakistan. It explains the immediate causes of the Dissent Letter and the process by which it came to be written.

In Chapter Four I return to the Washington arena, to examine the response there—both at the State Department and the White House—to the events unfolding in East Pakistan and, especially, to the Dissent Letter. This chapter aims to tie all the loose ends together to illustrate the main problems with structure of the American foreign policy bureaucracy and the Nixon-Kissinger style of leading foreign policy. The structural problems are shown in a clearer light through an examination of the conversations that occurred in Washington.

Additionally, Chapter Four adopts the analyses given by Oldenburg and Van Hollen that questioned Kissinger’s decision-making process and expands on them in the context of the Dissent Letter. In Chapter 4, I extensively utilize the memorandums, reports and cables that were exchanged in Washington. These documents were recently declassified and published in the State Department-issued Foreign Relations of the United States: South Asia Crisis 1971\textsuperscript{16} and FRUS: Documents on South Asia, 1969-1976\textsuperscript{17} series released in 2005, as well as the

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\begin{footnotes}{16}{The Foreign Relations of the United States series presents the official documentary historical record of major foreign policy decisions and significant diplomatic activity of the United States Government.” (This description is listed in the Preface of every volume of the FRUS series).

17 For the sake of brevity, I use the abbreviation “FRUS” to refer to Foreign Relations of the United States when citing the series throughout this thesis.
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National Security Archive in 2002.\textsuperscript{18} The reliance on these primary source materials allows for new evidence and analysis of this historical incident.

I initially undertook this project because I was fascinated by the existence of the Dissent Letter. In researching the circumstances that led to the writing of that letter, I came to have a better appreciation for to the importance of the institutional context and larger structural problems in Pakistan and in Washington D.C.

By using the structural lens for analysis, my thesis is able to explore both the structural problems of American foreign policy and give insights about the origins of the Dissent Letter. To this end, my thesis situates itself within the literature that contradict the Nixon-Kissinger view of the conflict by narrating the story of the Dhaka Consulate and describing the structural problems present during crisis. Therefore, my thesis hopes to simultaneously undermine the Nixon-Kissinger view and validate the moral stance American diplomats took in Dhaka despite the structural problems their country's foreign policy apparatus faced in 1971.

Chapter 1

Disconnect: Structure and Process in U.S. Foreign Policy towards Pakistan

Introduction

In this chapter I situate the story of the Dhaka Consulate Dissent Letter in a wider context. I ask what was at stake in 1971, and I examine the intersecting histories that were at play in the 1960s foreign affairs bureaucracy. The chapter explores the bureaucratic problems of the State Department, the Presidential proclivity to bypass and ignore the State Department, and the history of American foreign relations with Pakistan. Each section of the chapter explores the structural conflicts in a different context, but builds on previous sections.

The first two sections discuss the structural problems in a domestic context and focus on the State Department and Presidential involvement in foreign policy. They rely heavily on secondary sources analyzing the State Department’s problems during the 1970s presented by members of the State Department. The last two sections focus on the foreign relations context as it explores America’s involvement with Pakistan since 1947. These sections illustrate that the structural problems of American diplomatic missions in Pakistan were reflected by the structural problems of Pakistan itself.
The Problems at the State Department

Size—sheer unmanageable size—is the root problem in Washington and overseas.


In 1971, the United States had an enormous foreign policy bureaucracy that included the State Department, the Department of Defense, Central Intelligence Agency, United States Information Agency (USIA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and about a dozen other agencies. All of these agencies and departments had different purposes but they were all expected to work together to carry out a cohesive and coherent American foreign policy. In contrast, before World War II, most of America’s foreign policy was conducted by only the State Department. By 1971, State had become just one of many government departments or agencies in charge of U.S. foreign policy. This section will explore the bureaucratic and structural problems American foreign policy faced in the 1970s with a specific focus on the State Department’s role in setting and conducting U.S. Foreign Policy.

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During most of America’s history, the State Department was the only executive department that had any diplomatic relations with foreign countries. Before World War I and II, the State Department fulfilled its role rather well due to America’s limited interaction with the rest of the world. However, starting in the 1930s and after World War II, American involvement with foreign countries
greatly expanded.\textsuperscript{19} The increase in American diplomatic, military and economic involvement worldwide prompted not only the expansion of existing departments (such as State), but also the creation of whole new agencies. By 1969, more than 23,000 men and women manned U.S. diplomatic missions abroad, and only a fifth of them were State Department officials.\textsuperscript{20} This enormous expansion of the foreign affairs community caused State Department to lose its prominent role in conducting foreign policy abroad.

Moreover, most of these new agencies were created not by any grand design but rather through a bureaucratic process of accretion without much consideration as to how it would affect the foreign affairs bureaucracy at large.\textsuperscript{21} The hurried process of bureaucratic creation did not allow for coordination between departments and agencies, nor did it afford cohesion in conducting foreign policy. In response to the dispersed and disunited state of foreign policy bureaucracy, the President and the rest of the agencies looked to the State Department to coordinate foreign policy among the different agencies. However, the State Department had its own bureaucratic problems, which were indeed compounded by the proliferation of the new agencies, and was thus unable to lead the disjointed foreign affairs community.\textsuperscript{22}

The State Department faced serious problems with its hierarchy, communication, and traditional practices. Several State Department officials argued that the biggest problem within the State Department was the lack of able leadership. Smith Simpson, a former State Department official for twenty years, asserted that the leadership problem started with the role of the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State acted as an advisor to the President, a messenger to Congress and the head of foreign relations to all diplomats in Washington. Additionally, his presence was demanded in different countries throughout the world, as he became “a migratory definer of policy, silencer of doubt, reassurer, and persuader to action.” All of these responsibilities did not allow the Secretary to lead his own department in the domestic setting, causing him to delegate that responsibility to his subordinates.

The hierarchy of the State Department started with the Under Secretary of State (second in command after the Secretary of State). Below that were Deputy Under Secretaries in charge of committees such as the Deputy Under Secretary of Political Affairs and the Deputy Under Secretary of Economic Affairs. And below the Deputy Under Secretary of Political Affairs were the Assistant Secretaries in charge of the five divisional bureaus of the world such as the Bureau for Latin American Affairs or the Bureau for Near East and South Asian Affairs. These bureaus “bore the brunt of Department’s work of digesting

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24 The organization of the Bureau for Near East and South Asian affairs is illustrated in a chart in Appendix C.
information and making daily decisions." Each bureau had at least one country desk officer assigned to a specific country whose job it was to be the expert in Washington for that country. However, the system in place did not bring about an efficient mean of communicating information up and down the department’s hierarchy. 26

The problem of communication was directly correlated with the problem of an enormous bureaucracy. Richard Holbrooke, a former Assistant Secretary of the State Department, argued that the single biggest problem with U.S. foreign policy was the "sheer size" of the bureaucracy. He illustrated this point by stating,

"A desk officer in State has recently calculated that while in theory he is the focal point of all Washington efforts concerning ‘his’ country, in fact there are 16 people working on the country in Washington, in different chains of command. They are receiving information directly from the Americans in the country through up to nine different channels. No one sees all the communications in every channel. Through great effort the desk officer has come to know all the other officers, but he points out, they change regularly (himself included); someone is always out of town or sick; and most importantly, each one has his own boss, who can determine his future career, each one has his own set of priority projects and problems. ‘All I can do is try to stay on top of the really important problems,’ he says." 27

This account shows how the State Department official in charge of a single country is often hard-pressed to coordinate with other State Department officers who are under different bureaus in the State Department, or other officials in

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25 Ibid. 18-19.
26 See Appendix C for a State Department organizational chart of the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs.
different agencies or departments. The lack of a single structured hierarchy within foreign affairs was an enormous problem for communication.

This hierarchical problem played a major role in the flow of information within the department. As John Franklin Campbell, another former State Department officer, wrote, “To send a cable to Lisbon concerning the U.S naval bases in the Azores, the country director for Spain and Portugal must first ‘clear’ his draft with several officers.” He might need to consult up to five officers in different bureaus within the State Department to get “lateral clearance” and then he would need to consult five other higher-ranking officers in order for his message to reach up to the Secretary of State’s desk, and only if the matter was of sufficient importance. This process was vastly time-consuming and required “telephone calls, committee and staff meetings, and continual rewriting or amendment of the original draft message by however many colleagues are consulted about its contents.”

These cautionary measures institutionalized within the State Department reflected a larger bureaucratic problem. They were put in place to diffuse responsibility among many officers should it prove that the cable did not reflect the true interest of the United States government. They acted to ensure that

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28 Campbell, The Foreign Affairs Fudge Factory, p. 128.
29 “Lateral clearance” refers to the process of State Department officials submitting a draft to their colleagues and superiors to get clearance to move up the bureaucratic chain of the Department. However, quite frequently the draft would be passed around to other bureaus within the State Department and it would have to go through several more rounds of edits before it was passed on to superiors. This system of seeking an agreement among many departments and people was called concurrence. The system of concurrence became the norm at State causing communications to slow down excessively.
30 Campbell, The Foreign Affairs Fudge Factory, p.129.
31 Ibid.
the Secretary of State and his immediate subordinates only saw important messages, but it also slowed down the process by which these officials learned useful information. Additionally, it reflected the inability of the desk officer to communicate directly with their assigned country in a fast and efficient manner necessary without clearance. And this proved to be a source of frustration for any Embassy or Consulate that awaited instructions from Washington.32

Along with the problem of communication, the State Department had a problematic policy of moving its officers around. As mentioned earlier in Holbrooke’s account of the desk officer, the people working on a country within foreign affairs changed frequently. As Simpson writes, “the Department is now plagued by those disruptive rotations of personnel that were once limited to the overseas assignment.”33 The system of constant rotation was implemented to lessen conflicts between the Civil Services and the Foreign Services after they were both folded into the State Department in 1957.34

Moreover, frequency of the rotations was a measure used by the State Department to prevent its Foreign Service Officers from developing “clientelism” or practice “cliency”—the practice of favoring one nation’s interests over the interest of the United States.35 However, the constant rotations did not allow Foreign Service officers in the State Department to engage in meaningful

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32 In particular, for the Dhaka Consulate in 1971.
33 Simpson, Anatomy of the State Department, p. 35.
34 The Civil Service and Foreign Service were different departments before 1957. Their merger in 1957 caused great friction between the officers of the two Services. The Civil Service officers felt inferior to the Foreign Service dominant State Department. To ease this tension, Foreign Service Officers were rotated around to do traditional Civil Service jobs and Civil Service/Administrative Officers were stationed in foreign posts. For more on this topic, see Campbell, The Foreign Affairs Fudge Factory, p. 128.
programs or reforms in a specific place or country over an extended period of
time. The fear of rotation and the expectations of promotion regardless of one’s
performance in a given area provided little incentive for the Foreign Service
Officers to question State Department’s bureaucratic policies.

This conservative attitude State Department officials adopted towards
their jobs produced an unimaginative and overly cautious group of officers who
became self-interested about their promotions rather than providing solutions
to solving the bureaucratic problems. In a way, the policy of constant rotation
within the Department resulted in the criticisms the State Department faced. The
Department was criticized for

“being overly cautious, unimaginative, filled with career officers thinking
only of their promotions, incapable of producing coherent
recommendations or carrying out policy once the President has decided
what that policy should be.”36

Additionally, Presidents’ disapproval of the State Department’s structural
conflicts caused problems to accumulate. During the 1960s, while President John
F. Kennedy and various other foreign policy agencies such as USIA and USAID
called for better coordination of foreign policy, but their actions presented more
problems that added to the State Department’s woes.

Holbrooke identified the problem as “every other agency guards its
prerogatives and fights back whenever State makes the slightest movement to
broaden its role.”37 The executive branch was unable to address this problem
adequately partly because each department or agency was allowed to have its

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36 Holbrooke, ”The Machine That Fails,” p. 68.
37 Ibid.
own budget, without any consultations with the other departments. Their separate budget requests from Congress gave them less incentive to coordinate on foreign policy matters and instead caused bureaucratic agencies to fight for their own budgets.\textsuperscript{38} As long as there was no central foreign policy budget, there was hardly a chance for a cohesive State Department-led U.S. foreign policy.

In addition to the aforementioned problems of the State Department, William Bacchus offers us another cause of the structural problems: the Foreign Service Officers themselves. He writes, “Foreign Service Officers... [come with] the habits of diplomacy, characterized by individual brilliance, organizational caution.”\textsuperscript{39} He argues that these characteristics were in disagreement with the key characteristics that make good executives within a bureaucracy.

This was in direct contrast to the optimistic analysis offered by former Secretary of State Dean Rusk who stated, “We are a policy business. We need more chiefs than Indians.”\textsuperscript{40} Bacchus disagreed with this Dean Rusk’s statement as he argued, “Even more fundamental was the continual failure of many senior officers to recognize that they are in fact executives.”\textsuperscript{41} Bacchus illustrates that the State Department was unable to reform itself because it was unable to diagnose the essential problem with having too many Foreign Service Officers whose characteristics were harmful to a bureaucratic organization.

\textsuperscript{38} See Campbell, \textit{The Foreign Affairs Fudge Factory}, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{40} Campbell, \textit{The Foreign Affairs Fudge Factory}, p. 123.
\textsuperscript{41} Bacchus, \textit{Foreign Policy and the Bureaucratic Process}, p. 220.
Finally, while this section explored the many ways the State Department failed to take “charge” of foreign policy during the late 1960s and early 1970s, it is imperative to acknowledge the President’s role in this matter. Ultimately, the President had the power to reform all of State’s structural and bureaucratic problems. However, instead of attempting to reform it, the White House chose to subvert and bypass the Department and it did not follow through with its attempts to make the State Department the leader within the foreign policy bureaucracy.

**The President and Foreign Policy**

*Each President must decide whether or not he will attempt major changes, or instead choose to build small, personally loyal, bypass mechanisms with which to carry out policy on those matters of overwhelming high-level interest.*


Every president since John F. Kennedy tried to reign in the foreign affairs bureaucracy. However, the three presidents (Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon) of the 1960s did not do enough to enable the State Department to lead and coordinate America’s foreign policy. Instead, they chose to centralize foreign policy within the White House. Their actions led to numerous questionable decisions that occurred without the knowledge of the State Department. This section explores Presidential attempts to reform the foreign affairs bureaucracy in the 1960s and the rise of the National Security Council. It further investigates the actions of President Nixon and Kissinger to highlight the operation of the structures of Presidential foreign policy that would influence Nixon’s foreign policy decisions towards the State Department during his tenure.
When Kennedy took office in 1961, there was no executive department that coordinated the actions of the many different departments and agencies of the foreign affairs bureaucracy. Trying to address this problem, Kennedy sought to increase the role of the State Department to let it “take charge” of the bureaucracy. According to his Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Kennedy had “active expectation” that “this [State] Department will in fact take charge of foreign policy.” Upon taking office, Kennedy sent a letter to all ambassadors abroad giving them authority to “oversee and coordinate all the activities of the U.S. government” in their countries. However, these bold statements lacked power because while Kennedy was making these claims, his actions belied his words.

In 1961, Kennedy ordered the Bay of Pigs invasion with “little or no advice from career diplomats” and the State Department’s Foreign Service Officers. This move proved to be disastrous as Campbell argued, “the lesson that might have been learned in April 1961 was that it is dangerous for a president to fail to inform and consult expert opinion in State before making a major foreign policy decision.” However, instead of learning this lesson, Kennedy became increasingly frustrated with the State Department’s inability to coordinate and implement his foreign policy.

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42 Quoted in Campbell, The Foreign Affairs Fudge Factory, p. 49.
43 For a great case study of the U.S. structural conflicts during the Kennedy Administration, especially the management of the Cuban Missile Crisis, See Graham Allison, Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis, (New York: Boston, Little, Brown), 1971.
44 Campbell, The Foreign Affairs Fudge Factory, p. 49.
Kennedy’s disillusionment with the State Department occurred because of the immense growth in its size. As Campbell states, “As it grew in size, the Department diminished in usefulness. This was in part the consequence of bureaucratization... [and] a system of ‘concurrences,’ which required every proposal to run a hopelessly intricate obstacle course before it could become policy.” Yet, facing this problem, Kennedy did not seek to reform the State Department. Instead he chose to bypass the system through his National Security Council (NSC).

Kennedy’s National Security Assistant (NSA) McGeorge Bundy revolutionized the role of the NSC position in the White House. As Andrew Preston, a diplomatic historian writes, “From 1961, the special assistant [NSA] and the NSC staff ceased to be administrators and became policy formulators actively engaged in the policy making process.” Bundy’s job was to be the primary filter for the President on all foreign policy decision, normally a role reserved for the Secretary of State. However, this put enormous power in the hands of the NSA, an executive advisor not approved by Congress, as “the only limitations on this function were from his own discretion.” In essence, the NSC became the coordinator of foreign policy bureaucracy and operated directly out of the White House.

However, this move had consequences. The President chose to rely more on his White House staff rather than professional diplomats, and as a result he

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45 Quoted in Ibid. 50.
47 Ibid.
did not hear the restraint and caution of State Department officials. In a way, the structural problems of foreign policy became a circuitous problem because the State Department’s problems frustrated the President, who then relied on his own small staff to coordinate foreign policy, thus causing the President to make poor decisions because his professional diplomats in the State Department were not present during the decision-making process.

Additionally, numerous people in the State Department and those stationed abroad were left in the dark when the President chose to bypass the State Department. As Robert Hurwitch, the State Department’s Cuba desk officer, said regarding Kennedy’s Bay of Pigs invasion,

“...There was, in my judgment, a divorce between the people who daily or minute by minute had access to information, to what was going on, and the people who were making plans and policy decisions.”

This “divorce” between the top leaders and the bottom officers of the foreign affairs community would be on display in numerous cases since the Bay of Pigs invasion, including the South Asian crisis investigated in this thesis.

Following in the tradition of Kennedy, the Johnson Administration paid lip service to the idea of the State Department leading the foreign affairs bureaucracy. Johnson’s Administration organized the Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG). The SIG was created by an executive order that Johnson issued to make the Department of State,

“Assume responsibility to the full extent permitted by law for the over-all direction, coordination and supervision of interdepartmental activities of the U.S. government overseas (less exempted military activities).”

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48 Quoted in Campbell, The Foreign Affairs Fudge Factory, p. 52.
49 Ibid. 82.
While this represented a special order from the President that gave power to the State Department to coordinate foreign policy, in reality, the SIG had no real coordinating power.

The Under Secretary of the State Department chaired the SIG, which consisted of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Director of CIA, Director of USIA and the National Security Assistant (NSA). However, the SIG proved to only be a political tactic used by the Johnson to assure that no major changes in policy occurred without Presidential approval. It did not fix any of the problems with coordination the foreign affairs community faced. One of the utmost problems with the SIG was that the Under Secretary of State, and not the Secretary of State, chaired it. This assured its failure because all of its decisions could be appealed directly to the Secretary of State for reconsideration if ever another agency disagreed with the Under Secretary's assessments. This became the norm whenever other department officials disagreed with the Under Secretary of State’s decision.50 As Campbell writes,

“The announcement of the SIG was designed to give the public a reassuring impression of change, movement, and novelty while masking an intention that there be no change in policy.”51

However, no change in policy in regard to the State Department and bureaucracy meant more assertion of power by the NSC.

50 Ibid. 89.
51 Ibid. 90. The SIG would set a precedent for similar Presidential tactics taken by Nixon, especially when the Nixon Administration created the “dissent channel.” See Chapter 2 for more on this.
Johnson’s National Security Assistant, Walt Rostow, acted as the same filter of foreign policy to Johnson as McGeorge Bundy was to Kennedy. Johnson, like Kennedy before him, found it “easier to add a layer next to the President than to take on the awesome task of shaking down the entire inherited bureaucracy.” However, Johnson faced many critics about his foreign policy apparatus, especially from the State Department.

Due in part to his disastrous campaigns in Vietnam, where he deliberately kept secret the extent of U.S. involvement, the Johnson Administration faced a huge “credibility gap.” Johnson’s actions in Vietnam and his covert tactics to keep them secret from the State Department caused enormous dissent from State Department officials. In 1968 alone, the last year of Johnson’s term in office, 266 Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) resigned. These officers dissented with their feet as they resigned themselves from a government that ignored their advice and input, and marginalized them in pursuit of an unjustified war.

The massive dissent movement from the State Department further demonstrates the nature of structural problems in the 1960s. President Kennedy and Johnson did not muster the political will to reform the bureaucracy, or they showed little interest in accomplishing such a feat (depending on one’s interpretation). Instead they chose to marginalize the State Department by strengthening their National Security Advisor’s office. The problem of the

52 Ibid. 92.
54 Ibid.
55 Chapter 2 will examine the Nixon Administration’s policy towards the State Department.
structure and bureaucracy still remained at large. Their precedent paved the way for President Nixon to do the same.\textsuperscript{56}

Overall, this section portrays that Presidential control over foreign policy in the 1960’s was done through the National Security Council. Both Kennedy and Johnson utilized their National Security Assistants, Bundy and Rostow, extensively to formulate foreign policy throughout the different regions of the world. Their organization of foreign policy impacted their actions towards every region of the world, including India and Pakistan.

**Foreign Policy Towards Pakistan**

*The importance of South Asia to the United State oscillated wildly during those years, waxing and waning along with shifting American perceptions of global interests and threats in an ever-changing Cold war.*


During the 1950s and early 1960s, the U.S. shifted its support from India to Pakistan in concert with the administration in power. After the Korean War, however, the U.S. saw the Indian subcontinent as a strategic area in the geopolitical conflict with the U.S.S.R. This caused the U.S. to forge two strategic allegiances with Pakistan at a time when the political situation in the subcontinent remained very fragile. Due to its strategic location in the Cold War and in the broader geopolitical picture, the U.S. diplomatic missions in Pakistan provided an important area for the structural problems to present themselves. The U.S.’s unique relationship with Pakistan will be explored in this section to illustrate the structural conflicts present during the crisis of 1971.

\textsuperscript{56} Chapter 2 will also outline the unique way President Nixon and his NSA Henry Kissinger organized foreign policy that marginalized the State Department’s role.
After the independence of Pakistan and India in 1947, the United States approached both countries equally. From their inception, Pakistan and India had a highly antagonistic relationship with each other. Addressing this relationship, the Truman Administration refused to tilt towards either Pakistan or India in fear that supporting either country would strain relations with the other.\[^{57}\] However, after the Korean War, the Truman administration began to “Tilt”\[^{58}\] towards Pakistan in hopes of gaining a strategic advantage in the Cold War. Top American strategists believed that Pakistan’s participation in a Middle East alliance would provide a critical resolution in dealing with America’s strategic dilemma in such a volatile region.\[^{59}\]

Pakistan, for its part, desperately needed financial assistance from other countries to ensure its survival as a nation. Pakistan was created as a country that had two wings, East and West Pakistan, which were separated by a thousand miles of India between them. The core reason for Pakistan’s creation was that Indian Muslim leaders were afraid that Indian Hindus would dominate the Indian subcontinent’s Muslims.\[^{60}\]

However, Pakistan as a nation was plagued with various problems. Pakistan’s economic and military resources were minuscule compared to India;


\[^{58}\] The literature extensively uses the word “Tilt” to refer to U.S. favorable stance to either India and Pakistan.

\[^{59}\] McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery*, p. 54.

however, because it feared of the threat of war with India, the Pakistani
government devoted a disproportionate share of its GDP towards its military.
Additionally, West Pakistan controlled most of the political, economic and
military resources keeping its East Pakistan counterpart as a semi-colony.
Realizing that it needed financial assistance to continue on with its military
ambitions against India, Pakistan courted U.S. interests and advantageously
found that the U.S sought to use Pakistan as a buffer against Soviet influence in
the region.\footnote{McMahon, \textit{The Cold War on the Periphery}, p. 54}

On May 19, 1954, the United States and Pakistan signed the Mutual
Defense Assistance Agreement.\footnote{Ibid. 124 and 173.} Subsequently, in September 1954, the U.S.
created SEATO (South East Asia Treaty Organization) and in May of 1955, it
created CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) that further linked Pakistan’s
military alliance with United States.\footnote{For more on CENTO, See Guy Hadley, \textit{Cento: The Forgotten Alliance} (Brighton: Institute for the
Study of International Organisation, 1971). And for more on SEATO, see John K. Franklin, "The
Hollow Pact: Pacific Security and the Southeast Asia Trade Organization" (Texas Christian
University, 2006).} These alliances marked a significant shift of United States policy towards South Asia. Instead of playing the neutral partner
to the conflict as the Truman Administration initially advocated, the Eisenhower
Administration symbolically allied itself with Pakistan, straining relations with
India

Yet, after Eisenhower spent several years in office, he understood the
importance of having a good relationship with India in a Cold War setting. He
realized that the U.S. military commitment in Pakistan drained U.S. resources
and did not serve its best interests in South Asia. Therefore, the Eisenhower administration hoped to ease the strained relationship between India and the U.S. by administering substantial economic aid to India while India was on the verge of an economic crisis.\textsuperscript{64} Robert McMahon called Eisenhower’s second term policy towards South Asia a “balancing act” that aimed to support both India and Pakistan.

Following Eisenhower’s “balancing act”, John F. Kennedy hoped to have better relations with India. Kennedy equated support for India with a larger struggle for influence over the Third World in the Cold War. He believed it was essential for the United States to show greater support for non-aligned countries, of which India was a leader, and thought the Eisenhower administration unnecessarily emphasized its alliances with Pakistan.\textsuperscript{65} As one White House advisor stated, “Kennedy was most interested in India, which he had long regarded as the ‘key area’ in Asia.”\textsuperscript{66} To this end, Kennedy substantially increased the amount of aid given to India during his time in office.

Seeing the possible “Tilt towards India”, Pakistani President Ayub Khan went to Washington to re-assess the U.S.’s commitment to Pakistan in 1961. In the first meeting with Ayub Khan, Kennedy assured the Pakistani President of the U.S. commitment to the alliance with Pakistan and the meeting between the two leaders went well. In contrast, Kennedy’s meeting with Nehru was a disaster. Nehru expressed his deep disagreement with U.S. policy on Vietnam,\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{64} McMahon, \textit{The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India and Pakistan}, p. 136.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid. 272-273.
Berlin, and Nuclear Disarmament. Kennedy said, "It was the worst meeting between heads of state that I have ever had." Despite these setbacks, the United States tried to maintain its neutral position in the continent, especially during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965, after Johnson inherited Kennedy's presidency.

In June of 1965, Pakistan started the aforementioned war with India. Pakistan miscalculated "that an uprising along the Indian part of the line of control in Kashmir was possible with only limited help from Pakistan." Instead, the Indians attacked the entire Punjab border of Pakistan and it seemed possible that all of the 2,000-mile border between West Pakistan and India could become a theatre of war. Fortunately, both the United States and U.S.S.R. called for an end of this war in the United Nations and on January 10, 1966, India and Pakistan agreed to a peace treaty and ceasefire that ended the war.

During the crisis, in September, the United States launched an embargo stopping trade with both countries. At first it seemed the Russians did the same, but a week later the U.S.S.R. resumed its supply of armaments to India. Pakistan felt frustrated towards the United States because they viewed that while the U.S.S.R. supported India during the war the U.S. did not come to Pakistan's aid. However, as Secretary of State Dean Rusk stated, "The United States [felt it] was

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67 Ibid. 525-526.
69 Ibid. 36.
being invited on the crash landing without having been on the take-off.” In other words, America contended that because Pakistan preemptively caused the war, America did not have to honor the alliance of SEATO and CENTO as those only represented defense treaties. Regardless, America’s refusal to supply arms to Pakistan caused strife in U.S.-Pakistan relations.

In the last years of the Johnson Administration, America lost ground in creating a positive relationship with both India and Pakistan. After the 1965 war, both India and Pakistan turned inwards to face their domestic problems. While India was preoccupied with an enormous humanitarian crisis in the famine of Bihar, Pakistan realized it was not going to get a blank check from the U.S. to support its plans for revenge against India.

In addition, Indira Gandhi harshly criticized President Johnson for escalating the Vietnam War and for his food aid policy towards India. Gandhi’s criticisms struck a nerve with Johnson as he questioned one of his staffers, “Why is it that Jack Kennedy and you India lovers in the State Department are so Goddamned ornery to my friend Ayub [Khan]?” His distaste for India, as well as State Department’s “bias” towards India, was apparent in his last years in office.

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Following in the footsteps of Johnson, Richard Nixon would also distrust the Indians.\textsuperscript{73}

Overall, this section illustrated the history of U.S. relations with Pakistan in terms of its reactions towards events on the subcontinent. It highlighted that starting with Truman, the U.S. has changed its policies to reflect U.S. interests in the region. However, to better understand the context of U.S. policy with Pakistan, the next section will investigate the structure of U.S. diplomatic missions in Pakistan.

**The American Embassy in Pakistan**

*Pakistan was held together by Islam and the PIA (Pakistan International Airlines) and many asked if that was enough of a glue.*

- Scotty Butcher, Personal Interview, 2011.

The structural problems of U.S. foreign policy towards Pakistan were partly caused by the unique nature of Pakistan itself. The structure of the U.S. Embassy and its Consulates in Pakistan presented a logistical challenge for the implementation of a coherent foreign policy throughout the crisis. This section explores the correlated structural problems with Pakistan— as it stood before 1971— and the U.S. diplomatic missions throughout the country.

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In 1947, Pakistan came into existence under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who was fearful of Indian Hindu domination of Muslims and called for the two-state solution. The partition of India caused the largest human migration in history until that time as it displaced more than 15 million people. From its

\textsuperscript{73} Nixon’s attitudes towards South Asia are explored in the next chapter.
start, Pakistan’s two wings had different outlooks and priorities. On the one hand, West Pakistan contained the capital city Karachi (later the capital was moved north to the planned city of ‘Islamabad’, near Rawalpindi), it retained all of the political control over the two wings and was particularly distrustful of India because of its border conflicts with India over Kashmir. On the other hand, East Pakistan had a bigger population and had lots of cultural ties with India because the East Pakistani Bengalis and the Indian West Bengalis shared a common language and a cultural heritage. In general, the East Pakistanis cared little for the conflict in Kashmir and thought Pakistan would be better focusing its energy on more domestic matters, such as ensuring more autonomy for East Pakistan.74

Because of Pakistan’s divided wings, the United States diplomatic presence in Pakistan was complex. The United States first established relations with Pakistan in October 20, 1947 and set up its Embassy in Karachi, the first capital city of Pakistan. It also set up Consulates in Peshawar, Lahore and Dhaka.75 In 1960, the Embassy in Karachi moved to Islamabad, a new city constructed to be the capital of Pakistan, while the Embassy in Karachi became another Consulate. However, the Consulate in Dhaka, the main city in East Pakistan, proved to be the most peculiar case because it was more than a thousand miles away from West Pakistan.

From its inception, the Consulate General in Dhaka had different responsibilities and authority than the other Consulates in Pakistan. Whereas every Consulate in West Pakistan had to receive approval by the Islamabad Embassy to send messages to the State Department, the Dhaka Consulate had the authority to send its messages directly to Washington due to its distant location. However, the logistics of this arrangement presented problems for the American diplomats.

Because power was concentrated in Islamabad, the Ambassador to Pakistan, mostly situated in Islamabad, was influenced mainly by West Pakistani viewpoints when interacting with Pakistani leaders. This attitude could be characterized as “clientelism” because the Embassy was influenced by predominantly West Pakistani views that essentially ignored the interests of East Pakistan and instead adopted the West Pakistani viewpoints. In essence, “United States was allied not with the whole of Pakistan, but with a coalition of the military and a private and public sector bourgeoisie” mostly concentrated within West Pakistan.76

Additionally, the structure of the Embassy and Consulates in Pakistan led to a compromising position for the United States. As Scotty Butcher, a former political officer stationed in Dhaka Consulate, recalled,

“We were out in a provincial post and our perspectives and responsibilities were different. He [the Ambassador] is ultimately responsible with dealing with the government of Pakistan. We acted as a

foreign ministry liaison officer. We were not involved in the foreign policy aspect.”

The Dhaka Consulate’s location in East Pakistan, which was essentially its own separate country, alienated the Consulate from the political scene of Pakistan and lead to conflicts between the Islamabad Embassy and Dhaka Consulate in 1971. It was clear that the West Pakistani leadership influenced American policy towards Pakistan more than their suppressed majority East Pakistani counterparts.

Moreover, the Embassy in Islamabad was responsible for writing “country reports” for Pakistan that incorporated Consulate reports of their own areas. Additionally, consulate officers from the different Consulates met in Islamabad on a periodic basis to ensure that they were on the same page as they sought pursue a coherent American foreign policy in Pakistan. The conclusions and country objectives reached at these meetings put the Dhaka Consulate in a difficult position.

Located a thousand miles away, East Pakistanis felt suppressed by the West Pakistani-dominated government, and the Dhaka Consulate had to implement America’s policy that was dominated by West Pakistani interests in a place where West Pakistan was seen as exploitative and suppressive. The Consulate understood these concerns held by the East Pakistanis and reported them to Washington.

77 “Interview with Scotty Butcher,” December 11, 2011. See Appendix D.
The Dhaka Consulate was more unique in its position than other Consulates in Pakistan because the population it dealt with had different foreign policy interests than West Pakistan. Archer Blood, who served as a political officer and deputy principal officer at the Dhaka Consulate in 1960, recalled that his job involved “reporting the grievances of the Bengalis against the government of Pakistan and West Pakistanis.”

Furthermore, Blood mentioned, “this annoyed Washington because Washington liked to believe that Pakistan was a stable, united country.” In a way, both the Dhaka Consulate and the Islamabad Embassy practiced “cliency”, each reporting the interests and concerns of the locations they were situated in. However, the hierarchical nature of the Embassy and Consulate meant the State Department would rely more on the Embassy’s assessments as it formulated U.S. political objectives in Pakistan.

Additionally, the structural problems with U.S. involvement in South Asia also reflect a deep distrust existing between the U.S. presence in West Pakistan and India. Influenced by the country they resided in, the two Embassies in India and Pakistan were known to be “historic rivals.” In 1967, an American military attaché to Islamabad Embassy proclaimed, “We need a modern tank here. You know what the enemy has.” When referring to “we” here, he did not refer to the American Army, but rather the Pakistani Army, and it is clear that he referred to India when he said “enemy.” While the officials in the New Delhi Indian Embassy thought America policy in South Asia was terribly flawed because of its alliance

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79 Ibid.
80 Morris, “Clientism in the Foreign Service.”
with Pakistan. It appeared that both the New Delhi Embassy and the Islamabad Embassy officials also suffered from “clientelism” based on their locations. The issue of cliency would play an enormous role in the crisis of 1971 because both the diplomatic missions in New Delhi Embassy and Dhaka Consulate would vehemently disagree with the assessments made by the Islamabad Embassy.

Ultimately, the United States Embassy in Pakistan was structurally flawed because of the flawed nature of Pakistan. And as Scotty Butcher aptly put it, “It was an artificial construct in some regards to begin with and they had to overcome geography. Well, they didn’t overcome geography very well”— and neither did the American Embassy.

**Conclusion**

This chapter illustrates the structural problems with America’s foreign policy organization that existed both in Washington as well as in Pakistan. The problems of communication, hierarchy and bureaucratic practices present in the State Department highlights the inefficiencies of foreign affairs bureaucracy. It demonstrates that both Kennedy and Johnson made half-hearted attempts to reform the bureaucracy but they lacked the presidential will necessary to reform the enormous bureaucracy. Their actions conveyed a precedent that bypassed and marginalized the State Department by relying on the National Security Council to coordinate foreign policy.

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81 Ibid.
82 “Interview with Scotty Butcher,” December 11, 2011. See Appendix B.
Additionally, America’s bureaucratic problems in the domestic setting were exacerbated by the conflicts resulting from America’s foreign relations with Pakistan. The third section of this chapter outlines a brief history of U.S.-Pakistan relations that culminated with Johnson having a very distrustful attitude towards India and a very warm attitude towards Pakistan — a policy Nixon would follow. Finally, the last section presents an added layer of conflict to U.S.-Pakistani relations by highlighting the conflicts within American diplomatic missions in Pakistan that reflected the structural problems with Pakistan itself. All of these conflicts would manifest themselves during the crisis of 1971, particularly in the case of the Dissent Letter.
Chapter 2

Distrust: The Making of Nixon-Kissinger Foreign Policy

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy that resulted in the environment under which the Dhaka Consulate Dissent letter appeared in. In the first two sections, I explore Nixon and Kissinger’s lives and influences prior to Nixon’s presidency in order to locate the intellectual origins of their foreign policy structure. These sections also portray Nixon and Kissinger’s prior experience with South Asia, displaying Kissinger’s ignorance and Nixon’s bias towards Pakistan. The third section focuses on the first meeting between these two men that led to the formulation of the Henry Kissinger-led foreign policy decision-making structure. The last section explores Nixon’s China initiative that was orchestrated by Kissinger who used Pakistan as a secret channel to engage with China. Overall, this chapter illustrates the history of Nixon and Kissinger leadership style and biases that foreshadowed their actions during the 1971 Bangladeshi Liberation War that brought about the Dhaka Consulate's dissent letter.
Henry Kissinger: The Years Before Nixon

*In the field of foreign policy, we will never be able to contribute to building a stable and creative world order unless we first form some conception of it.*


When President Nixon was elected in 1968, he sought to change U.S. foreign policy in a new direction. He wanted to coordinate foreign policy from the White House and sought to change U.S. priorities in foreign policy. In this endeavor, Nixon found an able chief diplomat in Henry Kissinger who brought his own idealism and skills as an administrator. He was thus able to organize the foreign policy structure to Nixon’s foreign policy goals. Together, the two men created a partnership that would define American interests abroad during a pivotal moment in American history. This section explores the background of Henry Kissinger, focusing on his academic and advisory career that shaped his thinking on how best to pursue and implement U.S. policy abroad. It serves to highlight the origins of the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy.

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Henry Kissinger was born in Germany in 1923 to a Jewish family. In 1938, his family escaped Germany and the persecution of Jews to come to America. In his early life, Kissinger fought with distinction in World War II against Germany. After returning home from the war, he earned his bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees from Harvard University and became a renowned academic in political science. During the 1950s and 60190s Cold War atmosphere, Kissinger became an influential political scientist who changed the course of American foreign policy.
In 1957, Kissinger published his first book *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* where he criticized President Eisenhower’s “brinkmanship” or “the Great Deterrent” that sought to contain Soviet influence. The assumption behind the “Great Deterrent” was that a Soviet attack against any NATO states might be countered with a crippling atomic attack. The policy sought to place the countries of Europe and NATO under a virtual “atomic shield” which would provide invulnerable protection from Soviet aggression.\(^3\) However, the “Great Deterrent” policy had many flaws that prevented America from reacting to Soviet aggressions without declaring nuclear war. In the 1950s, Eisenhower’s foreign policy of “brinkmanship” failed because it left the U.S. without many options when the Soviet Army suppressed uprisings in East Germany, Hungary and Poland and the United States did nothing to risk nuclear war. It seemed to many that the “Great Deterrence” was actually an American bluff that the Soviets could take advantage of.

By 1957, there was almost unanimous agreement among policy makers and academics alike that the “Great Deterrence” policy had become obsolete. At this time, Kissinger provided a new framework for the U.S. to pursue foreign policy on more flexible terms. He suggested engaging with the Soviets under a policy based on “Graduated Deterrence.” In essence, it sought to address each Soviet aggressive action in proportion to its seriousness. Kissinger thought that America should pursue a policy that would make it clear to the Soviets that the U.S. would use all avenues including political, military, economic and possibly
even nuclear power, to punish Soviet acts of aggression to punish the Soviets instead of just relying on the threat of nuclear war that the “Great Deterrence” called for.\textsuperscript{84} Kissinger’s book became an immediate best seller and gained him recognition within the political world.

Moreover, Kissinger sought to change the structure of foreign policy bureaucracy in the United States because he judged the American foreign affairs bureaucracy to be ineffective in conducting foreign policy. In 1966, in an essay called “Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy” he explored the problems that existed within the foreign affairs bureaucracy. He stated that the problem with Presidential leadership in foreign policy was that “modern decision-makers often find themselves the prisoners of their own advisors.”\textsuperscript{85} Also, Kissinger described the foreign affairs bureaucracy as an “administrative machine, which is both elaborative and fragmented.”\textsuperscript{86} He further outlined, “With each administrative machine increasingly absorbed in its own internal problems, diplomacy loses its flexibility.”\textsuperscript{87}

In essence, Kissinger was skeptical about the domestic structure of United States foreign policy that was plagued by over-administration and lack of flexibility. He thought the President required “monumental commitment” to alter bureaucratic attitudes and structure.\textsuperscript{88} Therefore, he suggested that the

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\textsuperscript{85} Henry A. Kissinger, "Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy," \textit{Daedalus} 95, no. 2 (1966), p. 510.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
President utilize special emissaries or personal envoys to conduct foreign policy because their “status outside the bureaucracy free[d] them of its restraints.”\textsuperscript{89}

Kissinger’s distrust for the structures of U.S. foreign policy was further explained by his opinion of the State Department and Foreign Service officers. He recounted in his memoirs that the Foreign Service Officers of the State Department, while being the most competent group of men and women in public service, had a hard time following instructions that went against their judgments. He stated,

“They will carry out clear-cut instructions with great loyalty, but the typical Foreign Service officer is not easily persuaded that an instruction with which he disagrees is really clear-cut.”\textsuperscript{90}

In Kissinger’s mind, the Foreign Service Officers became a victim of the bureaucracy of which they were a part. He hoped to fashion a structure of foreign policy that would circumvent this problem.

Moreover, Kissinger thought that America should actively pursue policies that prevented crisis and suited American interests. He stated that the U.S should have been

“Making a conscious effort to shape the international environment according to a conception of American purposes rather than to wait for events to impose the need for decision.”\textsuperscript{91}

His statement also highlighted his criticism of the State Department and the standard conduct of American policy that was shaped by reports of crises on the ground instead of a broader geopolitical vision that he ascribed to.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid. 511
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid. 39
Kissinger’s book *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* even influenced President Kennedy, who sought to move away from Eisenhower’s “brinkmanship” policy and commit more resources into conventional military forces as well as nuclear weapons. In fact, Henry Kissinger became a foreign policy advisor to the President Kennedy in 1961. Kissinger was a student and colleague of Kennedy’s National Security Council Advisor McGeorge Bundy. During Kennedy’s term in office he served as a consultant for the NSC. However, Bundy and Kissinger had a contentious relationship because Bundy thought Kissinger used his charm to flatter his superiors, and Kissinger claimed Bundy was an Anti-Semite because as he ridiculed Kissinger because of his German accent.\(^{92}\) Nonetheless, Kissinger used his experience as an advisor to Kennedy to learn more about how foreign policy worked in the White House.

Additionally, his position as an advisor also gave him his first exposure to the Indian subcontinent as Kissinger visited India and Pakistan in 1962. The United States Information Agency (USIA) organized his trip and it wanted Kissinger to give a series of lectures in the subcontinent. During the trip, Kissinger made a series of gaffe about Pakistan when he was asked to assess the relationship between Pakistan’s budding flirtations with China as he said, “in light of the prevalent view of China’s congenial aggressiveness... I could not imagine Pakistan doing such a foolish thing.”\(^{93}\) Equating Pakistan’s actions as foolish did not endear Kissinger to the Pakistani leadership. Moreover, Kissinger

\(^{92}\) Lots of Jews in America came from Germany during that time. Kemp, Frederick,” The Kissinger-Kennedy Connection,” Reuters, June 2, 2011.

\(^{93}\) Kissinger, *The White House Years*, p. 847.
was also asked about Pakistan’s conflicting region of Pashtoon. He responded by admitting that he was ignorant about the conflict on Pakistan’s borders causing further disdain from Pakistani leaders who were insulted that the U.S. would send a Harvard professor who was ignorant of Pakistan's affairs. This experience highlights that Henry Kissinger was rather ignorant of the foreign policy issues in South Asia, and in a broader context Asia in general, before taking office.

However, Kissinger’s intellectual and academic contributions garnered him significant attention from the Washington foreign policy makers, especially Republican politicians. Both President Eisenhower and Vice President Richard Nixon were impressed by the analysis in his book *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*. Moreover, Nelson Rockefeller, a long-time Republican Governor of New York, took notice of Kissinger and the two became lifelong friends. In fact, Kissinger acted as Rockefeller’s main foreign policy advisor during his campaign to win the Republican nomination for President. Much to the dismay of Kissinger, Richard Nixon defeated Rockefeller in the Republican primary before going on to win the Presidency in 1968. However, Nixon would provide Henry Kissinger with his best opportunity yet.

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Richard Nixon: The Years Before Presidency

*America cannot-and will not-conceive all the plans- design all the programs, execute all the decisions and undertake all the defense of the free nations of the world. We will help where it makes a real difference and is considered in our interest*


President Richard Milhous Nixon hoped to change the reputation of U.S. foreign policy. During his time in office, Nixon made some remarkable achievements like ending the war in Vietnam and opening up U.S. relations with China. However, his tenure also reflected some major misjudgments in decision-making such as the bombing of Cambodia and the India-Pakistan War of 1971. In all these cases, Nixon’s personality, bias, and leadership style played an enormous role in carrying out U.S. policy abroad. This section explores Nixon’s life and career before he took office as President and outlines the origins of his China initiative and “tilt” towards Pakistan.

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Richard Nixon was born to a poor rural family in Yorba Linda, California. From an early age, Nixon showed considered promise in school. He received a B.A. from Whittier College and a law degree from Duke University. He served in the Navy during World War II mostly as an administrative officer, earning several service stars and citation commendations. After the war, he won a seat in Congress served as a Congressional Representative and Senator from California. He also served as Vice President under Dwight D. Eisenhower for eight years. In 1960, he ran for the Presidency but lost the race by a close margin to John F.
Kennedy. After his loss, Richard Nixon sought to rebuild his political image by arranging a global tour to reestablish his foreign policy credentials.

In 1964 and in 1967, Nixon visited India and Pakistan. Many historians and observers saw this visit as having left a marked impression on Nixon’s mindset about South Asia. As one Senator observed, the Indians treated Nixon “not only like a defeated governor of California, but also like one who had lost an election for dog catcher.”95 On the other hand, Pakistani President Ayub Khan “pulled out the red carpet” during Nixon’s visit. These differing receptions in the two countries caused him to favor Pakistan during his Presidency.96

After his global tour, Nixon wrote an article called “Asia After Vietnam,” in which he outlined his overall policy towards the continent. He argued that American involvement needed to be lessened in Asia as he wrote, “other nations must recognize that the role of the United States as world policeman is likely to be limited in the future.”97 In context, this signaled his commitment to end the American military involvement in Vietnam but it also left the door open for America to engage Asia through more diplomatic means.

In his article, one can see the origins of Nixon’s goal to open up U.S. relations with China. For close to twenty years after the Korean War, the United States did not engage in formal relations with Mainland China and instead made Taiwan’s government China’s proxy in the UN. However, Nixon saw that his

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96 Numerous State Department officials cited this story as a reason for the Nixon’s bias toward Pakistan (Personal Communications with Philip Oldenburg). Furthermore, I highlight several conversations in the White House that attests to this bias in Chapter 4.
Administration had a golden opportunity to achieve a major breakthrough in Sino-American relations. He wrote that even though China was a communist threat to Asian and world stability, “We simply cannot afford to leave China outside the family of nations, there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hate and threaten its neighbors”.98 His paper foreshadowed his commitment to one of his most important foreign policy achievements.

Moreover, Nixon wanted to reshape foreign policy by altering the structure of how foreign policy was conducted in the U.S. As Kissinger observed,

“Nixon had a massive organizational problem. He had very little confidence in the State Department because he thought its personnel had no loyalty to him... [and] because they disdained him when he was Vice President and ignored him as soon as he was out of office.”99

Nixon’s distrust for the State Department would cause him to rely on a special advisor, namely Kissinger, who would be able to manage the foreign affairs bureaucracy while Nixon's goals of foreign policy were being met.

Overall, Nixon's Vice-Presidential career, his world trip, and his article in 1967 would lay the groundwork for the decisions he would make during the South Asian crisis of 1971. Moreover, his first meeting with Kissinger would create the structure regarding how his administration formulated and implemented foreign policy that would enable him to pursue his goals.

98 Ibid.
99 Kissinger, White House Years. p.11
Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger were two extraordinary men who profoundly shaped America’s history during their time in office. However, their partnership created a foreign policy structure that reflected a deep distrust with the foreign affairs bureaucracy. This section explores the structure set up by Henry Kissinger to administer the decision making process within the White House. It focuses on the first meeting between Nixon and Kissinger as a launching point for Kissinger’s ascension to become the top foreign policy advisor in Nixon’s Administration. It also investigates the acrimonious relationship that existed between Secretary of State William Rogers and Henry Kissinger, causing a schism between the White House and the State Department.

In November of 1968, Richard Nixon was in New York organizing his transitional team before he took office. Nixon invited Henry Kissinger, who in he saw an able advisor, to converse with him about his goals and agenda for foreign policy. Nixon sought this meeting due to several reasons, not the least of which was the fact that Henry Kissinger was a Harvard professor.

It was widely known that Richard Nixon viewed Harvard and other Ivy League intellectuals, and the “Eastern Establishment” with distrust. Throughout his career, Nixon felt insecure about his law degree from Duke University, a non-
Ivy league school, and felt dismissed and shunned by the so-called “Eastern Establishment.”¹⁰⁰ In his memoir, Nixon stated, “Congress, the bureaucracy, and the media were still working in concert to maintain the ideas and ideology of the traditional Eastern liberal establishment.”¹⁰¹ However, Nixon was impressed with Henry Kissinger’s views on foreign policy and he knew Kissinger to be outside the “Northeast Intellectual Establishment.”¹⁰² Hence, Nixon thought he could trust Kissinger with his policy goals and with managing the foreign affairs bureaucracy. Additionally, many historians argue that Nixon wanted a Harvard professor to further his foreign policy objectives because he sought approval from the “establishment” even as he detested their influence in government.¹⁰³

On November 25, 1968, Nixon and Kissinger met at the Hotel Pierre in New York to discuss their foreign policy vision. Nixon commented on the meeting and the ensuing partnership that followed, stating that, “the combination was unlikely – the grocer’s son from Whittier and the refugee from Hitler’s Germany, the politician and the academic.”¹⁰⁴ However, the two men found common ground in regards to their overall vision for U.S. foreign relations. Both men agreed that the United States needed to move beyond the Vietnam

¹⁰⁰ In one instance, one of his White House aides, Alexander Butterfield, stated, “Nixon had asked, ‘Did one of those dirty bastards ever invite me to his fucking men’s club or goddamn country club? Not once.’ He was shaking... The hatred was very deep-seated. He didn’t just not like them. He hated them.” See Nixon and Butterfield quotes in Anthony Summers with Robbyn Swan, The Arrogance of Power: The Secret World of Richard Nixon, (Phoenix Press: London, 2001), p. 17.


¹⁰² Kissinger was thought to be outside of the “Establishment” because he came from a background of modest means and he was a high riser within the foreign affairs academia and political establishment.


War, a situation they considered to be of temporary importance, and focus on more long-term problems such as the deterioration of the NATO alliance, the Middle East, and the Communist threats presented by Soviet Union and China. The meeting allowed Nixon and Kissinger to align their foreign policy objectives.105

Nixon proclaimed that his choice of Henry Kissinger was made in an “uncharacteristically impulsive way” as he “planned to direct foreign policy from the White House.” During the meeting, Kissinger recalled that Nixon asked his opinion on the foreign affairs community because

"He felt it imperative to exclude the CIA from the formulation of policy; it was staffed by Ivy League liberals who behind the façade of analytical objectivity were usually pushing their own preferences. They had always opposed him politically.”106

In response, Kissinger suggested the need for a more formal system in place to make decisions on foreign policy than the one that existed under the Lyndon Johnson’s Administration.107 Kissinger judged Johnson’s administration to be ineffective because of its reliance on “informal Tuesday luncheons” to make policy decisions. These luncheons made it difficult for the bureaucracy to know exactly what decisions had been made. He added, “Even with the best of goodwill, each interested agency was tempted to interpret the often ambiguous

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105 Ibid.
106 Henry Kissinger, The White House Years, p. 11.
107 Lyndon Johnson’s system of formulating foreign policy occurred mostly in informal luncheons because the President was afraid of leaks to the press about his decision. In a meeting with Kissinger, Johnson stated, “I have one piece of advice to give you, Professor. Read the columnists and if they call a member of your staff thoughtful, dedicated, or any other friendly adjective, fire him immediately. He is your leaker.” See Ibid. 19.
outcomes of such meeting in the way most suited to its own preconceptions.”

Nixon agreed with Kissinger’s suggestions for this formal structure and after the meeting offered him the position of National Security Assistant, which Kissinger gladly accepted.

Many scholars described the first meeting between the two men as vitally important. As one scholar, Roger Morris, wrote,

“ At the Pierre, Kissinger recommended and Nixon readily adopted a formal new system of decision making for the NSC. The system... was instrumental in some of the most important and enduring diplomatic achievements of the Nixon administration.”

He added,

“The new NSC apparatus was significant too for the portent it held of the flaws running Richard Nixon’s government and the ironic role of foreign policy would play in its failures as well as his triumphs.”

After the meeting, Kissinger went to work in setting up the new National Security Council that would lead and coordinate foreign policy from the White House. In similar fashion to McGeorge Bundy and Walt Rostow (the two previous National Security Council Assistants), Kissinger was able to place leadership of foreign policy solely within the White House.

Nixon also appointed Henry Kissinger as chair of the Senior Review Group (SRG), a group of officials from all foreign affairs department that met on a regular basis to discuss foreign policy issues. Kissinger also chaired the Washington Special Action Group (WSAG), a group more specialized in its role to

108 Ibid. 11.
110 Ibid.
111 This used the same concept of the SRG group created by Lyndon Johnson discussed in Chapter One, but this group actually formulated policy because Kissinger chaired it.
handle foreign affairs crises as they occurred. Its staff members included high-ranking officials from the State Department, Department of Defense, and the CIA, as well as Kissinger. These members reported to Kissinger and Kissinger in turn reported to Nixon. The mode of organization of this group was clearly defined and hierarchical, and there was no room for “debate” or “conflict.”

Their method of crisis management was well suited to information gathering during crisis situations but not as good at responding to them. In particular, the WSAG struggled in implementing their decisions in certain scenarios because it relied on the existing highly formalized structures— the State Department lines of communication— to communicate and implement its policy. In essence, Kissinger solved the problem of slow communication moving up the bureaucracy to the desks of decision makers enabling the White House to make its decisions quickly. But he was less successful at relaying the rationale for policy decisions back to the State Department and its Foreign Service Officers or other agencies’ officers on the ground that implemented it.

Henry Kissinger was intimately aware of the problems associated with the State Department formal communications machine and he sought to correct them by relying on a system of backchannels. He stated,

“Backchannels in those days were a curious phenomenon. For every bureaucracy, they excluded they made the user hostage to another – until eventually we were able to set up channels directly from the White House that went through no other agency... Usually the excluded party was the State Department, which had victimized itself by technology and habit: by

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113 See Haney’s political cost and benefit analysis of Nixon’s crisis management apparatus in Ibid. 119.
technology because its computers automatically distribute even the most sensitive cables through the building by pre-established criteria; habit because diplomats live on trading information and are infinitely ingenious in getting around formal restrictions.”

Kissinger’s reliance on backchannels demonstrates that like Nixon, he was entirely distrusting of State Department procedures and sought to circumvent the Department as the Administration pursued its critical foreign policy objectives.

Furthermore, both Nixon and Kissinger were wary of dissenters within the government and they were keenly aware of the 266 State Department officers who resigned their posts during the Johnson Administration. In order to avoid such a bureaucratic protest and to “enhance their image as embracer of dissent,” Nixon created the State Department’s official “dissent channel” in 1971. On surface, this was a revolutionary move that Nixon and Kissinger marketed to the public as it institutionalized dissent. One Foreign Service Officer praised it as the State Department under Nixon became “unique as a historical entity and government bureaucracy.” However, the “dissent channel” proved to be the first method by which Nixon and Kissinger marginalized any governmental opposition to their policies.

Additionally, the foreign policy structure was complicated by President Nixon’s appointment William P. Rogers, the former Attorney General under

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117 Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 will illustrate how the Dhaka Consulate’s use of the “dissent channel” was handled by the Administration.
Eisenhower and one of his closest friends, as the Secretary of State. Nixon justified his appointment by claiming that Rogers would be valuable as State Secretary because he was adept at dealing with the press and Congress and would be able to reign in the “recalcitrant bureaucracy of the State Department.” However, Rogers’ appointment proved to be problematic as the personalities of Kissinger and Rogers severely clashed during Nixon’s first four years as President.

Kissinger stated that Nixon’s appointment of Rogers puzzled him because William Rogers did not have any prior foreign policy experience. Moreover, it seemed that Kissinger and Rogers did not work well as part of the same team because Rogers was frustrated by the fact that Kissinger and his NSC repeatedly left the State Department in the dark about policy matters; and Kissinger, for his part, thought Rogers was unable reign in the bureaucracy he was in charge of.

Kissinger argued that at the time of Rogers’ appointment, the Secretary of State had a problem to balance conflicting roles. The Secretary could either take direction from the President regarding foreign policy objectives and defend them to the press and Congress and make sure that the State Department followed through with the President’s decisions; or he could take the position of his subordinates in the State Department and present them as a challenge whenever the President made controversial decisions that went against the judgment of the State Department. Kissinger believed that Rogers took the latter

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position because he was not a strong Secretary of State and because Nixon entrusted Kissinger with more authority in the formulation of foreign policy.\footnote{Kissinger, \textit{The White House Years}, p. 11 – 13.}

The clashes between Secretary Rogers and Kissinger started as soon as Nixon took office. In the first meeting between Nixon and the Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin, Rogers was selectively left out. This set a precedent for the practices of the White House bypassing the State Department in the future to conduct foreign policy. Kissinger stated, “the President, or I on his behalf, came to deal increasingly with key foreign leaders through channels that directly linked the White House Situation Room to the field without going through the State Department.”\footnote{Kissinger, \textit{White House Years}, p. 29.}

Additionally, Kissinger kept the State Department distracted from formulating effective foreign policy by issuing numerous National Security Study Memorandums (NSSMs) to different bureaus within the State Department to instigate rigorous study of a particular issue in order to present viable options to the President.\footnote{Jere A. Rosati, “Developing a Systematic Decision-Making Framework: Beauracratic Politics in Perspective,” \textit{World Politics} 33, no. 2 (1981). p.} In reality, these studies were a way to “keep them busy and keep them out of trouble.”\footnote{Personal Communication with Ambassador Howard Schaffer. For a transcript of the interview with Ambassador Schaffer, please contact the author.} It was yet another way to subvert the bureaucracy in order for Kissinger to conduct his own foreign policy.

Overall, this section portrays how the first meeting between Nixon and Kissinger affected the formulation of the structure of foreign policy that arose formed during Nixon’s first term in office. It highlights Nixon’s deep distrust of
the State Department and other foreign policy agencies and how he sought to use Kissinger’s leadership abilities to marginalize their influences. The system set up Nixon and Kissinger was designed to marginalize the State Department and prevented it from asserting a leadership role in the foreign affairs bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{123} It emphasized Kissinger’s role as Nixon’s most trusted advisor, allowing Henry Kissinger to dominate the foreign policy bureaucracy.

**The China Initiative and the Pakistani Secret Channel**

\textit{Nobody has occupied the White House who is friendlier to Pakistan than me.}

-Richard Nixon, Islamabad, 1969. \textsuperscript{124}

During Nixon and Kissinger’s first meeting in Hotel Pierre in New York, Nixon suggested to Kissinger that he should read his article “Asia after Vietnam”. This signaled the beginning of Nixon and Kissinger’s initiative to open up relationships with Mainland China. The effects of the China policy would have enormous repercussions regarding how Nixon and Kissinger reacted to the South Asian crisis of 1971, particularly towards Pakistan. This section explores the reasons behind Nixon-Kissinger’s opening of relations with China and details how Pakistan served as a crucial link between the two nations.

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Nixon’s Presidency proved to be an opportune moment for China and the United States to resume official foreign relations. Many scholars contend Nixon and

\textsuperscript{123} Continuing on the trend set first by the Kennedy and Johnson Administration.

\textsuperscript{124} Quoted by G.W. Choudhury, “Reflections on Sino-Pakistan Relations,” \textit{Pacific Community}, vol. 7 (January 1976), p. 266.
Kissinger had three main reasons to open up China: they sought to take advantage of the Sino-Soviet conflict, to use Chinese influence to pressure the North Vietnamese in order to end U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and the U.S. wanted to create a balance of power between the three great nuclear powers.125

First and foremost, both Nixon and Kissinger wanted to contain the communist bloc and its influences around the world, so when they saw the Soviet Union and China engage in skirmishes on their border in 1969, they viewed it as a golden opportunity.126 Kissinger thought that the opening of China-U.S. diplomatic relations would act as a huge blow to the USSR because the United States could then collaborate with China in order to balance Soviet power in Asia.

Secondly, the Vietnam War was still continuing on in 1971, and the United States was trying desperately to gain the upper hand in the conflict against the communist North Vietnam. Nixon and Kissinger thought that opening up relations with communist China would provide them a key ally in negotiating with the North Vietnamese.

Finally, Nixon predicted that China would become a military superpower in the decades to come.127 Based on this prediction, Nixon thought it would be wise to have friendly relations with China because he feared that the United States could not match up to the combined military power of the USSR and China.

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were China to become a military superpower. For all these reasons, Nixon and Kissinger set opening up China as their top foreign policy priority.

While Nixon and Kissinger considered opening up China as one of their top priorities, the process of accomplishing such a feat proved to be delicate. A few conditions helped the United States to achieve its goal. First, Nixon’s presidency provided the right political climate for the United States to engage with China. The United States was removed enough from the Korean War and the memories that haunted the national psyche just after the war died down.\(^{128}\) Moreover, Nixon was a Republican President whose anti-communist record was well documented; thus Nixon was considered immune to charges that associated him with being soft on communism.

A second condition that helped Nixon and Kissinger’s goals was Chinese willingness to resume relations with America. The Chinese, for their part, wanted to open up diplomatic relations with other countries because they were afraid of the USSR. Their fear became all too real in 1969, when a border skirmish broke out between China and the USSR by the Ussuri River.\(^{129}\) Realizing that they had very few allies in the world that would support them against the Soviet Union, Chairman Mao Zedong sought to change the policy of isolation that had prevailed in China since its communist revolution. He called for an independent government committee to analyze how Chinese foreign policy was conducted and suggest improvements for it.\(^{130}\) These studies found that the U.S.

\(^{129}\) Ibid.
\(^{130}\) Ibid. 117.
under Nixon was not a threat to China because the Nixon Doctrine stressed non-involvement in Asia. Furthermore, the studies concluded that Nixon, as a Republican President, was much more willing to negotiate with China than his Democratic predecessors.

The last piece of the puzzle that allowed Nixon and Kissinger to conduct their secret negotiations was the secret channel provided by Pakistan. On December 8, Pakistani Ambassador Agha Hilaly approached the National Security Council asking for an audience with the President. He told the NSC that he wanted to discuss the Pakistani President Yahya Khan’s recent visit to China. On December 8, 1969 Ambassador Hilaly met with Henry Kissinger and dictated a note to him that came from Chou En-Lai, China’s influential foreign minister, which stated “...A special envoy of President Nixon’s will be most welcome in Peking.”

This message started a series of secret communications between Nixon and Kissinger, and the Chinese government’s top officials via the Pakistani channel. In June of 1971, Henry Kissinger became this ‘special envoy’ and the first government official to visit Mainland China in two decades. Needless to say, Pakistan’s willingness to relay the messages between China and the United States proved to be beneficial for them because Kissinger and Nixon turned a blind eye to the West Pakistani crackdown on its own people in 1971.

The first sign of the Nixon-Kissinger “Tilt” towards Pakistan came as Nixon issued a one-time exception to the U.S. embargo of military equipment

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132 Ibid. 700.
imposed on both India and Pakistan after the war of 1965. Nixon’s shift in policy, in contradiction to his predecessor Johnson highlighted how his personal bias towards Pakistan dictated US policy towards the country.

Additionally, the focus on China affected the U.S. position towards Pakistan after what happened during the cyclone of November 1970 that struck East Pakistan. Henry Kissinger outlined his policy towards Pakistan in a memo to the President,

“The argument for maintaining our present posture is that the east-west issue within Pakistan is an extremely delicate one for President Yahya, especially in this election period. While we want to provide whatever help he needs, he is the ultimate judge of how to manage this issue politically. A highly visible appearance that the U.S. was injecting its independent management would carry the implication that President Yahya’s government in West Pakistan could not or would not effectively manage this situation in East Pakistan.”

Kissinger’s assessment begs the question why he and Nixon were so concerned about the United States questioning President Yahya’s assessment of the situation. In the same report, Kissinger cited the Islamabad Embassy reports that argued the West Pakistani response to the relief efforts were marred by inefficiencies and bureaucratic problems. A week later Kissinger sent another memo to the President that stated that Pakistan’s inept management of its relief resources were “in part this is because of bureaucratic inadequacies but there is also a certain amount of apathy in West Pakistan about the plight of the East Pakistanis.” Despite these evaluations, both Nixon and Kissinger were concerned with offending Yahya Khan and one cannot help but draw the

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connection between U.S. policy towards Pakistan in 1971 to the high regard both men shared towards Yahya Khan for facilitating U.S. conversations with China.

Furthermore, the systematic procedures that left the State Department and Rogers in the dark about White House foreign policy decisions also excluded the State Department from Kissinger’s secret negotiations with Chinese officials. As Kissinger recalls, “Rogers was told of my secret trip to China only as I was already on my way.”  

Henry Kissinger called upon Joseph Farland, the American Ambassador to Pakistan, to organize the secret trip without reporting to the State Department.

Kissinger writes that Farland was entrusted with this responsibility because he was a political appointment and did not suffer from the same biases traditional Foreign Service Officers suffered from. Henry Kissinger finally made the trip to China during his tour of Islamabad where he faked sickness and in secretly boarded a Pakistani International Airline (PIA) plane from Islamabad that transported him to Peking (Beijing), China.

Overall, this section’s examination of Nixon and Kissinger’s policy towards China highlight the critical factors that caused Nixon and Kissinger to pursue open up relations with China. It also states the reasons China chose to reciprocate America’s efforts to resume relationship between the two nations. In addition, it shows the enormous value Nixon and Kissinger attached to the Pakistani secret channel.

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136 Kissinger, The White House Years, p. 22.
137 Ibid. 787.
Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the history of Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon, in particular how their paths crossed to formulate a foreign policy structure. It portrays Nixon's personal bias towards Pakistan and the importance the two men attached to their China initiative. Also, it highlights the conflicting relationship between the White House and the State Department due to Henry Kissinger's role as NSA. Furthermore, it illustrates that the problems with foreign policy bureaucracy was exaggerated by the personal conflicts existing between Henry Kissinger and William Rogers. Subsequently, it also explores the decisions taken by Nixon and Kissinger that reflected their bias toward Pakistan. This chapter sets up the structural problems the Dhaka Consulate faced during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. The narrative of the Dhaka Consulate's Dissent Letter is discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 3


Introduction

The famous Dhaka Consulate Dissent letter, also known as the ‘Blood Telegram’, was the most striking statement of dissent from U.S. policy made during the Nixon-Kissinger era. This chapter will illustrate the story of that telegram by focusing on the Dhaka Consulate’s accounts starting from the cyclone that hit East Pakistan in 1970 to Archer Blood’s transfer from his post as Consul General in June 1971.

To explain this narrative, this chapter will rely heavily on first hand accounts from Archer Blood and Scotty Butcher (a junior Foreign Service Officer stationed in Dhaka at the time) as well as memos exchanged between the State Department, Islamabad Embassy and the Dhaka Consulate. These reports highlights that the U.S. foreign policy towards Pakistan was plagued by frustrations within the Foreign Service, especially on the part of the officers stationed in Dhaka. The chapter will narrate the story from the perspective of the Foreign Service officers on the ground in Dhaka.138 It will show that the

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138 Chapter 4 will further explore the story from the perspective of the Islamabad Embassy and Washington.
South Asian political crisis that occurred in 1971 caused a bureaucratic crisis within America’s Foreign Service in Pakistan.

1970 Cyclone And Its Aftermath

*The Government of Pakistan was clearly not doing all it could or should do in this crisis.*

-Archer Blood, 1970, Dhaka

Over 300,000 East Pakistanis died in the cyclone and tidal wave that struck in 1970.\(^{139}\) In its aftermath, the international community poured in enormous support and resources to help the East Pakistanis. The United States, by way of its Dhaka Consulate, administered a remarkable aid effort. However, close examination of U.S. relief efforts reveal the difference in attitudes that existed between the State Department and the Foreign Service Officers on the ground. Moreover, the international relief efforts intensified East Pakistani animosity towards the West Pakistani dominated government. In a way, the cyclone of 1970 acted a precursor to the Bangladesh Liberation War because it caused East Pakistan to start losing faith in its own government and outlined the disconnect between the Dhaka Consulate and State Department’s foreign policy attitudes in East Pakistan. The following section will outline the events of the cyclone and show how it acted as a precursor to war.

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On November 12, 1970, a cyclone with winds up to 150 miles per hour struck the southern coast of East Pakistan; it was followed by a 20-30 foot high tidal wave.

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\(^{139}\) The exact number is unknown but both Archer Blood and Charles O’Donnell estimate the death toll to be around 300,000. See Charles Peter O’Donnell, *Bangladesh: Biography of a Muslim Nation*, vol. Westview Press (Boulder1984), p. 84.
wave. The results were devastating; initial death toll estimates reached 233,000. After a few weeks, the estimates increased to 300,000. This was the worst cyclone of the 20th century. Fortunately, the U.S. Consulate in Dhaka, under able leadership from Consul General Archer Blood and Ambassador Joseph Farland, led a very successful campaign in administrating disaster relief. In his autobiography, Blood wrote,

"The Ambassador was an excellent executive. He delegated authority freely and he backed his subordinates to the hilt. He also made crisp unequivocal decisions. His presence in Dacca ruled out any chance of conflict between the Consulate General and the Embassy, because the Embassy knew that messages coming from Dacca had the approval of the Ambassador."

This comment can be read two different ways: on the one hand, it shows that Blood’s supervisor, Ambassador Farland, was an excellent executive who organized relief after the cyclone’s repercussion in admirable fashion. On the other hand, it shows that inherent conflicts existed between the Dhaka Consulate and the Islamabad Embassy in terms of the authority each institution held. Blood’s statement suggests prior and future instances when the Embassy reports conflicted with the Dhaka Consulate reports reflecting the structural conflict of the American Embassy in Pakistan discussed in Chapter One.

The Dhaka Consulate was in touch with the local leaders, intellectuals and other Americans who interacted mostly with East Pakistanis. In similar fashion, the Islamabad Embassy was mostly in touch with government elites in West

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142 Blood, The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh p. 86.
Pakistan and heard rarely from East Pakistani voices. The differing attitudes of the two diplomatic stations in Pakistan were largely a structural problem defined by geography. The influences exerted on both missions can be characterized as cliency.

However, to keep Blood’s comments in context, it is important to note that he believed the U.S. relief efforts were by and large successful in 1971. In spite of this success, close examination of the relief effort reveals the beginning of divergent attitudes within the U.S. foreign policy bureaucracy. The relief effort started on November 16 when Blood received an official request from the Government of East Pakistan (GOEP) for essential supplies, food, money and helicopters from the United States. While food, supplies and money were secured in a fastidious manner, the Consulate General faced some bureaucratic obstacles in its request for helicopters. Immediately after the cyclone, there was only one helicopter in all of East Pakistan and that was used to ferry around the Pakistani government officials. Since the cyclone was hit in an area without roads, bridges or boat access, it was almost impossible to administer relief efforts without using helicopters.

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143 East Pakistan and West Pakistan had very different notions of what Pakistan ought to be and the American Consulate and Embassy stationed there shared their attitudes. Most important was the contending Pakistani attitudes toward foreign policy. The West Pakistanis looked at India with constant suspicions due to its conflict over Kashmir, whereas the East Pakistanis thought precious resources were being wasted in the Kashmiri conflict and looked at India in a more favorable light because they shared cultural ties with millions of Bengali speaking Indians in West Bengal. For more on the different conceptions of Pakistanis, see Philip Oldenburg, “A Place Insufficiently Imagined: Language, Belief and the Pakistan Crisis of 1971,” The Journal of Asian Studies 44, no. 4 (1985).
144 See Chapter 1 for earlier discussion on cliency.
146 Ibid. 80.
So on November 16, Blood submitted a request to Washington stating, “Again, I cannot urge too strongly the importance of getting helicopters here today or tomorrow at latest.”\textsuperscript{147} Despite the urgency of the message, the helicopters arrived in East Pakistan on November 22, five days later than requested. The State Department sent dismantled helicopters from Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina to Dhaka, where they needed to be reassembled.

This was an odd move because the U.S. had thousands of helicopters deployed in Vietnam, which was much closer to East Pakistan than North Carolina.\textsuperscript{148} The State Department justified its actions by arguing, “Helicopters in SEA (Southeast Asia) [are] committed to military operations and [the] need there [is] continuing and critical. Helicopters in U.S. more readily available for complex process of disassembly.”\textsuperscript{149} This instance shows that the U.S. chose to prioritize its war in Vietnam over its commitment to provide immediate relief to East Pakistan.\textsuperscript{150} The bureaucratic response to the request for helicopters reflected the U.S foreign policy: East Pakistan was not considered significant to the U.S. in its larger foreign policy.

The Dhaka Consulate and the Western press criticized the late arrival of the helicopters. The Western press also criticized both the U.S. and Pakistani relief efforts. These criticisms came from numerous sources; the Washington Post printed an article headlined, “Lack of Copters Stalls Aid,” and the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{147}] Quoted in Ibid. 81.
\item[\textsuperscript{148}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{149}] Memo is quoted in Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{150}] See Chapter 1 for explanation of broader U.S. policies that influenced its actions in East Pakistan.
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Washington Daily News printed a story titled, "Pakistan Aid Flop a Tragic Scandal."\textsuperscript{151} Worried about the negative media coverage, the State Department issued a cable to Dhaka instructing the Ambassador to

\begin{quote}
“1) Do all possible [to] encourage Pakistanis put forth maximum effort not only in disaster relief but also in press relations in Dacca and 2) make most our own and other friendly countries’ aid efforts on the spot. Assume you are personally doing everything possible with the Press.”\textsuperscript{152}
\end{quote}

These instructions illustrate that the State Department was primarily concerned about the negative media coverage of the U.S.’s relief efforts and chose to issue orders to negate these reports. However, as negative media coverage waned due to the diligent work by Ambassador Farland, Archer Blood, and the other U.S. officers present in Dhaka, the State Department took a more favorable tone towards its employees in Pakistan.

The State Department’s response to media reports about the cyclone is essential in understanding the Department’s later responses during the Liberation War. Unlike the cyclone, the atrocities of 1971 in East Pakistan received far less press attention because the Pakistani Army severely restricted press access to East Pakistan starting on March 25, 1971. The press reports that forced the State Department to act were not present during the Liberation War, partially explaining the lack of State Department response to the Dhaka Consulate’s reports on the latter crisis. Additionally, Washington disagreed with the Embassy and Consulate on one essential issue: the attitude towards the West Pakistani relief efforts after the cyclone.

\textsuperscript{151} Cable is quoted in Blood, \textit{Cruel Birth of Bangladesh}, p. 91.
\textsuperscript{152} Cable is quoted in Ibid. 91.
While looking at the West Pakistan relief efforts, it is important to note that as a Third World country Pakistan was woefully unprepared and incapable of handling the cyclone. However, both Blood and Farland assessed that the Government of Pakistan was clearly not doing all it could in its relief effort. With respect to the helicopters, Blood wrote,

“The Pakistani military were refusing to send large helicopters to East Pakistan on the grounds that it was inconvenient and expensive to dismantle the helicopters and fly them over.... That was exactly what we had to do, all the way from North Carolina.”

This illustrates Blood and the Dhaka Consulate’s frustration with the West Pakistani-controlled government. It highlights the West Pakistani government’s mismanagement of the crisis: how could a country claim an action is too expensive when it was to save its own people? Clearly the West Pakistani government did not think that transporting its military resources to East Pakistan was necessary, even to save the lives of its own citizens.

Furthermore, the West Pakistani government’s actions showed the enormous political and geographical divide that existed between the fragmented wings of Pakistan. The distance between East and West Pakistan presented a huge logistical problem for the Pakistani government. However, the West Pakistani government repeatedly prioritized its political goals instead of accepting help from other nations to ensure the maximum amount of aid for the East Pakistanis. The Pakistan government refused Indian helicopters, mobile

\[153\] Ibid. 95.

\[154\] Many people argue that the negative public perception of West Pakistan’s efforts was unfair because the Pakistani relief effort was being compared to the relief efforts of many first world countries who had far superior resources to provide in this crisis. See “Interview with Scotty Butcher.” Appendix D.
hospitals, and river craft because they were worried that New Delhi might look better than Islamabad in handling the crisis.\textsuperscript{155} The government also declined a West German offer of a fully manned 150-bed field hospital on the grounds that Pakistan could not feed the German personnel.\textsuperscript{156} It became clear that the government was more worried about its political aims than willing to admit its own lack of facilities in order to save its own people.

Despite these mismanagements of foreign aid offers, the response in Washington contradicted the critical assessments made by the Embassy and Consulate. Kissinger sent a memorandum to Nixon on November 20 that stated,

“\textit{The argument for maintaining our present posture is that the east-west issue within Pakistan is an extremely delicate one for President Yahya, especially in this election period. While we want to provide whatever help he needs, he is the ultimate judge of how to manage this issue politically."}\textsuperscript{157}

Kissinger’s faith in Yahya contradicted the assessments prepared by the Embassy and Consulate that criticized Yahya Khan for his management of the crisis. Both Nixon and Kissinger’s trust in Yahya to handle his internal affairs would prove to be the biggest point of contention between Washington and the Embassy, and the Dhaka Consulate.

Along with American diplomatic criticisms, the Western press and the East Pakistanis also criticized the West Pakistani management of disaster relief. On December 7, Time Magazine article entitled “The Politics of Catastrophe” stated,

“The Pakistan’s government proved shockingly inept and many of its people cruelly callous… Some 500,000 tons of grain were stock-piled in East Pakistan warehouses, but the 40-odd Pakistani army helicopters that could have airlifted them to the delta sat on their pads in West Pakistan.”158

The foreign press’s criticisms echoed the same points raised by Archer Blood and his consulate. Time Magazine’s criticism added a pointed analysis that read,

“The cyclone aftermath deepened the hate and envy felt by East Pakistan’s dark, rice-eating Bengalis for the taller, fairer— and wealthier— wheat-eating Sindhis, Punjabis and Pathans of West Pakistan.”159

While these stereotypes were a bit exaggerated, the article accurately captured the frustration the East Pakistanis felt at the time. The lackluster relief efforts were yet another instance in which the West Pakistani dominated government neglected East Pakistani interests.

This sentiment was captured by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib), the leader of the Awami League (the dominant party in East Pakistan) in a fiery speech in which he condemned the actions taken by the West Pakistani government after the cyclone. Mujib exclaimed,

“West Pakistan has a bumper wheat crop, but the first shipment of food grain to reach us is from abroad. While we have a substantial army stationed in West Pakistan, it is left to British mariners to bury our dead.... While we have an army of helicopters in West Pakistan, we have to wait on helicopters from across the earth. The feeling now pervades...every village, home and slum that we must rule ourselves. We must make the decisions that matter. We will no longer suffer arbitrary rule by bureaucrats, capitalists, and feudal interests of West Pakistan.”160

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159 Ibid.
160 Quoted in O’Donnell, Bangladesh: Biography of a Muslim Nation, p. 84.
Mujib’s speech illustrated the feeling of animosity that East Pakistanis harbored towards the West Pakistan government—which they saw as exploitative in the extreme. Mujib saw that foreigners came to the aid of the Bengalis when the West Pakistanis did not. Additionally, his statements demonstrate how the Awami League capitalized politically on the callous administration of cyclone relief by Yahya Khan. The Awami League's successful campaign of blaming Yahya Khan’s government for its dreadful management of the cyclone relief united East Pakistanis in their distrust of the West Pakistani government.

However, Mujib did make one mistake in assuming that Western support for East Pakistan during the cyclone would translate to similar support for the East Pakistan’s call for greater autonomy. Blood argued that East Pakistan received the world press’s attention during the cyclone, but the Awami League misinterpreted it. The disaster relief support that came to East Pakistan came purely out of humanitarian reasons and not political ones. Mujib and the Awami League thought the worldwide support that East Pakistan gained after the cyclone would translate to a similar level of support for the upcoming political struggle of East Pakistan against West Pakistan. Mujib’s assumption proved to be problematic. Blood stated,

“As events moved rapidly toward a bloody crisis the following year, it would be deceptive for Bengalis to hope that the humanitarian concern, ephemeral at best, might be broadened to include a supportive interest in the political outcome.”

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Overall, the cyclone produced unresolved problems within the foreign policy bureaucracy that had repercussions the next year. The disparity in attitudes that Washington had with its missions in Pakistan would only widen in the months following the cyclone. Moreover, the incompetence displayed by Yahya’s regime caused East Pakistanis to call for a more autonomous government in East Pakistan. The cyclone’s aftermath resulted in a hotbed of distrust between the East Pakistanis and the West Pakistani government. These distrustful feelings led to escalating tensions between the two wings of Pakistan after the election of 1970.

The Definitive Election (December 1970 – March 24, 1971)

I believe I have just witnessed the beginning of the end of a unified Pakistan.


The election of 1970 resulted in a resounding victory for the Awami League. Unfortunately for the East Pakistanis, the election result did not produce a representative democracy for Pakistan that they hoped for. West Pakistani elites could not accept being ruled by the East Pakistani Awami League party. From December 7, 1970 to March 25, 1971, tensions mounted as Yahya Khan repeatedly postponed the date for the first meeting of National Assembly, or Pakistan’s legislative body.

During this time, the Dhaka Consulate kept a close watch on all parties involved in Pakistan. They witnessed a political game that robbed the Awami League of its rightful leadership position in a representative democracy. Archer Blood and the Consulate reported these events faithfully and objectively to the
best of their abilities, but they became frustrated with the lack of meaningful responses to their reports from either the Islamabad Embassy or the State Department. Their frustrations would produce the famous Dissent Letter. This section will outline the frustration expressed by the members of the Dhaka Consulate that led to the West Pakistani crackdown and eventually the dissent cable of April 6, 1971.

Immediately after the election of 1970 there was an air of jubilance that swept through East Pakistan. The Awami League won a stunning 160 seats in the 300-member National Assembly Election. The party’s dominant performance in the election reflected the frustration the East Pakistani Bengals felt towards their West Pakistani government. While the Awami League, led by Mujib, gained a substantial majority of votes from East Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the leader of the Pakistan People’s Party, won a majority of the votes in West Pakistan by winning 81 out of the 138 contests in West Pakistan. The election results should have paved the way for an Awami League-led National Assembly. However, Yahya Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto refused to accept an Awami League victory.

Both Yahya and Bhutto were particularly concerned with the Awami League’s proposed “six-point plan” that called for a change in Pakistan’s Constitution to guarantee regional autonomy in a federated Pakistan. In other words, Mujib wanted two autonomous governments for East Pakistan and West

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162 The Awami League won 160 out of the 162 seats in East Pakistan. See O’Donnell, Bangladesh: Biography of a Muslim Nation.
Pakistan, in which each part would be able to rule its own people. Additionally, the “six-point plan” sought to have separate currencies for the two wings of Pakistan, a separate East Pakistani Army, and the power of taxation relegated to the provincial governments. Mujib stated,

“We want to be complete masters of our wealth. We want only our legitimate rights without encroaching upon the share of West Pakistan. We shall give the centre\textsuperscript{164} necessary funds if required.”\textsuperscript{165}

However, Mujib’s “six-point plan” meant the effective breakup of the politics under which West Pakistanis dominated their East Pakistani counterpart. Both Yahya Khan and Bhutto refused to accept this challenge to the power relations that existed between East and West Pakistan.

Moreover, after the election, Mujib stated that he would not compromise on this “six-point plan” because he saw his victory as a mandate from the people. In a conversation he had with Archer Blood on December 30, Mujib stated, “any attempt to delay or thwart wishes of the people would be resisted to the bloody end.”\textsuperscript{166} This uncompromising attitude reflected Mujib’s stubbornness in negotiating with the West Pakistani leaders. On December 22, the Awami League issued a public statement that asserted that the party had a clear mandate and the ability to frame a constitution and form a central government on its own.\textsuperscript{167} Bhutto met this bold assertion by the Awami League with complete intransigence.

\textsuperscript{164} “Centre” refers to the federal government in Mujib’s six-points plan.


\textsuperscript{166} Blood, \textit{The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh}, p. 131.

\textsuperscript{167} The public statement was quoted in Ibid. 135.
A week later, Bhutto replied to the Awami League in a press conference where he stated that the making of a constitution demanded consensus. He admitted that the Awami League could rewrite the constitution but threatened a kind of premeditated chaos if it did so: “We will step aside and the People’s Party will not be responsible for the consequences.”168 In fact, Bhutto’s statement did not reflect his later actions: he did not step aside and, to the contrary, did everything possible to thwart the convening of the first National Assembly.

Despite Bhutto’s seeming lack of cooperation, the three leaders met and discussed the possible future government of Pakistan. Yahya met with Mujib on January 12 and 13 in Dacca, and Bhutto met with Mujib at the end of January.169 In these meetings, the most pressing issue discussed would be the date of the first National Assembly meeting. While Mujib wanted the National Assembly to convene as soon as possible to assert his party’s authority in the Pakistani Parliament, Bhutto wanted to delay the first meeting to gain assurance that his party would have a voice in reframing Pakistan’s Constitution.170

These meetings were inconclusive at best and provided little chance for negotiations between the three leaders. However, the Awami League later refused to meet with Yahya when the latter invited Mujib and top Awami League leaders to a meeting in Rawalpindi. The Awami League feared a possible trap by Yahya Khan and chose to stay in their position of power in East Pakistan. Awami League claimed that there was nothing else to discuss and pointed out that they

168 Quoted in Ibid.
169 Ibid. 137-139.
170 “Sid Sober’s conversation with Bhutto”, quoted in Ibid. 140.
already met with Yahya. It also demanded that the first National Assembly had to take place in Dhaka. It was clear that the Awami League wanted to create a constitution based on the “six-point plan” without the cooperation of Yahya Khan or Bhutto’s party. The Awami League’s firm position caused Yahya Khan to appease Mujib and declare that the first meeting of the National Assembly would convene in Dhaka on March 3, 1971. However, Yahya would not follow through with this promise.

Yahya’s announcement caused Bhutto to declare a boycott of the meeting on February 15. He argued there was no point in making the trip to Dhaka if there was no reassurance that his party would be able to participate in the writing of the constitution. However, the Awami League’s bold demands along with its refusal to have further meetings would prove costly for East Pakistan, as Bhutto pressured Yahya into delaying the first National Assembly date.

As March 3, 1971 approached, tensions built up between the three men and their supporters. After Bhutto’s response, the Awami League realized it had little chance to sustain a Pakistani Constitution based on the “six-point plan” without the support of West Pakistan’s elected leader Bhutto. While it was technically possible under parliamentary procedure to produce a new constitution based on majority vote, the new constitution would have no meaning if West Pakistani authorities did not enforce it.

This is partly because West Pakistan controlled the vast majority of the commerce and industry in both East and West Pakistan. Furthermore, the

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171 Ibid. 141.
172 Ibid. 143
government in West Pakistan possessed the sole enforcing mechanism (the army) to ensure that the rule of law and the Constitution were being upheld. Given these realities, it seemed more and more unlikely that the Awami League’s call for greater autonomy and majority control of the government would easily be accepted by the powerful elites in West Pakistan. More pressingly, the Awami League was not even sure if the National Assembly would convene at all. It recognized the power Bhutto wielded with the political and military establishment in West Pakistan because of his commitment to increase the military budget and his shared distrust of Indians. 173

However, even after acknowledging Bhutto’s influence over the military establishment, Mujib and the Awami League underestimated him. In a conversation with the U.S. Ambassador Farland in Dhaka, Mujib stated, “Awami League had ‘now boxed him in’.”174 This proved to be a misreading of the situation by the Awami League, as Bhutto made his boldest move on February 28. As the March 3rd meeting loomed closer, Bhutto feared his party would be left out of power if he did not take drastic action. So on February 28, 1971, he declared that he would raise all of West Pakistan from “Khyber to Karachi” in violent protest if the National Assembly convened on March 3.175

This put enormous pressure on Yahya Khan to choose between the two opposing sides. While Mujib threatened Yahya with protests in East Pakistan,

175 Quoted in Ibid, p. 152
Bhutto threatened violent protests in West Pakistan. On March 1, Yahya gave in to Bhutto’s demands and announced that the first meeting of the National Assembly would be postponed. His speech reflected a deep concern over the political climate in Pakistan. He began the speech by stating, “Today, Pakistan faces her gravest political crisis.”176 Yahya Khan went on to state that he hoped more time would allow the leaders of the East and West Pakistani political parties to get together in order to “arrive at a reasonable understanding on the issue of Constitution-making.”177 Yahya’s call for a reconciliation of the two parties fell on deaf ears as the political situation escalated tensions even further.

The Consulate in Dhaka and the Islamabad Embassy had very different reactions to Yahya’s speech. Blood stated, “Our Embassy in Islamabad reacted quickly with a telegram welcoming Yahya’s announcement as possibly providing a needed cooling-off period.”178 On the other hand, the Dhaka Consulate’s reactions reflected the attitude of the East Pakistaniis reflecting the problem of cliency. Blood stated, “Once again the interests of the East Pakistan were to be sacrificed before the altar of West Pakistani concern.”179

More dramatically, his report to the State Department ended with the words, “I believe I have just witnessed the beginning of the end of a unified Pakistan.”180 In response, the Pakistan desk at the State Department thanked him for his “colorful reporting” but cautioned him against the employment of

177 Ibid.
178 Blood, The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh, p. 155
179 Ibid.
180 Ibid.
hyperbole. These differing positions held by the different levels of the Foreign Service and the State Department prompted the emergence of the Dhaka Consulate’s frustrations.

Later that day, the Consulate would defend its position by sending another cable that stated,

"Being closer to the eye of storm we find ourselves unable to take as relaxed and optimistic view of consequences as Assembly postponement as envisaged by Embtel (Embassy Telegram). Rather than setting stage for further efforts to reach agreement on Constitution, Yahya’s action has, in our view, in effect ruled out any possibility of East-West compromise and will force Mujib to more direct action to achieve independent Bangla Desh."¹⁸²

The Consul General contended that his presence on the ground gave his assessment of the situation greater credence. However, neither the Embassy nor the State Department paid attention to this argument. Events in East Pakistan after March 1 would only increase the divide and frustrations between the Dhaka Consulate on the one side, and the Islamabad Embassy and State Department on the other.

Reacting to Yahya’s speech of postponement, Mujib declared an East Pakistan-wide hartal, or strike, for three days starting on March 3rd. Reacting in an unprecedented and uneven manner, Yahya Khan sent troops to East Pakistan and imposed a curfew.¹⁸³ The West Pakistani military presence in East Pakistan escalated the situation beyond the non-violent protest called by the Awami

¹⁸¹ Ibid.
¹⁸² “Report by Dhaka Consulate made on March 1,” Quoted in Ibid. 156.
League. Yahya’s actions set the scene for the start of a brutal military campaign to suppress the East Pakistani protests.

On March 7, Mujib organized a massive rally in Dhaka where he proclaimed, “the struggle this time is the struggle for our emancipation! The struggle this time is the struggle for independence!”\(^{184}\) While this speech resonated deeply with the East Pakistani people as a call for independence, Mujib did not go so far as to declare total independence that day.\(^{185}\) Mujib called for an extension of the *hartal* across East Pakistan, but permitted normal commercial and transportation activities in order to relieve the hardships of Bengalis.\(^{186}\)

The Dhaka Consulate and Islamabad Embassy had remarkably different reactions to this speech. While both realized that an immediate showdown was averted by the speech, the crisis situation did not improve. In its report, the Dhaka Consulate stated, “the Sheikh’s tactics, if successful, reduce the chances of open confrontation by exposing only a fuzzy target for the MLA (Martial Law Administrators).”\(^{187}\) In contrast, the Islamabad Embassy argued, “events of

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\(^{184}\) Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, ""This Time the Struggle Is for Our Freedom,"" Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/This_time_the_struggle_is_for_our_freedom. For a video of the speech, see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sKcC_YqzTo.

\(^{185}\) Some historians argue that Mujib’s call represented a mixed message to the Bengalis as he tried to both calm the crowd down from violent actions, but also incited the many reasons for hating the West Pakistani government and made the case for a Bangladesh that was independent. For more on this, See Umar, *The Emergence of Bangladesh: Rise of Bengali Nationalism (1958-1971)*.

\(^{186}\) Ibid.

March 6-7 have deferred showdown…. Question now is whether Yahya or Mujib will blink first… Showdown cannot be put off much longer.”

For its part, the State Department shared the Embassy’s pessimistic view regarding Mujib’s speech, as it contended that the “two sides had only bought time in their confrontation.” From these differing reports, the diverging attitude of the Dhaka Consulate and the Islamabad Embassy become clearer. The American officers in Dhaka clearly sympathized more with the people of East Pakistan, while the State Department and Islamabad Embassy distrusted Mujib’s intentions, reflecting the attitudes harbored by West Pakistani elites.

From March 10-24, the situation escalated even further due to several instances of violence between the East Pakistanis and the Pakistani Army, in which the army showed remarkable restraint. The situation looked to get better when Yahya came to Dhaka to discuss a possible compromise between the two leaders (Yahya and Mujib). These talks began on March 15 and would continue until March 23. According to the reports the Consulate received from Alamgir Rahman, Mujib’s Secretary, the meetings seemed to produce real progress in negotiations. Yahya agreed to reestablish provincial government control in East Pakistan and to the creation of two different Constitutions, one for each wing of Pakistan. However, Yahya did not keep his side of bargain with the Awami League and ignored East Pakistani interests again in the upcoming days.

188 Ibid.
189 Ibid. 174.
190 “Interview With Scotty Butcher”, December 6, 2011. See Appendix D.
On March 23 and March 24, Alamgir came to Archer Blood to request that the United States government talk to Yahya Khan and express the U.S.’s hope for a political solution as opposed to a military one.\textsuperscript{192} In response, Archer Blood sent a telegram to the Embassy in Islamabad and the State Department that suggested, “The U.S. could be somewhat more positive in our response to Mujib.”\textsuperscript{193} In his corollary report analyzing the reasons behind his request, Blood presented his unique situation and stated,

“We must begin by confessing to a certain lack of objectivity. It is difficult to be objective in Dacca in March 1971 when, out of discretion rather than valor, our cars and residences sport black flags and we echo smiling greetings of 'Joi Bangla' as we move about the streets. Daily we lend our ears to the outpouring of Bengali dreams, a touching admixture of bravado, wishful thinking, idealism, animal cunning, anger and patriotic fervor. We hear on radio Dacca and see on Dacca TV the impressive blossoming of Bengali nationalism and we watch the pitiful attempts of students and workers to play at soldiering. ... On the other hand, our contacts with the contending force, the Pakistani military are nil.”\textsuperscript{194}

It is clear from Blood’s eloquent paragraph that he was inherently sympathetic to the East Pakistani/Bengali cause, in part because he was unable to communicate (or, indeed, even sympathize) with the Pakistani Martial Law Administrators.

The State Department reply did not take the Dhaka Consulate’s frustrating situation into account and stated that,

“In current charged situation, U.S. approach could be seen by Yahya and GOP (Government of Pakistan) as unwarranted interference in Pakistani domestic affairs, lend substance to suspicions that U.S. supports

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid. 186.
\textsuperscript{193} Report quoted in Ibid.
\textsuperscript{194} Report quoted in Ibid.
separatism, and undermine our future relations with West Pakistani leaders.”

Clearly, the State Department cared more for its good-relations with West Pakistan than its commitment to stopping an impending crisis in East Pakistan. In this instance, the State Department response was not so different than Yahya’s: both rejected the East Pakistani interest in favor of the West Pakistanis — further illustrating that State Department approved of Islamabad Embassy’s clientelism over the Dhaka Consulate’s. As for the Consulate in Dhaka, it seemed that it was the only U.S. diplomatic station sympathetic to the struggle of 75 million East Pakistanis.

On the eve of March 25, President Yahya left Dhaka for West Pakistan and ordered the start of “Operation Searchlight” which involved the systematic killing of several hundred Bengalis by the Pakistani Army. The Army also arrested Sheikh Mujib and imprisoned him in West Pakistan. The next day, Yahya Khan delivered a radio address that accused Mujib of treason. He also banned the Awami League and all political activities in Bangladesh, claiming, “The blame [for the current situation] rests entirely on the anti-Pakistan and secessionist elements.” Yahya’s radio address completely undermined the democratic election of 1970 and highlighted his suppressive governmental measures in East Pakistan.

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195 The State Department’s reply was quoted in Ibid. 188.
196 Although many in the U.S. Foreign Service did sympathize with the East Pakistanis, it was not clear to Archer Blood at the time because the officials he was regularly communicating with did not share his views.
197 O’Donnell, Bangladesh: Biography of a Muslim Nation, p. 93.
198 “Text of Yahya's Broadcast on March 26, 1971” Bangla Desh Documents.
On March 25, Dhaka and all of East Pakistan heard shots of intense gunfire, bombs and screaming. The West Pakistan army selectively pursued the East Pakistan Rifles, the Bengali Police and Dhaka University, where they suspected student leaders of the Awami League of hiding. Horrified and shocked by the atrocities of March 25, many Bengalis fled the country in the upcoming days to escape the West Pakistani Army’s wrath. As one Bengali writer put it, “Deafening sounds of heavy guns, the intermittent sounds of machine guns and the whistling sound of bullets filled the air. The tracer bullets brightened the sky.”\textsuperscript{199} These extraordinary acts of violence put to rest any notion of a united Pakistan as a nine-month war would ensue in East Pakistan.

The Dhaka Consulate’s report of violence on the night of March 25 stated, “According to numerous accounts including eyewitness reports, Pak[istan] military crackdown on Bengali nationalists has been carried out throughout Dacca swiftly, efficiently... And often with ruthless brutality.”\textsuperscript{200} Additionally, the Consulate sent numerous follow-up reports detailing vicious acts of violence since then. On March 29, they reported, “The Army’s technique was to set houses afire and then gun down the people as they left their homes. Although both Hindus and Muslims lived in the areas burned out, the [American] priests think the Hindus were a particular focus of the campaign.”\textsuperscript{201}

These reports of atrocious acts of violence were all for naught, as hardly anyone in the Islamabad Embassy or State Department felt the need to respond to them.

\textsuperscript{200} Blood, \textit{The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh}, p. 198.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid. 202.
Furthermore, there were very few press accounts of the event because the Pakistani Army rounded up all western press in Dhaka and evacuated them out of the country. Scotty Butcher,\textsuperscript{202} recalls that he received a phone call from Sydney Schanberg, a New York Times reporter who would later become famous for his coverage of the war in Southeast Asia. Schanberg reported,

"Guests at the Intercontinental Hotel, where the foreign press was staying, were forbidden to leave the hotel after 11PM. One [Pakistani] officer said that anyone who left would be shot and another said that a curfew was about to be put into effect."\textsuperscript{203}

Shortly thereafter, all of the western press correspondents were rounded up and removed by the Pakistan government.\textsuperscript{204} The lack of press coverage of the events after March 25 resulted in less international attention to East Pakistan than during the cyclone even though the results of the West Pakistani military crackdown were far more brutal.

**The Dhaka Consulate Dissent Cable (March 26 – June 3, 1971)**

*Our Government has evidenced what many will consider moral bankruptcy*

-Dhaka Consulate Dissent Cable, Dhaka, April 6, 1971

On March 26, 1971, Lieutenant General Ziaur Rahman declared independence for Bangladesh following the Pakistani military crackdown on East Pakistan the

\textsuperscript{202} An interesting note on the names of Blood and Butcher is highlighted in my interview with Scotty Butcher. He stated, "early on we had Archer Blood as the Consul General, then his deputy initially for a couple of months was Andrew Killgore, and then we had me as Butcher. So I would sometimes draft a telegram. It would be drafted by Butcher, cleared by Killgore and signed by Blood. So you had some pretty rough sounding names. One of the Islamic parties, Jamaat-e-Islami, or some other Anti-American party translated our names into Bengalis and he said, 'With people’s names like this, things bode well for us.' It was kind of funny...Butcher, Blood and Killgore. Little did we know that unfortunately there would be some foreboding in our names.” See Appendix D.

\textsuperscript{203} “Interview with Scotty Butcher,” Appendix D.

\textsuperscript{204} Umar, *The Emergence of Bangladesh: Rise of Bengali Nationalism (1958-1971).*
night before. Following this declaration, the Bangladeshi Liberation War ensued; the war lasted till December 16. In the days between March 26 and December 16, millions of innocent people died at the hands of the Pakistani Army and its affiliates. The Dhaka Consulate was a witness to these horrific “crimes against humanity and on April 6, 1971, it sent a dissenting cable to Washington and Islamabad criticizing U.S. policy towards East Pakistan.

The Dissent Letter resulted from the frustration the Consulate felt at not receiving any reply or instructions from the State Department even after sending numerous reports about the crisis. And while the dissent cable failed to change in the U.S. policy, it illustrated an instance when U.S. Foreign Service Officers on the ground acted as the upholders of American morality even when the U.S. Government ignored the human dimensions of a repressive crackdown. This section will outline the immediate causes for the dissent cable and portray the frustrations that built up within the Consulate as a result of the differing viewpoints between the State Department and the Consulate.

After the initial reports of March 25, the Dhaka Consulate received no comment whatsoever from the Embassy and the State Department. Blood argued that the State Department and the Embassy did not respond in any constructive

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205 Rahman declared independence because Mujib was in jail in Islamabad at the time.
206 It should be noted that Bengalis caused many atrocities themselves, killing thousands of West Pakistani sympathizers, however, Bengali instances of violence was far few in number and did not represent an orchestrated government means to subdue its majority population. See Sarmila Bose, *Dead Reckoning: Memories of the 1971 Bangladesh War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
manner because Washington did not believe the Consulate’s reports. He focused in particular on the State Department comment stating, “We do not want to comment on what is going on in East Pakistan because of conflicting reports.”

Blood and the Dhaka Consulate found this sentence insulting because he realized that the only conflicting reports the State Department received came from Islamabad, which in turn received its reports from the Government of Pakistan, which was thoroughly biased against the East Pakistani cause. He wrote in his autobiography: “This was frustrating; we thought we were better equipped, and motivated to provide objective assessments than the Pakistani Government.”

In all fairness, the Consulate in Dhaka did have a sense of what was going on in East Pakistan because of its relations and networks of contacts with East Pakistanis. And from the Consulate’s perspective, the East Pakistanis suffered much more than the West Pakistani government reports led Ambassador Farland to believe. However, the State Department did not give credence to the Consul General’s reports in its policy making thus causing the Dhaka Consulate to distrust the intentions of the State Department.

Archer Blood wanted to invoke a response from his superiors in Islamabad and Washington because he was tired of “shouting into the dark.” As a result, he “decided to ratchet the intensity of reporting up a notch.” On March 28, he sent a telegram captioned, “Selective Genocide,” detailing how the

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208 Statement quoted in Ibid. 209.
209 Ibid.
210 See Appendix D. “Interview with Scott Butcher.”
211 Ibid.
Pakistani Army was systematically killing Bengalis, specifically Hindus. He wrote,

“Full horror of Pakistani military atrocities will come to light sooner or later. I, therefore, question continued advisability of present USG [United States Government] posture of pretending to believe GOP false assertions and denying... that this office is communicating detailed accounts of events in East Pakistan. We should be expressing our shock, at least privately, to GOP, at this wave of terror directed against their own countrymen by Pakistan military.”

Even this telegram did not cause any immediate and substantive responses from the State Department or Islamabad Embassy. The only response that Blood received came from the Country Director of Pakistan in the State Department who suggested that Americans harboring East Pakistanis should be discouraged from doing so. Archer Blood responded strongly to this cable by stating that he had no intention of discouraging Americans from taking such actions. He believed Americans hosting East Pakistanis were acting out of human compassion because all the officers in the Consulate had friends and servants who faced unbelievable dangers if they did not reside in American quarters.

Blood’s comments displayed his frustration with the State Department’s attempt to regulate the Americans’ capacity for compassion during this tragedy.

However, in the midst of this crisis, the Dhaka Consulate did find a voice of support from Kenneth Keating, the American Ambassador to India, who wrote that he was “appalled at possibility that these atrocities are being committed

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213 Ibid.
214 There were approximately 850 Americans stationed in East Pakistan at the time, and about 250 of them were American diplomats or government officials and a vast majority of them had Bengali servants living in their quarters. See “Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon”, *Foreign Relations of the United States: South Asia Crisis, 1971*, March 26, 1971, Document 10.
with American equipment.” Blood wrote, “our reporting, and our sympathies were much more in line with Ambassador’s Keating’s position than with that of our own Embassy.” This statement highlights the larger structural problems with the American Embassies in South Asia as it portrayed the contrasting attitudes the Embassies in Islamabad and New Delhi adopted. Again, the problem of geographical distance between the Islamabad Embassy and the Dhaka Consulate and “clientelism” in each setting was apparent as the two different diplomatic missions in Pakistan shared very different notions regarding the military crackdown.

Furthermore, on March 30, Blood requested the evacuation of non-official members of the American community. He stated,

“The mood of the American community is becoming increasingly angry. Some feel that they are being held hostage to a USG desire to placate Pakistan which obviously wants the Americans to remain in order to show that the situation in East Pakistan is under control and to keep them from spreading the awful truth about recent events.”

In response to this, Ambassador Farland reassured the American community by issuing instructions on April 1 that stated, “In telling our people here of thinning out of US citizens in East Pakistan, we are emphasizing this is temporary, not ‘evacuations’.” The decision to call an evacuation “thinning out” clearly

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217 It also builds on the analysis provided in Chapter One’s discussion of cliency and “historic rivalry” between the Embassies located in Pakistan and India.
demonstrated that the Embassy and the State Department were extremely reluctant to upset the West Pakistani government. To the Consul General in Dhaka, this rhetorical sleight of hand seemed unnecessary and further strengthened the Consulate’s notion that the Embassy and State Department supported the West Pakistani government in the conflict despite its violent suppression of East Pakistanis and democracy.

Moreover, the Americans were outraged by the fact that during the evacuations, the U.S. did not send its own military aircraft to carry its civilians out of East Pakistan, but rather relied on the Pakistan International Airline (PIA). This was especially disconcerting because Americans saw that their departure coincided with the arrival of West Pakistani troops in East Pakistan via the very same airplanes. In a sense, the West Pakistani Army soldiers were replacing the Americans leaving East Pakistan.

In one instance, Scotty Butcher, one of the officers in the Consulate, saw that the same aircraft that was evacuating his wife and daughter had transported West Pakistani soldiers dressed in civilian clothing. He recalls, “we saw the planes at the airport unloading the white pajama style West Pakistani attire all marching off in military formation... so were upset since we were subsidizing the movements of military personnel from the West to put down the opposition in the East.”

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221 “Interview With Scott Butcher”, Appendix D.  
222 Ibid.
All of these factors combined to produce the Dissent Letter on April 6, 1971. As Butcher recalls, “A number of us got to the point where we were pretty disgusted that by whole variety of circumstances, not the least of which was that we were not being very well informed of what our policy was.” So on the morning of April 6, several officers of the Consulate presented Archer Blood with an eloquent and strongly worded message of dissent. They were unsure whether or not Archer Blood would forward this message because they saw Blood to be a “high-rising senior officer” who would have a lot to lose in his career if he sent it.

To their surprise, Blood sent the message to the newly formed “dissent channel” in the State Department, without editing any of the words drafted by his officers but adding his own comment to it. Archer Blood signed the letter and added a corollary explaining his own position in the matter. The dissent letter contained some extremely harsh criticism of the U.S. Government. It stated,

“Our government has failed to denounce the suppression of democracy. Our government has failed to denounce atrocities, our government has failed to take forceful measures to protect its citizens while at the same time bending over backwards to placate the West Pak dominated government and to lessen likely and deservedly negative international public relations impact against them. Our government has evidenced what many will consider moral bankruptcy, ironically at a time when the USSR sent President Yahya, a message defending democracy, condemning the arrest of leader of a democratically elected majority party (incidentally pro-West) and calling for end to repressive measures and bloodshed. ... But we have chosen not to intervene, even morally, on the grounds that the Awami conflict, in which unfortunate the overworked

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223 Ibid.
224 Blood, The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh, p. 244.
225 “Interview with Scotty Butcher.” December 6, 2011. Appendix D.
term genocide is applicable, is purely internal matter of a sovereign state.”\textsuperscript{226}

It is important to note, though, that Archer Blood regretted putting the sentence “Our government has failed to take forceful measure to protect its citizens” in the dissent cable. He wrote in his autobiography, “I should have tried to tone down the assertion... certainly, I never doubted Ambassador Farland’s keen concern for our welfare.”\textsuperscript{227}

However, the Dissent Letter finally caught the attention of the Islamabad Embassy and the State Department, as well as both Secretary of State William Rogers and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger. It made them finally respond to Dhaka. In response to the Dissent Letter, Ambassador Farland ordered all copies of the letter to be destroyed in all Consulates in West Pakistan. Moreover, he stated, “[While] Department statement falls short of ‘denunciation’ but it does not, in my opinion, reflect ‘moral bankruptcy’.”\textsuperscript{228} The State Department, on the other hand, repeated the same exact line it had used earlier in its response and stated,

“We view this primarily as an internal matter of Pakistan Government and most other governments have the same view. Reports have been conflicting. Media in U.S. have been carrying stories of atrocities on both sides although we do not, of course, equate the two.”\textsuperscript{229}

\textsuperscript{227} Blood, The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh, p. 244.
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid, 247
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid. 249.
In essence, the State Department responded to the dissenting policy by repeating the policy against which the Consul General dissented. There was no official change of policy towards the crisis.

While these reactions went back to the Dhaka Consulate, a more private reaction took place at the very top in a phone conversation between Secretary Rogers and Henry Kissinger. Excerpts from the conversation are given below:

“Rogers: I wanted to talk about that goddamn message from our people in Dacca. Did you see it?

Kissinger: No.

Rogers: It’s miserable. They bitched about our policy and have given it lots of distribution so it will probably leak.

…

Rogers: It’s a terrible telegram. Couldn’t be worse—says we failed to defend American lives and are morally bankrupt.

Kissinger: Blood did that?

Rogers: Quite a few of them signed it. You know we are doing everything we can about it. Trying to get the telegrams back as many as we can. We are going to get a message back to them.

…

Rogers: They talk about condemning atrocities. There are pictures of East Pakistanis murdering people. To me it’s outrageous they would send his.”

This conversation illustrates that both leaders of U.S. Foreign Policy were keenly aware of the dissent cable the day it came out. It shows there was no problem of reports moving upwards, but that the problem was primarily the information

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that flowed downwards to the officers in the Consulate. Their frustration with the dissent cable also meant that Archer Blood would soon be removed from his position as Consul General in Dhaka.

Blood received this news from Ambassador Farland who told him “that the decision had been made at the ‘highest level’ to move [him] out of Dacca.” Before leaving his post, Blood went to Islamabad on April 28 for a Country Team Meeting consisting of principal Foreign Service officers from all over Pakistan. Blood described the attitude of his colleagues in this meeting as one of “sad resignation” as his colleagues thought their formerly respected colleague (Blood) had clearly “gone off the deep end.”

He reasoned that his colleagues in West Pakistan held such a dramatically different attitude because “they had been exposed since March 25 to a steady barrage of MLA propaganda.” Blood’s reasoning partly explains the enormous difference in attitudes between the Foreign Service Officers in East and West Pakistan. Yet it was still astounding that the Islamabad Embassy chose to accept MLA propaganda over the reports of its professional American diplomats stationed in East Pakistan.

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232 This probably referred to President Nixon, Blood, The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh, p. 289.
233 Ibid. 287.
Refugees, American Arms and “Selective Genocide”

More than nine million people have made their way across the border—approximately twice the number that moved West at the time of partition in what was considered one of the greatest population movements of all time.


Upon his return to Dhaka from Islamabad, Blood knew that his time was limited in his position as Consul General of Dhaka. However, in his last months as Consul General he reported on three key situations that linked America to the crisis in East Pakistan. These reports concerned the refugee crisis in India, the use of American arms by the West Pakistani Army and the “selective genocide” committed by the West Pakistani Army towards the Hindus. This section will outline his work in linking the conflict to American interests in those months further justifying his dissent letter.

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Upon returning to Dhaka after the Islamabad meeting Blood observed, “In April and May 1971 the conflict between the Pakistani Army and the Bengali nationalists escalated quickly into an ominous confrontation between India and Pakistan.”234 The Indians were brought into the conflict due to the massive influx of refugees pouring into the country from East Pakistan. The refugee total reached 10 million before the December of 1971.235 The Indians handled this refugee crisis to the best of their ability but as John Galbraith, a former Ambassador to India, wrote, “In all the [refugee] camps the margin between

234 Ibid. 302.
235 Ibid. 303.
survival and death from hunger, exposure and disease is perilously thin.”\textsuperscript{236} The refugee crisis in India gave it a moral high ground in the upcoming Indo-Pakistani war. Blood discussed India’s role in the conflict and stated,

“There seems little doubt that India, taking advantage of Yahya’s gross miscalculation on March 25, was determinedly seeking to bring about the Separation of the East Wing from Pakistan. Moreover, India held the moral high ground, and enjoyed the support of the vast majority of world opinion.”\textsuperscript{237}

India’s plans, however, were dictated by circumstances that were caused by the West Pakistani crackdown of East Pakistan. If it weren’t for this brutal crackdown, there would not have been a massive influx of refugees into West Bengal. Galbraith argued that there were three waves of migrants to West Bengal. The first wave consisted of Bengalis who felt politically threatened, the second wave consisted of Hindus who feared the Pakistani Army’s campaign of genocide against Hindus, and the third wave consisted of everyone who fled the country in fear of starvation.\textsuperscript{238} The Nixon Administration, tellingly, chose to ignore this enormous humanitarian crisis due to its strategic interests in Pakistan and its distrust of Indian intentions.\textsuperscript{239}

Additionally, Blood and the Dhaka Consulate sent reports to the State Department about the “selective genocide” of Hindus by the West Pakistani Army. During his time in the Consulate, Scotty Butcher recalled hearing several reports of the Pakistani Army “stopping people, having the males take down

\textsuperscript{237} Blood, \textit{The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh}, p. 313.
\textsuperscript{238} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{239} See Chapter 2 for Nixon’s bias towards Pakistan and India. Also see Chapter 4 for the Washington and State Department response to this crisis.
their lungis... to tell if they were circumcised or not... and if they weren’t, they were assumed to be Hindus and therefore suffered accordingly.” Blood offered an explanation for the selective killing of Hindus as he suggested that the West Pakistani army was trained to see Hindus as enemies and did not realize that a significant population of East Pakistan was Hindus who were loyal Pakistanis.

These vivid reports were sent to the State Department as “spot reports”, but again they received no substantial response from Washington.

Finally, one of the last projects Archer Blood undertook as Consul General came from the State Department’s request to investigate whether or not the Pakistani Army was using American arms in its suppression of East Pakistan. While it was very difficult to know the exact amount of American military equipment used in East Pakistan, the Dhaka Consulate reported on April 15 regarding the extent of U.S. military use. They reported that the West Pakistani Army used U.S. M-24 tanks, American .50 caliber machine guns, American Jeeps, and F-86 aircraft with rockets against the East Pakistani Bengalis. There was clear evidence that showed U.S. arms were being used to kill Bengalis.

In a follow up report spearheaded by Senator Edward Kennedy, it was found that the U.S. shipped $3.8 million in military supplies to Pakistan between

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240 "Interview with Scotty Butcher." See Appendix D.
241 Blood wrote, “The Pakistani Army was unable to make a distinction between East Pakistani Hindus and Indians” due to their military background in West Pakistan.” Quoted in Blood, The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh, p. 218. However Blood’s argument ignored some of the nuances behind the West Pakistan orchestrated violence against the Hindus. For the West Pakistani soldiers, the Bengali Hindu went against the definition of what Pakistanis ought to be because East and West Pakistan had defined very different identities of Pakistani citizenship meant. See Oldenburg, “A Place Insufficiently Imagined.”

242 All of these weapons were mentioned to in a Consulate Report to the State Department in April 15, 1971. Quoted in Ibid. 284-285.
March 25 and September 30, 1971, even after the State Department issued a halt on supplying all arms to Pakistan.\textsuperscript{243} The supply, although minimal in amount, provided reassurance to the Yahya regime that the United States did not strongly condemn its actions in East Pakistan. In a way, the U.S. government implicitly supported the atrocities in East Pakistan through its weapons deals. Galbraith put it best:

\begin{quote}
“So plainly, our military and economic support to the Yahya Khan government postpones the only possible solution. And symbolic support, which allows the government to believe that suppression has our approval is almost as damaging as support that is in substantial amount.”\textsuperscript{244}
\end{quote}

**Conclusion**

After his time in Dhaka, Archer Blood was stationed back in Washington, working in the State Department personnel office. For the next six years of his life, Blood referred to his career as “professional exile”. His assignment to these posts came about directly because of his dissenting position in Dhaka 1971. However, after Kissinger’s departure from office, Archer Blood was able to resume substantive positions within the State Department.

Archer Blood and the Dhaka Consulate’s experience and dissent shows a glimpse of the ‘disconnect’ between the Foreign Service officers on the ground and the State Department in Washington. The experience of Dhaka in 1971 presents a unique instance in which each level of the foreign policy bureaucracy held different attitudes because of their differing influences and goals. The


\textsuperscript{244} Galbraith, "The Unbelievable Happens in Bengal."
“clienity” practiced by both the Dhaka Consulate and Islamabad Embassy caused their divergent attitudes. This led to the State Department choosing the reports from Islamabad Embassy over the Dhaka Consulate, essentially ignoring the events on the ground. These diverging perspectives on each level of foreign policy structures caused confusion for the officers in the Dhaka Consulate, who witnessed horrific atrocities committed by the Pakistani Army but saw nothing from their government that expressed disapproval of such actions.

Their frustration with the lack of a coherent U.S. foreign policy and with not being heard or believed —as they reported on the atrocities of East Pakistan to Washington — caused their dissent. And while their dissent did not create any dramatic change in U.S. foreign policy, their actions served to remind the Bengalis of East Pakistan that Americans did not stay silent during this horrific period of military crackdown. As Blood stated regarding the purpose of his dissent, "We hoped to see a little morality injected into the realpolitik of Nixon and Kissinger." To this end, the dissent cable of April 6, 1971 served its purpose.

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Chapter 4

The Washington Response: The Dissent Letter and the “Tilt”

Introduction

The origins of the Dissent Letter had three settings, Dhaka, Islamabad and Washington. The Dhaka context and immediate causes of the events that led to the Dissent Letter were explored in Chapter Three. This chapter investigates the discussions that took place in Washington — primarily in the White House but also in the State Department — to illustrate the attitudes top foreign policy officials adopted regarding the Bangladeshi crisis.

It demonstrates how Washington reacted to the Dissent Letter and then chose to ignore it. It also discusses the divergence between the State Department and the White House regarding the crisis and points out how important of a role the pre-existing biases of Nixon and Kissinger played when the Administration formed its policy. It extensively relies on Kissinger’s account of the war to present the rationale for U.S. policy. However, it juxtaposes Kissinger’s narrative with recently declassified government documents to illustrate the disturbing attitudes that drove U.S. foreign policy in 1971.
The Structural Setup of the Crisis

*In balance, however, it is a more defensible position to operate as if the country remains united than to take any move that would appear to encourage separation*


In 1971, Henry Kissinger and the National Security Council staff set up a structure to organize a coherent hierarchy that would decide on U.S. policy matters on Pakistan as the crisis of the Bangladesh Independence War unfolded. Numerous Senior Review Group (SRG) Meetings as well as the Washington Special Action Group (WSAG) were organized to address questions regarding Pakistan and South Asia. The structure set up by Kissinger sought to reduce the role of the State Department and enable the formulation of an NSC-originated foreign policy that supported West Pakistani goals at the expense of the East Pakistanis. In this section, I explore when and how the structure to monitor the situation in Pakistan was set up. This section also explores the pre-existing pro-West Pakistani attitudes that influenced the government’s foreign policy as the crisis unfolded throughout the year.

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In 1970, Pakistan held the first free national election in its history. The result was that the Awami League, East Pakistan’s major political party, won the majority of the seats in the National Assembly. This meant that East Pakistanis

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246 Senior Review Group meetings consisted of members from different foreign policy agency such as State Department, CIA, Defense Department, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the NSC. They were presided over by Henry Kissinger and the meetings discussed important foreign policy matters as they developed. See Chapter 2 for how the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy structure was organized to handle emergency situations.
would, in theory, at least) be called upon to form a national government.

However, Pakistan’s government had long been dominated by West Pakistani interests; consequently the President of Pakistan, Yahya Khan, and the leader of Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), Zulfikur Ali Bhutto, refused to yield power to the Awami League and its leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib).247 This caused tensions to build up between the East and West Pakistani political factions.

The Awami League demanded that the National Assembly should meet as early as possible in order to assert its majority in the National Assembly, not least so that it could begin the process of creating a new constitution that would enable more autonomy for East Pakistan. This caused West Pakistani leaders to be concerned about the unity of Pakistan, not to mention their ability to protect their various military and economic interests. American diplomats in Pakistan and the foreign policy decision makers in Washington followed these developments closely as the crisis unfolded.

Initially, after the election, President Yahya Khan agreed to convene the first National Assembly meeting on March 3, 1971. However, on March 1, 1971, Yahya announced that the first National Assembly meeting would be postponed to March 26. This caused enormous uproar in East Pakistan and on March 4, 1971, two members of the National Security Council Staff, Harold Saunders and Samuel Hoskinson, sent a memorandum to Henry Kissinger explaining the importance of the situation.

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247 For more on Pakistan’s elections, refer to Chapter 3.
The memorandum started by stating, "Overnight reports from Pakistan indicate that the situation in East Pakistan is deteriorating." It went on to describe how Mujib rejected Yahya Khan’s invitation to meet with West Pakistani leaders to discuss a compromise regarding when to hold the first assembling of the National Assembly. Also, it expressed concern about West Pakistani military deployment of aircraft in East Pakistan that aimed to subdue the East Pakistan population. The distress over the possibility of a West Pakistani military crackdown in East Pakistan made the issue a priority and it was put on the agenda for discussion in the next SRG meeting.

The memo also mentioned concerns for the State Department’s handling of this report:

"Regrettably, State just has not given this issue the attention it deserves… Only because of our prodding is there a contingency paper today. As for the notion that this is not a political issue, I cannot believe that the repartition of South Asia after twenty-three years is not a policy issue of major proportions. State has not objected to dealing with this in the NSC framework so far."

The NSC staff members’ concern highlights the ineffective manner in which the State Department operated. Even in a crisis situation, the reports from the ground in Pakistan did not make their way to the desks of policymakers in an efficiently. While there might be several reasons for which the State Department did not give this issue a higher priority, the structural issues discussed in Chapter One bear repeating. The State Department’s bureaucracy was set up to ensure that only important messages were to be seen by the Secretary of State

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249 Ibid.
and his immediate subordinates. However, because information had to be pre-screened by lower officials before it made its way up, it took a long time for information to move up the hierarchy of the State Department bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{250} Moreover, as Saunders and Hoskinson points out, the structural inertia regarding flow of information had real consequences, as the State Department was possibly ignoring the events that would lead to the repartition of South Asia.

After Kissinger received this memo, a Senior Review Group (SRG) meeting was scheduled. In the meeting, held on March 6, 1971, the situation in Pakistan was discussed in detail and U.S. interests were laid out. U. Alexis Johnson, the Undersecretary for Political Affairs, described U.S. interests in these terms: ”In general, we would like to see unity preserved. If it cannot be, we would like to see the split take place with the least possible bloodshed or disorder."\textsuperscript{251} All members of the SRG meeting agreed on this policy, but it was also conceded that the breakup of Pakistan was inevitable.

However, the U.S. position in the conflict between West and East Pakistan was debated in the SRG Meeting between Alexis Johnson and Henry Kissinger. The following excerpt from the minutes show this dispute:

“Mr. Johnson: On autonomy, if West Pakistan does not accept that solution\textsuperscript{252} and seeks to use force, I think we would want to discourage the use of force. We would do the same in the event of a unilateral declaration of independence.

\textsuperscript{250} See Chapter 1 for more on State Department’s problem with the flow of information.


\textsuperscript{252} The solution would be a compromise on a Constitution that would enable East and West Pakistan to be governed by each of their respective Provincial Assemblies, instead of a National Assembly that consisted of both East and West Pakistani factions.
Mr. Kissinger: If I may be the devil’s advocate, why should we say anything?

Mr. Johnson: If the West Pakistanis use force, there will be a bloodbath or, at least, a situation of great turmoil in East Pakistan. If it is quickly over, the Indians, and possibly others, might feel impelled to intervene if it continued. In the short run, probably not.

Mr. Kissinger: What would we do to discourage the use of force? Tell Yahya we don’t favor it?”

This exchange highlights the differences between Kissinger and the State Department’s assessment of the situation. Johnson wanted to discourage West Pakistan from using force while Kissinger saw no need to intervene in Pakistan’s affairs, even if it were to urge the lessening of violence. A little later on in the meeting, Kissinger reiterated his view “Intervention would certainly be self-defeating.”

This conversation makes apparent the divergent attitudes the State Department (Alexis Johnson) and the NSC (Henry Kissinger). State wanted to discourage Yahya Khan from engaging in violence because they believed the violence would result in a bloodbath in East Pakistan. While the NSC, Kissinger, in particular, did not think it necessary for U.S. to pressure Yahya, irrespective of the possible consequences of violence. Kissinger’s attitude partially explains the “Tilt” towards Pakistan that occurred later that year as tensions mounted because Henry Kissinger had more control over America’s foreign policy than did the State Department.

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254 Ibid.
Additionally, the meeting also agreed on the exact instructions that would be sent to the Embassy in Islamabad and the Consulate-General in Dhaka. Alexis Johnson stated,

“I plan to send something out today to give our people in Dacca and Islamabad the flavor of our thinking in terms of the pros and cons, and to instruct Dacca, if they are approached by Mujib, to stall and refer to Washington... In general, we would like to see unity preserved. If it cannot be, we would like to see the split take place with the least possible bloodshed or disorder. If Mujib approaches us, we will have to walk a tightrope between making him think we are giving him the cold shoulder and not encouraging him to move toward a split if any hope remains for a compromise.”

These instructions sent to the Consulate General in Dhaka put Archer Blood, the Consul-General, and his staff in a difficult position. They could not support Mujib’s actions but they still had to maintain U.S. interests in East Pakistan.

This proved to be difficult as Mujib and the Awami League became de-facto rulers in East Pakistan after the election. Moreover, the instructions not to take any actions without approval from Washington presented a significant problem. As Philip D. Oldenburg, a prominent South Asian scholar at the time, argued,

“...There were, on the whole, no problems in the flow of information upwards... There is no indication that President Nixon or Kissinger felt any lack in the information they received or in the responsiveness of officials in Washington or in the field... There were however, severe restrictions in the flow of information downward. Rationale for policy never reached lower levels of State. Similarly, upward flow of analysis and advice was impeded because it had to be considered relevant.”

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255 Ibid.
From this analysis, we can see that the Consulate General in Dhaka was faced with the structural inertia of the foreign policy bureaucracy. On one hand, the Consulate was supposed to refer to Washington when making any substantial decisions in East Pakistan. On the other hand, the Consul General was limited in its capability to carry out foreign policy properly when proper rationale for policy did not filter down to the Consulate. The constant need for approval for its actions hindered the regular activities the Consulate could engage in.

After the SRG meeting Kissinger sent a memorandum to President Nixon describing the meeting’s conclusions,

“It was generally agreed that very little, if anything, could be gained by U.S. diplomatic intervention at this point and that the best posture was to remain inactive and do nothing that Yahya might find objectionable.”

This non-interventionist attitude was based primarily on the desire to not upset Yahya. Only after the fact did it become clear why Kissinger and Nixon wanted to avoid upsetting Yahya. Known only to a few officials, Yahya Khan acted as the sole link between Beijing and Washington as the U.S. negotiated the opening up of relations with China. However, the State Department, the Islamabad Embassy, and the Dhaka Consulate were all completely unaware of Pakistan’s secret role as interlocutor between China and the U.S. State Department’s lack

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257 This problem was highlighted in the discussion with Nixon-Kissinger WSAG set up in Chapter 1. It highlights a specific case that fits those categories.
259 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 834.
260 In his autobiography, The White House Years, Kissinger outlines the secret communication with China that kept the State Department in the dark about his plans on p. 684. Also, see “The Beijing-Washington Backchannel and Henry Kissinger’s trip to China,” National Security Archive. http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ for more on this topic.
of knowledge regarding Nixon’s China initiative caused it to view Kissinger’s actions as irrational.

Leaving the State Department and its foreign posts in the dark about the China initiative did not allow the officers of the Dhaka Consulate to see the rationale behind Nixon and Kissinger’s policy that supported Yahya. As Scotty Butcher, one of the officers of the Dhaka Consulate in 1971, states, “we were totally in the dark [about the opening up of China] and I think we would have been more understanding [of], if not agreeing, [with] our policy had we known more.”

While Nixon and Kissinger were wary about upsetting Yahya, the Dhaka Consulate saw American policy as flawed in its support of the dictator, who they thought was harming American interest by committing atrocities in East Pakistan.

Furthermore, Kissinger saw the conflict as a geopolitical theatre in which U.S. needed to protect its many interests in Pakistan. Kissinger’s insistence on seeing the power equations at play in South Asia between Pakistan, India, and China led him to believe that U.S. should support West Pakistani interests. He said in his memo to President Nixon,

“On balance, however, it is a more defensible position to operate as if the country remains united than to take any move that would appear to encourage separation. I know you share that view.”

From Kissinger’s perspective, he wanted the U.S. to have the most “defensible position” possible when conducting foreign policy. It is important to unpack what Kissinger meant by “defensible”. In this instance, it appears Kissinger...

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261 “Interview with Scotty Butcher,” December 11, 2011. See Appendix D.
wanted to defend American actions to Yahya Khan. Neither Nixon nor Kissinger wanted to be seen as supporting Pakistan’s disintegration, especially at a time when the U.S. needed West Pakistan’s assistance to open up relations with China.

Kissinger also hoped to defend his viewpoint by misleading the East Pakistanis. On March 26, 1971, the day after the first West Pakistani army strike across East Pakistan, Kissinger was steadfast in his recommendation to the President. He wrote in a memo,

“The advantage of not involving ourselves at this stage is that we do not prematurely harm our relationship with West Pakistan. We can for a time yet claim with the Easterners that the situation is too unclear there to provide a basis for action.”

This memo suggests that Kissinger thought the East Pakistanis would not question U.S. claims that it did not know what was going on. However, this tactic of claiming confusion in an instance where West Pakistan was clearly oppressing Eastern Pakistani Bengalis proved to be present several dilemmas for the Dhaka Consulate. The American officers in Dhaka saw clearly that West Pakistani armed forces were attacking East Pakistanis to suppress a movement for autonomy. The Dhaka Consulate reported the atrocities objectively and accurately, to the best of their ability, what they saw in East Pakistan in such trying times. However, Kissinger refused to pay attention to these reports, therefore causing more frustrations on the part of the Dhaka Consulate.

Furthermore, the State Department response to the Consulate’s reports echoed Kissinger’s claim that the “situation is too unclear.” This assessment was

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insulting to the diplomats in Dhaka who did not view the situation as unclear
and interpreted the Washington response as a clear disregard for their objective
and pointed reports, thus causing a bigger divergence in attitudes towards
American policy.

Moreover, after this memo the Washington Special Action Group (WSAG),
Kissinger’s special interagency group that dealt with foreign crises, set up a
meeting to discuss the matter.264 The minutes from the meeting stated,

“The WSAG agreed that the State Department would be responsible for
monitoring developments in Pakistan on a day-to-day basis and for
insuring that the White House is fully informed.”265

This agreement highlights how the WSAG, or more specifically Kissinger, who
was its chairman, made sure that all substantive policy on the issue was made in
the White House. Kissinger also ensured that there would be no bureaucratic
problem to hinder the flow of information upwards by requiring the State
Department to keep the White House updated on all reports from Pakistan.

The structure that was set up by the WSAG validates Philip Oldenburg’s
claim that “There were, on the whole, no problems in the flow of information
upwards.”266 However, as the decision-making apparatus was set up, the glaring
problems of information moving down the chain of command became more and
more prominent. This caused the Consulate General in Dhaka and the officers on
the ground there to be increasingly frustrated, ultimately causing them to send
the Dissent Letter to Washington.

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264 See Chapter 2 on Nixon-Kissinger model of dealing with foreign policy crises.
265 FRUS: South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 11.
Initial Reactions to the West Pakistani Military Crackdown

Full horror of Pakistan Military atrocities will come to light sooner or later. I, therefore, question continued advisability of present USG posture of pretending to believe GOP false assertion and denying, for understood reasons, that this office is communicating detailed account of events in East Pakistan.


On the night of March 25, 1971, the West Pakistani army launched a military crackdown of East Pakistan called “Operation Searchlight.” During this crackdown, American decision makers in Washington grappled with what course of action to pursue towards Pakistan. Ultimately, they decided on a non-interventionist policy that did not condemn the atrocities by the West Pakistani Army. In this section, I explore the initial reports from the Dacca Consulate and how they were taken into account as Washington crafted its policy.

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On March 28, 1971, The Dhaka Consulate sent a telegram with a subject heading “selective genocide” that stated,

“Here in Dacca we are mute and horrified witnesses to a reign of terror by the Pakistan military. Evidence continues to mount that the MLA (Martial Law Administrators) have a list of Awami League supporters whom they are systematically eliminating by seeking them out in their homes and shooting them down.”

The cable went on to describe in detail some of the atrocities they encountered,

“Moreover, with support of Pakistani military, non-Bengali Muslims are selectively attacking poor people’s quarters and murdering Bengalis and Hindus. Streets of Dacca are aflood with Hindus and others seeking to get

out of Dacca. Many Bengalis sought refuge in homes of Americans, most of whom are extending shelter.”  

This cable reached the National Security Council as Harold Saunders, a NSC staff member, sent a memo to Kissinger on March 28 asking, “Is the present U.S. posture of simply ignoring the atrocities in East Pakistan still advisable or should we now be expressing our shock at least privately to the West Pakistanis?”  

Another cable was sent from the Dhaka Consulate on March 30, 1971 that described how the West Pakistani Army killed unarmed students at Dhaka University. The cable reported, “Students were either shot down in groups or mowed down when they came out of building as groups.”  

The report also noted, “major atrocity accounted to him [an American Food and Agricultural Organization Personnel] took place at Kokeya Girls’ Hall, where building set ablazed and girls were machine-gunned as they fled building.”  

However, as the Dhaka Consulate sent these reports and urged for a revision of American policy towards Pakistan, the Embassy in Islamabad sent its own cable offering different advice. Islamabad Embassy stated, “In this Embassy's view, deplorable as current events in East Pakistan may be, it is undesirable that they be raised to level of contentious international political issue.”  

The Embassy argued that its position stemmed from the fact that they considered this to be purely an internal Pakistani affair matter, “At earlier stages

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268 Ibid.  
271 Ibid.  
in the present crisis, but before March 25-26, USG [U.S. Government] decided it should not intervene effort to influence GOP decision-making or actions in matter deemed to be essentially of internal nature. Crisis has changed course and heightened then, but problems remain essentially internal to Pakistan.”

These reports of killings and the unstable situation in Pakistan were discussed in a conversation between Kissinger and President Nixon on March 29. A brief excerpt of the conversation is given below:

“President Nixon: What’s new today. Got anything on the wires or anything of interest?

Kissinger: There’s nothing of any great consequence Mr. President. Apparently Yahya has got control of East Pakistan.

President Nixon: Good. There’re sometimes the use of power is ...

Kissinger: The use of power against seeming odds pays off. Cause all the experts were saying that 30,000 people can’t get control of 75 million. Well, this may still turn out to be true but as of this moment it seems to be quiet.

President Nixon: Well maybe things have changed. But hell, when you look over the history of nations 30,000 well-disciplined people can take 75 million any time. Look what the Spanish did when they came in and took the Incas and all the rest. Look what the British did when they took India.

... 

President Nixon: ...But anyway I wish him well. I just ... I mean it’s better not to have it come apart than to have to come apart.”

Nixon and Kissinger’s attitude here can be described as apathetic towards the actual situation in East Pakistan. It’s clear that even as reports of atrocities reached Kissinger’s desk, he selectively ignored them. Kissinger did not fairly

\[273\] Ibid.  
characterize the conflict in his conversation with the President, and their pre-existing bias toward West Pakistan shaped the conversations that took place to formulate the pro-West Pakistani policy. In summary, President Nixon stated, “I wouldn't put out a statement praising it, but we're not going to condemn it either.” And this became the official U.S. stance towards Pakistan as West Pakistani violence continued.

This conversation shows the structure set up by Kissinger aided and abetted the subversion of U.S. ideals. Even though the NSC set up a system ensuring that coherent and complete information reached the makers of foreign policy in The White House, Kissinger and Nixon’s bias in the conflict prevented them from assessing the situation objectively. There was no mention of the Dhaka Consulate’s reports of atrocities in the conversation illustrating that even though all relevant information reached the White House, the President and his National Security Assistant refused to take into account new evidence to reconsider their foreign policy choices. Their stubborn adherence to their pre-existing biases exacerbated the structural problems of foreign policy bureaucracy. Nixon and Kissinger’s apathy towards the East Pakistani sufferings led to enormous confusion and distress for the Dhaka Consulate because neither any coherent response nor any revisions to U.S. foreign policy in Pakistan was sent to the Dhaka Consulate to clarify or justify the decisions reached by Nixon and Kissinger.

The SRG met the next day, March 31, 1971, to discuss the military situation in East Pakistan. Henry Kissinger asked his group of foreign policy
experts, "What is our judgment on the countryside generally? Can 30,000 troops do anything against 75 million people?" This question was clearly came out of the conversation Kissinger had with President Nixon the day before. However, the State Department Under Secretary Alexis Johnson and others represented in the SRG did not agree with Nixon and Kissinger’s assessment of Yahya’s military commitment. Alexis Johnson responded to Kissinger’s questions and stated, “In the long run, it will be difficult for 35,000 troops to maintain control over 75 million people.”

Additionally, the SRG meeting also discussed the possible role India would play as violence erupted in East Pakistan. The day before, Kissinger assessed and reported the situation to President Nixon, and the conversation went as such,

“Kissinger: That’s right and of course the Bengalis have been extremely difficult to govern throughout their history.

President Nixon: The Indians can’t govern them either.

Kissinger: No, well actually the Indians who one normally would expect to favor a breakup of Pakistan aren’t so eager for this one. Because they’re afraid that East Pakistan may in time, or East Bengal may in time have an attraction for West Bengal with Calcutta and also that the Chinese will gain a lot of influence there.”

Kissinger’s did not think that India was interested in an independent Bangladesh. However, during the SRG meeting, David H. Blee, the CIA Director of Soviet Affairs, stated,

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275 FRUS: South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 17.
276 FRUS: South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 15.
“Mr. Blee: In the long run there will be pressure. The Bengalis may seek help from the Indians.

Dr. Kissinger: Will the Indians provide it?

Mr. Blee: Four hundred Indian parliamentarians signed a statement in favor of recognizing East Pakistan. “

Lee’s assessment of India’s role was strikingly different from Kissinger’s. These two assessments present a noticeable lack of cohesion in Washington as it tried to formulate policy towards Pakistan. On the one hand, Kissinger thought that India would be opposed to the breakup of Pakistan because of a sense of paranoia that Indians would feel about the possibility of secession of its own West Bengal province. While on the other hand, the fact that 400 out of 802 Indian parliamentary members signed a statement in favor of recognizing Bangladesh within five days of its declaration of Independence portrayed a different story than what Kissinger believed. Yet, differing perceptions and facts of the case could not deter Nixon and Kissinger from assessing the situation incorrectly.

Three days after the SRG meeting, the Secretary of State William Rogers sent a memorandum to the President assessing the conditions in East Pakistan. His subject line read, “Background to the Thinning Out of the U.S. Presence in East Pakistan.” In the memo, Rogers stated to the President,

“The situation in East Pakistan has seriously deteriorated over the last ten days... our Consul General recommended the thinning out of the U.S. presence in East Pakistan... To ensure that their departure will not

\[277\] Ibid. Document 17.

appear to be a precipitate or large scale evacuation, we have made it clear to the Pakistan Government and to the press that, although we are temporarily thinning out our people, we will maintain a substantial enough American presence in East Pakistan to represent our continuing interests and take care of our operational requirements... Looking toward the future, much will depend upon the ability of the Pakistan armed forces in the East, now numbering about 30,000, to maintain effective military control in the face of the general alienation of the Bengali population of 75 million... During the period immediately ahead we may be faced with a number of difficult policy decisions. These include our political reaction to the events in East Pakistan and various aspects of our economic assistance and military supply programs for Pakistan. “

This memorandum shows how differently the Secretary of State William Rogers and NSC Assistant Henry Kissinger phrased the issue in Pakistan. Rogers’ was primarily concerned with the American presence in East Pakistan, something Kissinger completely ignored in his conversation with Nixon. Moreover, in his last two sentences Rogers suggested the possible need for rethinking American policy towards Pakistan.

While Rogers wrote this letter three days after Kissinger had his conversation with President Nixon — by which time the situation in East Pakistan deteriorated even further— he presented the perceptions of the Dhaka Consulate much more accurately. Yet, even in his memo Rogers presented the “thinning out” of American civilians rather inaccurately from what the Dhaka Consulate General suggested. The Americans in East Pakistan felt frustrated that the Islamabad Embassy and the State Department called their request for evacuations as “thinning out” because they saw the wording of “thinning out” as placating West Pakistani interests.279 This misuse of the words “thinning out”

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279 For more on why the Dhaka Consulate felt insulted by the term “thinning out”, refer to Chapter 3.
and the differing attitudes towards American evacuation from East Pakistan highlight that even as the reports from Dhaka Consulate moved upwards through the policy bureaucracy, the original content and frustration of their reports were lost in the fray of bureaucratic channels. The accurate view of the Americans in East Pakistan did not reach the President neither via Secretary Rogers nor via Kissinger. This problem highlights the still inherent problems with the State Department’s communication.

Overall, the initial Washington reaction after the West Pakistani military crackdown was fraught with problems. The Dhaka Consulate’s claim that the “USG posture of pretending to believe GOP false assertion and denying, for understood reasons, that this office is communicating detailed account of events in East Pakistan” was indeed taking place. This section show that the structural problems and inherent biases of American foreign policy leaders caused the United States Government to ignore the reports of the Dhaka Consulate as Nixon and Kissinger formulated the policy.

Furthermore, The Islamabad Embassy’s assertion of the Pakistan military crackdown as purely “an internal affair” matter devalued the reports the Dacca Consulate made. The Islamabad Embassy’s recommendation to not see this matter as an “international political issue” portrayed their assertions and predictions to be woefully inaccurate as the events of East Pakistan did amount to an international crisis that restructured the geography of South Asia.

Moreover, Kissinger’s bias towards West Pakistan, and his evident disregard (or even disdain or worse) for Bengalis, partly due to his China
initiative, prevented him from paying proper heed to reports coming from Dhaka as he presented the issue to President Nixon. And finally, State Secretary Rogers’ claim that the Dhaka Consulate wanted a “thinning out” of American personnel misrepresented the reports and opinions the diplomats in Dhaka. These misinterpretations and diverging attitudes on each level of the American foreign policy bureaucracy would ultimately contribute to the emergence of the Dissent Cable on April 6, 1971

**Response to the Dissent Letter**

*The United States could not condone a brutal and military repression in which thousands of civilians were killed and from which millions fled to India for safety... But Pakistan was our sole channel to China; once it was closed off it would take months to make alternative arrangements.*


After the Dhaka Consulate Dissent letter reached Washington D.C., the leaders of American foreign policy, specifically William Rogers and Henry Kissinger were outraged at Archer Blood for sending his cable. The letter was also not well received by President Nixon either as he ordered Archer Blood to be transferred out of Dhaka. This section will portray the reactions, conversations and policy decisions that immediately came about following the Dissent Letter. It will also highlight how the Nixon-Kissinger method of conducting foreign policy had no place for dissenters. Additionally, this section will also highlight how the structure set up to deal with the South Asian crisis — detailed in the earlier subsection of this chapter— was flawed at every level of U.S. foreign policy.

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On April 6, 1971, Henry Kissinger received a call from Secretary of State William Rogers at 9:35 AM. A short excerpt from the conversation is given below:

“R: I wanted to talk about the goddamn message from our people in Dacca. Did you see it?
K: No
R: It’s miserable. They bitched about our policy and have given it lots of distribution so it will probably leak. It’s inexcusable.

.....

R: It’s a terrible telegram. Couldn’t be worse – says we failed to defend American lives and are morally bankrupt.
K: Blood did that?
R: Quite a few of them signed it. You know we are doing everything we can about it. Trying to get the telegrams back as many as we can. We are going to get a message back to them.
K: I am going in these next two days to keep it from the President until he has given his speech.280
R: If you can keep it from him I will appreciate it. In the first place I think we have made a good choice.

...

R: They talk about condemning atrocities. There are pictures of the East Pakistanis murdering people.
K: Yes. There was one of an East Pakistani holding a head. Do you remember when they said there were 1000 bodies and they had the graves and then we couldn’t find 20?
R: To me it is outrageous they would send this.

....

R: We should get our answers out at the same time the stories come out.”281

Firstly, the conversation demonstrates Rogers carried a frank tone of outrage that he felt towards the diplomats in the Dhaka Consulate. His language suggests that he was angry with Archer Blood for sending this letter out in the first place. Moreover, Rogers was specifically frustrated with Archer Blood because he thought Blood deliberately gave the Dissent Letter a lower classification in order

280 Reference is to the speech Nixon delivered to the nation on April 7 on the situation in Southeast Asia. For text, see Public Papers: Nixon 1971, 522-527.
281 “Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between Secretary of State Rogers and the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” FRUS: South Asia Crisis,1971. Document 20.
to ensure the leak to the press. Kissinger agreed with this assessment and added his own analysis of the Dissent Letter as he wrote,

“ In a favorite device of subordinates seeking to foreclose their superiors’ options, the cables were deliberately given a low classification and hence wide circulation. Leaks to the Congress and press were inevitable.”

While Rogers and Kissinger distrusted Archer Blood’s intention in sending the cable, they ignored some of the subtleties of the message. Blood wrote in the cable,

“ I believe the views of these officers, who are among the finest U.S. officials in East Pakistan, are echoed by the vast majority of the American community, both official and unofficial. I also subscribe to these views but I do not think it appropriate for me to sign their statement as long as I am principal officer at this post.”

This statement was completely ignored by Rogers and Kissinger who suspected Blood had malicious intent to leak. To be fair, Archer Blood added this section out of formality but also to reassure Washington that he was still a loyal policy enforcer of the United States. Moreover, in his own memoir, Blood took blame for the leaking of the message as he agreed that he should have labeled his message as “secret” rather than just “confidential” in order to prevent wider circulation. However, he stated, “My fault was carelessness, not malignance.”

Needless to say, Blood’s intentions were not taken into account by President Nixon ordered Archer Blood transferred out of Dhaka.
Additionally, Rogers insisted that this message does not get forwarded to the President. Rogers’ request to Kissinger highlights how the Nixon foreign policy mechanism worked. In Nixon’s foreign policy apparatus, even his own Secretary of State could not get through to Nixon without Henry Kissinger acting as a filter regarding any foreign policy matter. However, Kissinger’s access to the President was unprecedented and it limited the scope of viewpoints that President Nixon received as he made his decisions on what course of actions America should follow as the crisis developed. Similar to how Kissinger neglected to mention the reports from the Dhaka Consulate in his conversation on March 29, this conversation illustrated yet another instance of Kissinger withholding information from the President — albeit temporarily and at the recommendation of Rogers this time — to ensure that Nixon would not be alarmed about the situation.

Another component of the message considers the validity of the Consulate’s reports of West Pakistani atrocities. Both Rogers and Kissinger cite various reports of East Pakistanis killing non-Bengali Biharis and “razakars” (traitors to Bangladesh) to counter the claim that any atrocity was even taking place in East Pakistan. What they failed to realize was that most of the foreign press reporting done in East Pakistan was controlled by the West Pakistani government which had its own agenda to promote to the press. In one instance, the Dhaka Consulate reported on one of the press tours organized by the GOP,

“Group [of Journalists] was tightly programmed and was not permitted to talk with Bengalis... Galloway [an United Press International correspondent] reported that one Japanese correspondent who had also remained behind in Dacca for several days, had been arrested by Army
for taking pictures in burned-out Hindu Bazaar and had been questioned for several hours before being released with apologies."  

From the above cable, it is clear that West Pakistani intervention and limited foreign press attention in East Pakistan portrayed a very different picture of what was going on in Pakistan than the realities on the ground. Rogers and Kissinger’s conversation suggests that they were also victimized by this West Pakistani propaganda. Here again, we see another instance where the reports from the U.S. government’s own diplomatic officers were given less credence than slanted press reports. The lack of trust in the Consulate emphasizes yet another problem of trust present within the U.S. foreign policy bureaucracy.

Rogers and Kissinger’s conversation left the State Department with the task of containing the Dissent Letter and providing a substantive response to it. Rogers and Kissinger put Joseph Sisco, the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs in charge of this task. After the Dissent Letter reached Washington at 2 am on April 6, nine junior officers in the State Department added a memorandum proclaiming their support of the letter. They demanded that U.S. condemn the genocide in East Pakistan and impose an embargo of U.S. military and economic aid to Yahya’s government.

Faced with a potential bureaucratic rebellion, Sisco called Henry Kissinger and stated, “my people seem to be leaving the reservation.”  

Kissinger replied by stating that Sisco needed to keep the dissenting officers “in

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line” and added，“After all Joe, you must be capable of intimidation of subordinates as well as superiors.”288 This disturbing account highlights how Kissinger sought to use the “dissent channel” Nixon set up in 1969. Instead of considering dissent as a legitimate reason to question his foreign policy decisions, Henry Kissinger used it as a political tool to ensure that dissenting officers were marginalized.289

After the conversation, Sisco brought in the dissenting officers in Washington and made it clear to them that he was not “buying” the Dhaka Consulate’s assessments. He suggested, “Blood and his staff might be ‘overreacting’.”290 The next day the State Department finally responded substantively to the Dhaka Consulate’s concerns by stating,

“We have been restrained in our public utterances for several reasons: (1) We have been particularly mindful that the cooperation of safety of Americans in both East and West Pakistan and the GOP is necessary in order to assure orderly and safe evacuation of Americans from East Pakistan. (2) We view situation in East Pakistan as primarily an internal matter of the Pakistan Government and most other governments have same view; and (3) Reports have been conflicting: media US has been carrying stories of atrocities on both sides although we do not, of course equate the two.”291

The State Department’s reply to the Dissent Letter recycled the same arguments that caused the Dhaka Consulate to be frustrated in the first place. The realities on the ground in Dhaka were different than the ones State Department described. The telegram the Consulate sent to Washington in response outlined their realities. Their biggest frustration of the Dhaka Consulate was the

288 Ibid.
289 See Chapter 2 for origins of the “dissent channel”.
290 Morris, Uncertain Greatness, p. 220.
inconsistent position the State Department took on March 2, and in their
to the Dissent Letter. On March 2, the State Department sent the Dhaka
Consulate the following clarification of U.S. policy towards East Pakistan,

“If West Pakistani intervention becomes imminent or actually occurs, we
would have an interest in doing what we could [to] avoid bloodshed, and
restore peace and to prevent the conflict from escalating beyond a purely
East-West Pakistani clash, we should be willing to risk irritating the West
Pakistanis, and the threat of stopping aid should give us considerable
leverage.”

The Consulate telegram went on to state how Washington ignored this policy as
no one in Washington made no statements to condemn the West Pakistani
government after it commenced its military crackdown of East Pakistan. This
added credence to the charge the Dissent letter accused Washington for “
bend[ing] over backwards to placate West Pakistani interests.”

In hindsight, the Dhaka Consulate was unaware that the reason for
Washington’s lack of response was due to Nixon and Kissinger’s bias towards
Yahya Khan, who played a crucial part of their China initiative and the
misrepresentation of their views by the State Department. The system was
stacked against the Dhaka Consulate, as West Pakistani interests pervaded all
sectors of the foreign affairs bureaucracy and the Nixon and Kissinger way of
conducting foreign policy in secret did not take into account the moral interests
and the day-to-day realities of the Dhaka Consulate in 1971.

Furthermore, the Embassy in Islamabad also had divergent assessment of
the situation in East Pakistan. After the Dissent Letter was sent to Washington,

the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Joseph Farland, sent a telegram through a secret backchannel to Henry Kissinger where he reported,

“Embassy has had full-scale revolt on general issue by virtually all officers in Consulate General, Dacca, coupled with forfeiture of leadership for American community there. Dacca’s reporting has been tendentious to an extreme.”

This outlined the layers of problem that were manifesting themselves during the crisis as the Embassy and the State Department disagreed and distrusted the reports coming from the Dhaka Consulate.

It is crucial to note that Ambassador Farland’s assessment came at the special request of Henry Kissinger, who was ordered by President Nixon to seek Farland’s opinion on the matter. Nixon was presented with three possible options the U.S. could take towards Pakistan: a) “hands off” policy where United States would do nothing to discourage West Pakistan’s actions against East Pakistan; b)”use of selective influence” where the US would express its concern for the violence in East Pakistan privately and seek to end hostilities; and c) “an all-out effort to end the hostilities” where the United States would publicly condemn the actions taken by West Pakistan and threaten to cut off aid as leverage for its position.

However, as these options were presented to the President, Nixon and Kissinger thought the State Department needlessly recommended the actions

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293 FRUS: South Asia Crisis, 1971, April 21, 1971, Document 34.
294 These options were discussed in a Senior Review Group meeting before presented to the President on April 19,1971. See FRUS: South Asia Crisis, 1971, Document 32.
that would offend Yahya Khan, due to its Indian bias.\textsuperscript{295} Therefore, to gain an unbiased opinion on the matter, Nixon and Kissinger sought out Ambassador Farland—a “man outside the regular Foreign Service Establishment.”\textsuperscript{296}

Joseph Farland lived up to his reputation and commented negatively on the State Department stance on the policy options given to President: “You must be aware there is strong advocacy in the State Department seeking to pull the rug from under GOP and support the idea of an early Bangla Desh.”\textsuperscript{297} Farland disagreed with this State Department position and added his own evaluation of the crisis,

“\textquote[It has been my view, perhaps substantiated by East Pakistan provincial Governor Tikka Khan’s conciliatory TV broadcast on April 19, that GOP is not yet prepared to go much further than it has already gone, unless perhaps goaded into a Sherman-like march prior to complete pull-out. Contrariwise, I think there is strong possibility that, after this initial act of violence, cooler heads may question the worth of hanging on unduly long to a wasting asset.]\textsuperscript{298}"

\textsuperscript{295}The policy options presented to President Nixon are recorded in Document 132 of \textit{FRUS: Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972}. The document also presented the State Department stance on the continuance of U.S. aid to Pakistan as it stated, “Although we hope for an early peaceful accommodation, our public and private statements that current programs are under review have indicated to the GOP that we are not prepared to carry on exactly as before as long as our programs cannot operate, our disaster relief cannot be provided, and as resource transfers cannot take place on the equitable basis as we had originally assumed in making our loans to the Government of Pakistan.” These comments concerned Kissinger who wrote in his memoir: “Ignorant of the China initiative, heavily influenced by its traditional Indian bias, in early April – without clearance with the White house — the Department moved towards a new arms embargo on Pakistan... The State Department also began to throttle economic aid to Pakistan, again without White House clearance, by the ingenious device of claiming that our existing programs could no longer be made effective through the entire country because of the civil war.” See \textit{White House Years}, p. 854.

\textsuperscript{296} Ambassador Farland was a political appointee of Richard Nixon. Therefore, Nixon trusted Farland. In fact, Farland was later flown to the U.S. to be briefed on Kissinger’s secret trip to China through Pakistan. Farland was also given the task of organizing the secret trip between the Pakistani, Chinese and American officials in West Pakistan. See Kissinger, \textit{White House Years}, p.722.

\textsuperscript{297} \textit{FRUS: South Asia Crisis, 1971}, April 21, 1971. Document 34.

\textsuperscript{298} Ibid.
His comments highlight the enormous schism that existed between the Dhaka Consulate and Islamabad Embassy in terms of their assessment of the situation.

While Dhaka Consulate officers objectively reported the horrors of West Pakistani military crackdown, their own Ambassador did not trust their reports and instead relied on an account given by General Tikka Khan, who was known for his cruel and repressive tactics. Farland’s comments offer support to Philip Oldenburg’s later retrospective analysis of the situation. Oldenburg writes: “The fact that the Islamabad Embassy seemed to give greater credence to its Pakistan government sources than to its own officers in the field... hurt the morale of the officers in Dacca.” Demoralized, frustrated and ignored, the Dhaka Consulate’s position became even more difficult as it sought to objectively report on the crisis in East Pakistan.

In a way, the conflicts within the U.S. foreign policy bureaucracy could be broken down to the three possible policy suggestions presented to the President. The “hands off policy” was advocated by Kissinger and Nixon, who distrusted the Indian bias of the State Department; the “selective influence policy” was taken by the State Department and the Islamabad Embassy, which disagreed with the Dhaka Consulate’s reports but still sought to use U.S. influence to influence Yahya Khan and the West Pakistani government; and “the all-out effort to end hostilities” approach that was recommended by the Dhaka Consulate and the

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junior-level dissenters of the State Department, based on reports by U.S. foreign service officers who were the closest observers of the crisis and who were appalled by the lack of U.S. condemnation of the horrific events committed by the West Pakistani government.

Unfortunately, at the early stages of this conflict most Washington decision-makers ignored the Consulate’s assessment of the event even as the Consulate exclaimed,

“Horror and flouting of democratic norms are objective reality and not emotionally contrived. It is inconceivable [to us] that the world can mount magnificent relief efforts to save victims of last November’s cyclone disaster on one hand, and on the other condone indiscriminate killing of same people by essentially alien army defending interests different of the general populace.”

The Consulate’s appeal was of no avail in deciding the United States policy as President Nixon chose to pursue the first option laid out by Interdepartmental Group’s proposals. He told Henry Kissinger, “It’s a classic situation for us to stay out of... For us to cut off aid would infuriate the West Pakistanis.”

However, as military crackdown of East Pakistan continued, and the possibility of a war between India and Pakistan increasingly became a possibility, the conflicts of interests that existed between the Dhaka Consulate and the rest of the bureaucracy shifted to reflect a larger conflict between the

White House and the State Department. The major issue at contention was which side the United States would support during the war: India or Pakistan.

**Indian Refugee Crisis and Military Aid to Pakistan**

_We would continue to maintain friendly relations with India, but we would strongly oppose any Indian military action. Our disapproval could not, however, take the form of military aid or military measure on behalf of Pakistan._


After the Dissent Letter was discussed and dealt with by the Administration, the United States Government was faced with two substantial policy questions that it needed to take a stance on: the Indian refugee crisis and the U.S. military aid to West Pakistan. In both cases, the American policy makers in Washington formulated the position without regard to the reports coming from Dhaka. Moreover, the press and Congress played a considerable role in formulating this policy. This section explores these two problems the United States faced and points out the inherent anti-Indian bias that Kissinger possessed in formulating this policy.

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Following the March 25 Pakistani military crackdown, as more than 10 million people crossed the border between East Pakistan and India to seek refuge in India’s West Bengal region; it signified the largest human migration in the history of East Pakistan.\(^3\) Hearing these reports, there was a Congressional Subcommittee formed to address the U.S. response to the crisis. In one of the

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\(^3\) See Chapter 3, Section “Refugees, American Arms and ‘Selective Genocide’ of Hindus.”
subcommittee hearings in June, Archer Blood testified to the address the connection between the Pakistani military crackdown and the refugee problem:

“Senator Fong: So why did the refugees leave?

Archer Blood: ... Many Hindus left because of the way they were treated.

Senator Fong: Did many of them leave because they say conditions were imposed on Hindus they thought they could not live with?

Archer Blood: I assume so, yes.”304

Blood’s evaluation of the situation came at the heels of his reports detailing “Selective Genocide” of Hindus conducted by the Pakistani Army.305 The Dhaka Consulate’s reports of these atrocities were more or less ignored by Nixon and Kissinger who had their own policy agendas to pursue the conflict. Since Blood’s departure from his post in Dhaka on June 6, the situation in East Pakistan settled to a prolonged conflict as the West Pakistani Army asserted relative control over the cities but the East Pakistanis formed their own guerilla army called “Mukti Bahini” that disrupted West Pakistani communication and supplied and drove them into the “fortified enclaves.”306 However, the biggest problem facing East Pakistan and India was the refugee problem. In a conversation with Dr. Kissinger, Kenneth Keating, the Ambassador to India stated,

“Dacca is reasonably quiet, although only half the normal inhabitants are there. The Pakistani army is now concentrating on the Hindu population. At first the refugees crossing into India were in the same proportion of Hindu and Muslim as in the whole East Pakistani population. Now, 90% are Hindus.”307

304 “Relief Problems in East Pakistan and India, Part I”, Congressional Subcommittee Hearings, June 28, 1971, p. 46.
305 See Chapter 3 Section “Refugees, American Arms and ‘Selective Genocide of Hindus’”.
306 Roger Morris, Uncertain Greatness, p. 222.
307 FRUS: South Asia Crisis, 1971, June 3, 1971, Document 64.
Subsequently, Keating and Kissinger went on to have a conversation about what policy the United States should take as the crisis strained Indian government’s ability to handle the ten million refugees. There was a clear difference between the stance taken by Keating and Kissinger. Keating believed that U.S. should cut off all military aid to Pakistan immediately and demand that Pakistan stop killing East Pakistanis in order to receive U.S. economic assistance.\textsuperscript{308} Kissinger, on the other hand, was mainly concerned with India’s consideration of using military force in East Pakistan. He reiterated the President’s position to cut off Indian economic assistance if such a situation occurred. Kissinger also added, “In all honesty…the President has a special feeling for President Yahya. One cannot make policy on that basis, but it is a fact of life.”\textsuperscript{309}

This conversation outlined the fundamental difference the Indian Embassy and Washington had in assessing the situation at hand. Keating’s assertion that Pakistan should be held accountable for its military crackdown of East Pakistan that caused the refugee crisis was in striking contrast to the anti-Indian stance Nixon and Kissinger took. Instead of threatening to cut off aid to Pakistan — even as countless reports from U.S. diplomats on the ground spoke about the atrocities committed by the Pakistan army — the President immediately considered withholding aid to India hearing reports that India \textit{considered} using military force to lessen the refugee crisis on its borders. The

\textsuperscript{308} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{309} Ibid.
pro-Pakistani and the anti-Indian position of President could not be more apparent.

The President’s position to ignore Yahya Khan’s military crackdown illustrated yet another example of how Washington ignored the proposals put forth by the Dhaka Consulate. In his memoir, Archer Blood stated that he had sent a proposal to Washington as early as March 30 to reconsider U.S. position in South Asia. He wrote,

“A military solution to East Pakistan’s desire to attain a high degree of autonomy cannot contribute to stability in South Asia. It is a vivid example of suppression by force and offering continuing possibilities of civil resistance or guerilla warfare.”

Blood went on to propose that the United States should withhold all economic assistance to Pakistan except for those that would prevent starvation in East Pakistan. Moreover, Blood suggested that President Nixon should privately convey to Yahya his “deep disapproval of suppression of democratic forces and widespread loss of lives and property.” These recommendations were never given a second thought in the Nixon-Kissinger-led foreign policy.

Interlinked with the refugee crisis in East Pakistan, United States military assistance to Pakistan played a prominent role as U.S. sought to prevent the start of a war between India and Pakistan. At home, the press and Congress became aware of the Pakistani military crackdown in East Pakistan. There was increased pressure on the Administration to cut off aid to Pakistan. As Kissinger recalls,

“On June 17, the New York Times took the administration to task, calling our public statement urging restraint on both sides ‘belated’; our appeal

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would be fruitless, said the Times, unless we matched word with deed, that is cut off all American aid to Pakistan until we there was a genuine political accommodation in East Pakistan.”311

Additionally, the New York Times reported that on June 22, a ship left the American shore for Pakistan carrying weapons, labeling it a “breach of faith” between the American public and Congress as well as India that undermined American credibility.312 Responding to these claims, Kissinger outlined that the U.S. government was in no position to control those shipments because they were already purchased before the State Department cut off $35 million worth of military aid to Pakistan. He expressed his frustration,

“We could convince no one that we simply had no mechanism to track down licenses already issued, nor that the amount of ‘seepage’ was miniscule and could affect the military balance neither on the subcontinent nor in Bengal.”313

And while Kissinger was correct in stating the military shipment to Pakistan most likely did not affect the military crackdown because the shipment was so small, his memo to the President on August 3 suggest a different story. In this memo, Kissinger wrote,

“The Pakistanis have played along with the administrative game and have not made an issue of our restrictions. It was clear when I was in Islamabad that they were grateful that the US had not taken the formal step of imposing an embargo. The loss of military supplies bothers the military, but to Yahya it seems at least as important that the US has not joined others in condemning him...The rationale behind this distinction was that administrative actions over equipment within US Government jurisdiction could be explained for a time as bureaucratic delays, but establishing control over equipment within Pakistani jurisdiction would

311 Kissinger, White House Years, p. 858.
312 Ibid.
313 Ibid.
have had conveyed all the political signals of a full embargo. Those were signals we wanted to avoid."\textsuperscript{314}

The memo presented above belies Kissinger’s words in his memoir and further highlights the previously stated strong emphasis in American policy towards not offending Yahya Khan. Furthermore, the memo also suggests that the government did have the power to stop the shipment, but such an action was not pursued in fear of offending Yahya Khan who might have interpreted it as American embargo. This policy portrays the two interests that Kissinger was trying to balance: on the one hand, the government was trying to show the American public that it was not supporting the brutal military crackdown of West Pakistan, but secretly it did not want to express condemnation of West Pakistan’s military crackdown. This was the “bureaucratic snafu” that Christopher Van Hollen, the Deputy Under Secretary of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, described in his 1980 paper criticizing Kissinger’s policy.\textsuperscript{315}

Additionally, after the media fiasco regarding U.S. military assistance occurred in June, the United States gradually adopted a policy of providing aid to India to assist in its refugee crisis. On June 24, the State Department announced that Washington would provide $70 million to India to help the refugees. This became the centerpiece for U.S. policy undertakings in South Asia. Kissinger calculated that by providing aid to India, the U.S. could kill two birds with one stone, as he stated to the President and SRG members,

“The issue is whether we are going to use relief to squeeze Yahya to set political conditions or whether we are going to use relief to deprive the Indians of an excuse to attack.”

In essence, the United States tried to follow both above courses of action in pursuing its interests in South Asia. However, the problem with this approach was that United States was not addressing the main cause of the problem. The real problem was not the refugee crisis, per se, but rather the military crackdown that the West Pakistani government engaged in East Pakistan.

Instead of pressing Yahya Khan on his military’s brutal tactics that selectively committed genocide against Hindus in East Pakistan, President Nixon sought to engage him by taking a neutral stance towards his actions by providing relief to the Indians. The U.S. government did not clearly articulate that it was deeply concerned with the West Pakistani military crackdown because it was the morally defensible position. Instead, it sought to soften the criticism it had for Yahya Khan by outlining that the United States had a concern with Pakistan’s military only because of the refugee crisis. These differences in interpretations of the representation of the refugee crisis portray United States bias towards Pakistan.

This bias was clearly portrayed in the August 11 meeting Nixon and Kissinger had with the Senior Review Group members as Nixon stated his distrust for the State Department bureaucracy and its Indian bias,

“Every Ambassador who goes to India falls in love with India. Some have the same experience in Pakistan—though not as many because the Pakistanis are a different breed. The Pakistanis are straightforward—and

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sometimes extremely stupid. The Indians are more devious, sometimes so smart that we fall for their line.”

Nixon’s words could not portray his bias any more clearly. However, his assessment of the situation was ignorant of many of the facts presented in the situation. Many historians have recorded Nixon’s bias towards Pakistan, but in this case, his bias towards Yahya Khan combined with his distrust for the State Department to formulate U.S. policy in the crisis.

The government was pressed into deciding this policy due to the pressure form the press. As Nixon stated,

“The media no longer have a great deal to write about on Vietnam. The big story is Pakistan. The political people—Democrat and Republican—are ‘raising hell’ about this issue. ‘And they should from the standpoint of human suffering.’”

While press attention caused Nixon and Kissinger to pay more attention towards East Pakistan, it did nothing to sway from their support of West Pakistan.

Neither he nor Kissinger gave any credence to the possibility that the State Department had a legitimate preference for and geostrategic deference to India. As Christopher Van Hollen stated,

“On the basis of an basis of the objective assessment of the power equations in South Asia, there was government-wide agreement that India merited greater attention in terms of U.S. interests.”

These statements fell on deaf ears as both Nixon and Kissinger ignored the assessments made by the State Department regarding how to proceed as India and Pakistan marched closer to war. Moreover, the administration’s myopic to

\[^{317}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{318}\text{Ibid.}\]
the point of ignorance stand towards Pakistan was highlighted earlier by its selective disregard for the proposals coming from the Dhaka Consulate.

“Bend[ing] over backwards to placate West Pakistani interests”—the accusation of the Dissent cable—became U.S. policy.

**Conclusion: India-Pakistan War**

*When the Nixon Administration took office, our policy objective on the subcontinent was, quite simply, to avoid adding another complication to our agenda.*


After the Nixon Administration settled on its policy towards the refugees in India and handled the media fiasco over the arms shipment to Pakistan, the U.S. observed escalating tensions between India and Pakistan that led towards war. Despite U.S. attempts to lessen the tensions, America could exert very little influence over the events on the ground.

The Indians aided in the training of the East Pakistani Mukti Bahini during the continual West Pakistani military crackdown in East Pakistan. On November 22, 1971, Indian troops crossed the border into East Pakistan to augment the Mukti Bahini forces and weaken the Pakistani Army's position in the war that was about to ensue. West Pakistan claimed November 22 as the date for the start of the war and Henry Kissinger used this date in his memoir as the start date of the war. However, most observers contested this claim and claimed war started on December 3.\(^{320}\) On that date, the Pakistani Air Force launched a surprise attack on eight Indian airfields in Northern and Western

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\(^{320}\)For a brief discussion on the historiography of this contested date, see Oldenburg, "The Breakup of Pakistan," p. 22.
India. India responded by a full-scale invasion of East Pakistan and selected airstrikes against West Pakistan until they were in full control of East Pakistan.\footnote{Christopher Van Hollen, “The Tilt Policy Revisited: Nixon-Kissinger Geopolitics in South Asia”, p. 350.}

On December 11, 2011, President Nixon sent the aircraft carrier \textit{USS Enterprise} and eight other ships to the Bay of Bengal to intimidate the Indian Navy blockade of East Pakistan. Henry Kissinger explained the rationale for Nixon’s actions,

“An aircraft carrier task force that we had alerted previously was now ordered to move toward the Bay of Bengal, ostensibly for the evacuation of Americans but in reality to give emphasis to our warnings against an attack on West Pakistan.”\footnote{Kissinger, \textit{The White House Years}, p. 905.}

Kissinger defended the President’s decision that risked war with India and called it a “courageous” move on Nixon’s part that resulted in Soviet Union pressuring India’s Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to stop the war.\footnote{India and the Soviet Union signed the “Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation” on August 9, 1971. Nixon and Kissinger suspected India to be acting as a “client” state for the Soviet Union.} However, many historians argue that Kissinger misjudged the Indo-Pakistan war to be another Cold War theatre when it was only a conflict between regional powers.\footnote{See Robert J. McMahon, ”The Danger of Geopolitical Fantasies: Nixon, Kissinger and the South Asia Crisis of 1971,” in \textit{Nixon in the World: American Foreign Relations, 1969-1977}, ed. Fredrik Logevall and Andrew Preston (New York: Oxford University press, 2008).} He pointed out that the India had signed a friendship treaty with the U.S.S.R in August 1971, signaling a pseudo-alliance between the two countries.\footnote{For more on the India-Soviet Friendship Treaty in 1971, See C.J. Mohan, ”India and the Balance of Power,” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 85, no. 4 (2006).}
It was unlikely that the Soviets convinced Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to stop the war, and a more likely explanation was that Gandhi was satisfied in ending the war after her army liberated East Pakistan from West Pakistan’s military control. Ultimately, India and Pakistan agreed on a cease-fire on December 16 after India gained full control of East Pakistan and forced the West Pakistani army stationed there to surrender. December 16 became a national holiday known Bangladesh Victory Day.

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The lessons of this chapter are manifold. Henry Kissinger’s structural set up paved the way for the policy the United States would adopt as the events of East Pakistan escalated to a war between India and Pakistan. This chapter highlights how the initial reactions by the Washington bureaucracy and the Islamabad Embassy presented a multi-layered structural problem that brought about the frustration felt by the Dhaka Consulate. The structural problems were further demonstrated by the Washington response that dismissed the Dissent Letter and forced Consul-General Archer Blood out of Dhaka. It also reflected Nixon’s distrust for his State Department and presents a moral failure for his Administration.

It portrays how Nixon and Kissinger used their “dissent channel” to root out dissent instead of accepting the Dissent Letter on its merits to reevaluate the biases that drove American policy. Their dismissal foreshadowed the upcoming structural conflict that would take place between the White House and the State Department as “Nixon and Kissinger cut themselves off completely from the
South Asia experts in the State Department, whose voices were ignored when the situation escalated.”

This chapter’s spotlight on the Washington response to the Dhaka Consulate reports and its handling of the Dissent Letter brings together the variety of structural problems that were at stake during this crisis. The institutional inefficiencies of the State Department that caused communication to lag were addressed by the NSC, which set up a structure to ensure that all information reached the White House. However, it did not ensure that all Nixon and Kissinger took into account all the reports coming from Pakistan — leaving their pre-existing biases to formulate U.S. policy during the crisis.

Moreover, the Nixon-Kissinger style of formulating foreign policy marginalized the State Department and left it in the dark in regards to the China initiative. This translated to causing confusion for the Dhaka Consulate because they were unaware of Nixon and Kissinger’s “Tilt” towards Pakistan. And finally, these structural problems and the enormous control Nixon and Kissinger exercised over foreign affairs led to severe misjudgments on their part. Nixon’s personal bias toward Yahya Khan and Kissinger’s insistence on applying a geopolitical framework to a regional conflict caused the United States ignore the main cause of the conflict: Yahya Khan and his government’s military crackdown in East Pakistan.

Starting with the Dhaka Consulate reports detailing the atrocities in East Pakistan, Nixon and Kissinger ignored all reports and accounts that detailed the

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East Pakistani atrocities because it went against their pre-conceived favorable biases toward Pakistan. Even the Dissent Letter, a cry from American diplomats urging the U.S. to reconsider its silence in the face of a brutal military campaign, did not make a dent in Nixon and Kissinger’s foreign policy. Further, this chapter highlights that Nixon and Kissinger’s pre-existing biases — along with their excuse that their secret China initiative could be justified to support a repressive regime — drove their “Tilt” policy. Thus, the Dissent Letter acts to portray the myopic nature of Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy that ignored the horrific atrocities in East Pakistan. Overall, Nixon and Kissinger’s bias and ignorance caused them to completely misjudge the overall crisis and their strict dismissal of the Dissent Letter showcased their moral failures.
Conclusion

With hindsight it is clear that structural issues in Washington, Islamabad, and Dhaka shaped U.S. foreign policy on South Asia in 1971. The title of my thesis — Disconnect, Distrust, and Dissent — reflects these problems. The “Disconnect” refers especially to the Presidential actions that ignored the key causes of the structural problem in the State Department; and exacerbated them further by marginalizing the State Department’s role in foreign policy. It also encompasses the divergent perspectives inherent in the structure of the American diplomatic missions in Pakistan. “Distrust” refers to Nixon and Kissinger’s distrustful attitudes toward the State Department, which indeed caused them to marginalize the State Department while formulating policy. Thus the “disconnect” and the “distrust” were inherently intertwined. In addition, “distrust” illustrates the hostility with which Nixon and Kissinger viewed any position that hindered their secret China Initiative orchestrated by Pakistan.

“Distrust” also characterizes Nixon’s personal biases towards both India and Pakistan. Finally, “Dissent” points to the end result of these larger structural forces: the Dhaka Consulate Dissent Letter. In what follows, I elaborate on how these factors combined to define—and ultimately undermine—U.S. foreign policy during a major turning point in modern South Asian history.

Structure and Process

My thesis asserts that U.S. policy during the Bangladeshi War had its origins in larger structural problems of the State Department bureaucracy. It argues that
the Nixon-Kissinger model of conducting foreign policy exacerbated these problems. I demonstrate that starting in the 1960s, President Kennedy and Johnson did not address the causes of the structural problems but instead marginalized the professional Foreign Service bureaucracy altogether. By depicting this history, I illustrate the historical trends that Nixon and Kissinger followed when they organized their foreign policy structure.

I also argue that the U.S. position in the Bangladesh War partly resulted from the structural conflicts of its mission in Pakistan. I show that officials in the Islamabad Embassy and the Dhaka Consulate were influenced by their local settings when they made their policy assessments and sent reports to Washington. This may be understood in terms of what foreign policy experts refer to as “clienency.” However, since the attitudes of the East and West Pakistanis were so divergent, Washington could not give the same priority to reports coming from both missions. The hierarchical nature of the Embassy and Consulate relationship meant that U.S. interests would be defined more by the positions held by Islamabad (i.e., West Pakistani government elites) instead of the Dhaka Consulate (i.e., the democratically elected East Pakistani leaders). This structure foreshadowed Washington’s dismissal of the Dhaka Consulate’s reports in 1971.

Furthermore, I contend that the Nixon-Kissinger model of conducting foreign policy exacerbated these historical problems of structure as it further marginalized the State Department. Nixon and Kissinger’s distrust for the State Department caused them to leave the bureaucracy “in the dark” as Kissinger
negotiated with Pakistan to open up relations with China. This left the State Department, and by extension, the Islamabad Embassy and the Dhaka Consulate, unaware of West Pakistan’s elevated strategic importance to the U.S. Uninformed of the White House’s China initiative, the State Department in Washington could not properly relay the pro-West-Pakistani rationale to its Foreign Service officers on the ground.

It is also the case, as I note in Chapter 2, that Nixon and Kissinger had pre-existing biases favoring Pakistan, and I argue that these also influenced policy during 1971. Nixon favored Pakistan because he was impressed by the Pakistanis “pulling out the red carpet” for him during his visit there before he took office. And Kissinger, meanwhile, harbored a deep distrust for India’s relationship with the Soviet Union and thought it was imperative that America supported Pakistan, its geopolitical ally, against a communist ally (i.e. India). Their biases and misplaced judgments blinded them to facts even as the horrific events in 1971 unfolded. They discredited the Dhaka Consulate’s reports of West Pakistani orchestrated atrocities in East Pakistan. Additionally, they wrongly accused India of escalating tensions in South Asia—even ignoring the clear role that West Pakistan’s military crackdown played in starting the conflict.

Also crucial was the fact of the Dhaka Consulate’s location in East Pakistan—a thousand miles away form its Embassy in Islamabad. Given the real potential for violence in 1971, this distance added to the enormous pressures felt by the officers stationed in the Dhaka Consulate. Ignored and distrusted by their own Embassy superiors in Islamabad—many of whom were influenced by
the rhetoric and propaganda of West Pakistan’s elite, thereby exhibiting “clientelism”—the Consulate witnessed the atrocities in East Pakistan with increasing frustrations towards Islamabad and Washington.

Its reports to Washington were misinterpreted and labeled as instances of “clientelism” even though it was clear that the Islamabad Embassy displayed its own version of “clientelism” in its reporting from West Pakistan. In the final analysis, the hierarchical nature of the chain of diplomatic command meant that Washington would discount the East Pakistani reports of horror and atrocities. In Chapter Three, I portray how these structural problems manifested themselves on the ground, creating a level of frustration and disgust that the Dhaka Consulate officers could not tolerate. The Dissent Letter with its implicit charge of U.S. “moral bankruptcy” was the dramatic result.

Nixon and Kissinger’s reaction to the Dissent Letter presented yet another moral failure for American foreign policy. Instead of accepting the Dissent Letter on its merits and reconsidering America’s flawed policy towards Pakistan, Nixon chose to remove the chief dissenter, Archer Blood, from his post as Consul-General in Dhaka. Additionally, Kissinger insisted that the State Department keep all of the dissenting officers “in line”. These actions show that the “dissent channel” created in 1969 was only a political apparatus deployed by the Administration, that it lacked substance.

In reality, Nixon and Kissinger could not be swayed away from pursing their policy objectives in South Asia regardless of how many State Department officials dissented against them. Their stubborn adherence to pre-existing
prejudices caused them to disregard the facts of the situation and substantiate the Dissent Letter’s claim that America experienced “moral bankruptcy” by “bend[ing] over backwards to placate West Pakistani interests” in 1971.

**The Aftermath**

The Dissent Letter did not change the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy in 1971. Yet, it serves to demonstrate an instance, possibly one of many, that caused them to reevaluate the problems of their foreign policy structure during Nixon’s second term. Kissinger would later write in his memoir,

> “Though I did not think it at the time, I have become convinced that a President should make the Secretary of State his principal adviser and use the national security adviser primarily as a senior administrator and coordinator to make certain that each significant point of view is heard. If the security adviser becomes active in the development and articulation of policy he must inevitably diminish the Secretary of State and reduce his effectiveness. Foreign governments are confused and, equally dangerous, given opportunity to play one part of our government off against each other; the State Department becomes demoralized and retreats into parochialism.”

His reflections on the structural problem highlight his awareness—and perhaps even chagrin—of the problematic role he played in America’s policy towards South Asia in 1971. In this instance, one can see that Nixon and Kissinger made strides in assessing one of the key causes of America’s foreign policy structural problems: Presidential actions that marginalized the State Department. To this end, Nixon’s appointment of Henry Kissinger as both Secretary of State and National Security Advisor in his second term demonstrated an attempt to mend persisting structural problems with U.S. foreign policy.

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327 Kissinger, *The White House Years*, p. 27.
Despite this, one cannot dismiss their decisions in 1971 as merely a lesson they learned to correct later. Their actions had severe consequences. And while their flawed decisions failed to prevent the creation of Bangladesh, and certainly did not cause the death of any American civilians, they did constitute a moral failure on the part of the American government. The seventy five million people of Bangladesh, the ten million East Pakistani refugees in India, and the rest of the world are aware of U.S. policy in East Pakistan in 1971, and continue to judge harshly the American government’s silence towards atrocities by West Pakistan — and deservedly so.

My thesis highlights Nixon and Kissinger’s problematic stance but frames the history of U.S. policy in 1971 in a larger context. I have asked: Why did the Islamabad Embassy, the State Department, Henry Kissinger and President Richard Nixon dismiss the merits of the Dhaka Consulate Dissent Letter in 1971? I conclude that the structural problems existing in the U.S. foreign policy bureaucracy and in America’s involvement with Pakistan need to be taken into account to fully understand American government’s decision-making process in 1971.

There is a silver lining to this cloudy scenario. Despite all of the structural challenges they faced, the actions of officials at the Dhaka Consulate provide an instance of true courage against a terribly flawed American policy. The Dhaka Consulate Dissent Letter represents a brave moral stance by American diplomats that sympathized with Bangladesh’s cruel and violent birth — an instance that cannot be forgotten in the history of either nation.
Appendix A

Map of Pakistan during the 1971 Wars

Appendix B

The Dhaka Dissent Cable

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PAGE 02: DACCA 01138 0610882.

TARIANs, RATHER THAN STRATEGIC BUT WE HAVE CHOSEN NOT TO INTERVENE, EVEN MORALLY, ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE AKKAM-COMPLEX IN WHICH UNFORTUNATELY THE OVERWORKED TERM GENOCIDE IS APPLICABLE IS PURELY INTERNAL MATTER OF A SOVEREIGN STATE PRIVATE AMERICANS HAVE EXPRESSED DISGUST WE AS PROFESSIONAL PUBLIC SERVANTS EXPRESS OUR DISSENT WITH CURRENT POLICY AND FERVENTLY HOPE THAT OUR TRUE AND LASTING INTERESTS HERE CAN BE DEFINED AND OUR POLICIES REDIRECTED IN ORDER TO SALVAGE OUR NATION'S POSITION AS A MORAL LEADER OF THE FREE WORLD.

2. OUR SPECIFIC AREAS OF DISSENT AS WELL AS OUR POLICY PROPOSALS WILL FOLLOW BY SEPTEMB.

3. SIGNED:
  BRIAN BELL
  ROBERT L. BOURAN
  WR SCOTT BUTCHER
  ERIC GRIFFEL
  ZACHARY M. HAHN
  JAKE HARSHBARGER
  ROBERT A. JACKSON
  LAWRENCE KOESEL
  JOSEPH A. HAWK
  WILLARD M. McKEE
  DESAI MYERS
  JOHN L. NESSVIGI
  WILLIAM G. GRANT
  ROBERT R. CARCE
  RICHARD L. SIMPSON
  ROBERT C. SIMPSON
  RICHARD E. BUTTOR
  WAYNE A. SNEDENGURLE
  RICHARD L. WILSON
  SHANNON W. WILSON

4. I SUPPORT THE RIGHT OF THE ABOVE NAMED OFFICERS TO VOICE THEIR DISSENT, BECAUSE THEY ATTACH URGENCY TO THEIR EXPRESSIONS OF DISSENT AND BECAUSE WE ARE WITHOUT ANY MEANS OF COMMUNICATION OTHER THAN TELEGRAPHIC I AUTHORIZED THE USE OF A TELEGRAM FOR THIS PURPOSE.

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5. I believe the views of these officers, who are among the finest US officials in East Pakistan, are echoed by the vast majority of the American community, both official and unofficial. I also subscribe to these views but I do not think it appropriate for me to sign their statement as long as I am principal officer at this post.

6. My support of their stand takes on another dimension. As I hope to develop in further reporting, I believe the most likely eventual outcome of the struggle underway in East Pakistan is a Bengali victory and the consequent establishment of an independent Bangla Desh at the moment we possess the good will of the Awami League. We would be foolish to forfeit this asset by pursuing a rigid policy of one-sided support to the likely loser.

GP=3
BLOOD

Note: By OC/TC LIMDIS: CAPTION: ADDED: PER S/S-0, MR PASSAGE, 4/6/71
The Honorable
William P. Rogers
Secretary of State
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The undersigned officers, all of whom have specialized in South Asian affairs for the major portion of their service, wish to associate themselves with the views expressed in Docca 7138 (copy attached) and to urge that the United States Government take immediate steps to meet the objections raised in paragraph one of the telegram.

Sincerely yours,

Craig Baxter NEA/PAF
A. Peter Barley NEA/INC
Townsend S. Speyze ATO/NESA
Joel M. Goldman NEA/PAF
Anthony C. Quainton NEA/INC
Howard B. Schell NEA/EX

Douglas M. Cochran INR/ENA

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Appendix C

State Department Organization Chart for Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs

Appendix D

Interview with Scotty Butcher. December 6, 2011.

[The excerpt of conversation follows after initial pleasantries are exchanged]

Zaman: ... I was wondering about the exact timeline of your stay in Dhaka?

Butcher: We arrived in Dhaka in the summer of 1969. Just a little of my personal background: I was a second tour foreign service officer. My first tour was in Rangoon, Burma. I was actually a Burmese language officer that was my language training. I was there during a pretty busy period in Burma. There was a lot of civil unrest there too and Anti-Chinese rioting.

So it was not an easy tour. In its own ways, Burma was a rich country in terms of its natural resources, much more poorly managed than was Pakistan —at least they had an open economy there. It was a controlled economy in Burma. It was quite a country, a rich country that was poorly managed [compared] to East Pakistan, which was a fairly poor country in terms of its natural resources but people had more access to food and basic provisions than they did in Burma, a rich country.

So it gave me an account of socialism. An open economy at least gives people better use of resources. You know there were problems between rich and poor and all that. We were there with a young child; she was a little over a year once we moved to East Pakistan. We lived on Road 32 in Dhanmondi, which is right down the street where Sheikh Mujibur Rahman lived. It was a pretty lively experience for us, shall we say.

I did not have language background. I learned from a few courses in South Asia from the Foreign Service institute. And I arrive in Dhaka in the summer. I think it was sometimes in late June or so in 1969. Actually, while we had temporary housing, I listened to the Apollo 11 moon landing on my oceanic radio. It was very early in the morning in Dhaka time. And later that fall, the Apollo 11 stopped by Dhaka during their tour around the world. So that was quite a surprise. Anyway, so that was kind of interesting.

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328 Dhanmondi is a neighborhood in Dhaka.
Anyway, there were several of us who followed political activities. My boss was the deputy principal officer was the Senior Political Officer. He had management responsibilities and he was number 2 in the Consulate. I ended up doing a lot of the footwork in terms of the meeting with young politicians and student activists and so on. It was a very good media assignment for a first tour political officer. And that is kind of a traditional substantive function of State Department personnel in an Embassy or a mission in economic work and political work.

Then you have administration and Consulate and so on. Anyway, so in my tour in Burma, I had done Consulate work and had little training in approaching the political sections of others. This is a very good assignment and I got out and I got to travel around a bit and really enjoyed the Bengali people and it was a very interesting period.

The military administration of Yahya Khan had achieved Martial Law\textsuperscript{329} and we were there in November of 1970 when the tragic cyclone occurred. It cost the lives of several hundred thousand people. We got several American helicopters to the disaster zone and rushed some relief supply to where they were needed. It was quite a fascinating experience.

\textit{Zaman: Could you speak about that?} I read Archer Blood’s biography and he thought American response and international response was pretty great responding to this natural disaster but he had some harsh criticisms for the West Pakistani government.

\textbf{Butcher:} Well, a lot of things in politics are about perception. And sometimes frankly – I mean we have seen it in our own natural calamity – sometimes what happens when you have a natural disaster, the area is pretty affected around there. In the case of Pakistan, you have the issue of just the nature of the country. It’s like say there was disaster in Hawaii or Alaska, it might be harder for people from mainland US to respond because of the distance. Well, in terms of Pakistan, a lot of the military assets were on the Western wing and not the Eastern wing.

In any case, the foreign response was very impressive. And I think the airport was crowded with US and other countries’ aid. Russian, British, Canadian, all kinds of Western European and Soviet Bloc countries were involved. So it was quite an outpouring of passion for relief.

In contrast, the West Pakistani assistance looked less capable. Some of them may frankly be an unfair characterization. But it just played in the atmosphere and the perception of the neglect of the East. Their resources were being exploited and they had lesser treatment. So it just added to that perception. As I said, some

\textsuperscript{329}Hence the term Martial Law Administration was used to refer to the West Pakistani dominated government in East Pakistan.
of it maybe unfair because it’s sometimes easier to go from point A to point B without the intermediate point because of the nature of this disaster.

**Zaman:** So you don’t agree with Archer Blood’s assessment where he states, the West Pakistani Government did not do everything it could do.

**Butcher:** I am not a hundred percent sure. I think the point was contrasted with international response for whatever reasons. And you try to be objective and fair and there was a reality that against the backdrop of general feeling of neglect and powerlessness that the Easterners did not feel that the West did not step up quite the way the foreigners did.

That’s a perception and it’s a very important perception because it played into the political elections that were held in December. And of course the result of that was an unanticipated Awami League, not only majority but they just won a huge majority. They only lost two of the seats in East Pakistan.

Anyway, the upset was that they won the majority in the National Assembly, which was to be seated. And the rest is history in terms of the West Pakistani just could not think of being ruled by East Pakistanis, especially by Sheikh Mujib who they felt was less patriotic, for want of a better term.

The Bengalis just did not have the same feelings on issues such as Kashmir. They saw that as a waste of resources on their part. On their part, the Bengalis had a close cultural affinity with their compatriots in West Bengal, Calcutta being the cultural center. They wanted to have more free exchange. That did not mean they were less proud Pakistanis or anything like that. It just meant that they had a different view of what Pakistani nationhood was. So there was just a lot in the mix.

They used to say at the time that Pakistan was an interesting country:” It was held together by Islam and PIA.” And there were people who questioned, “is that enough of a glue?” because of the difference in culture, climate and lifestyle. Even racially, the West Pakistani tended to be very different. The West Pakistani would be fairer and taller compared to the East Pakistani who tended to be shorter and of darker complexion. Very very different in some ways.

**Zaman:** I was wondering if Archer Blood came to the Consulate the same time you did.

**Butcher:** We had a fellow by the name of Lesley Squires. He came from the background as a US Information Agency Office. So he was kind of the public affairs and the cultural affairs as opposed to coming out of the more traditional State Department side.
In fact, now USIA has actually been folded into a distinct department. I guess Arch came in my second year. He was there roughly the summer of 1970 for about a year. He left earlier than his scheduled two or three-year assignment. But his term was ended prematurely.

I had a better part of year or so serving with him. He was a fine officer.

**Zaman:** So to go back to the topic of the elections. The post elections to March 25 were very intense days. He talks about that most. I imagine they were very intense days for the Consulate. He talks about you a lot in his book going from here to there and meeting these leaders. Did you have personal contact with Sheikh Mujib or Alamgir [Rahman]?  

**Butcher:** Basically what happened is the Consul General and his deputy... Initially it was kind of interesting because early on we had Archer Blood as the Consul General, then his deputy initially for a couple of months was Andrew Killgore, and then we had me as Butcher. So I would sometimes draft a telegram. It would be drafted by Butcher, cleared by Killgore and signed by Blood. So you had some pretty rough sounding names.

One of the Islamic parties, Jamaat-e-Islami, or some other Anti-American party translated our names into Bengalis and he said, “With people’s names like this, things bode well for us.” It was kind of funny. Somewhere I have a copy of that in a scrapbook. Butcher, Blood and Killgore. Little did we know that unfortunately there would be some foreboding in our names.

What happened was that we followed the developments very closely. It looked like everything was set to go very smoothly but then things bogged down. And a lot of this is looking back but I suspect everyone, not the least Sheikh Mujib and his colleagues who had basically been in opposition politics, and suddenly they not only won a voice but a majority in national elections. And he had the Six-Point principles, and the question was how to put those in a sellable actions program that everyone in Pakistan could accept.

And the feeling was, and again if you read Archer’s book, that these things were not immutable. Some were more subject to negotiations than others. We watched things, as there was a period of civil disobedience when the elections, were postponed indefinitely.

**Zaman:** Just one question about that, on March 1st, Yahya Khan made the announcement to postpone the elections. And I find it very interesting that the perspective you guys took in Dhaka was that “this is an absolute terrible decision on Yahya’s part” and I think Blood wrote in a telegram, “I see the end of United

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330 He probably meant National Assembly meeting here.
While the response that Islamabad Embassy saw Yahya’s actions as preventing a crisis. I was wondering if you could speak to this disconnect.

Butcher: Well, again it’s been a while. But I actually read Archer’s book twice and each time I read it, I’ve gotten more from it. I know that we felt very strongly that this was a serious move the sitting of the National Assembly, which was going to be involved in writing a Constitution and all that.

And this was a huge setback but it was not irretrievable. And there were number of negotiations. Then you had Yahya and Bhutto come to Dhaka and they were negotiating and we were all very hopeful.

Meanwhile that period of civil disobedience after the National Assembly was postponed, there were a number of protests, street riots and some violence. And actually our impression was that the military was being very restrained. They were being spat upon and called names. It was a very tense period. But they, despite provocations, they did not react with brutal violence. And that was something that was in the back of our minds. Then you had the negotiations with Bhutto, Yahya and Mujib. And what happened was that we kept hearing different reports whether there were any progress or no progress. And again, Arch’s book is very good in re-telling some of that.

It turns out, in retrospect, looking back that it was kind of a Shakespearean tragedy plotting out. Despite each of these men had, from their perspective, very reasonable approaches that the three men had irresolvable differences.

And certainly Bhutto’s ambitions were very much recorded. Here you have the opposition party. It wasn’t like previous Bengalis who came out of the system like Shurwardi for instance. These were people who were not under control of the West Pakistan power elites. And again just the nature of the way they viewed the world. And much of West Pakistan’s worldview was very harsh in terms hard line against India. Whereas the East Pakistanis had a much softer line especially because they did not feel India as a domineering power, they just did not have the same depth of feeling of hatred that some of the West Pakistanis had.

Zaman: You were there during March 25 and I was wondering if you could recount those days’ events. Especially since Archer Blood recalls that he did not get any response from the State Department.

Butcher: I will talk a little bit about that period because I actually have here notes that I’ve taken just to refresh my own memory. It was very clear some of the sequencing of what happened.
Things were going on and life went on as usual. We spent a lot of time in the office reporting. And outside of office hours, meeting with people and socializing as best as we could. There were times when there were strikes and *hartals* and lots of protests. And you know out of fear, we had to walk to and from the office sometimes because during *hartals*, nothing on wheels was allowed to move. Not that easy getting around but we kept in touch.

One of the real realities was that US was deeply engaged in East Pakistan. We had the SEATO Pakistan Cholera Lab. There were a lot of people with the agency of international development who were involved in development projects. We had an active USIS cultural program and media program. I think we had very good contacts and they were not just limited to the capital city. People got out of town and met with people and we had 8 projects going. The SEATO Cholera people had some very. And as you recall, it was the time of the Vietnam War and there were a number of people who were medical doctors who could satisfy their military obligation by working at the Public Health Service. And a number of them were assigned overseas to this cholera lab. They did wonderful research and they had a lot of fieldwork and so on. In fact, it was very helpful that after the cyclone disaster that they had a lot of work to make sure that there weren’t a big cholera outbreak.

The point was that we had a lot of information sources. So we actually felt very well informed. But when you had these high level negotiations, then we were dependent on whatever people were telling us because they were very closely guarded negotiations.

The first thing I knew was that the night of the 25th-26th, is that I got a call and I am not sure the exact time but let me just see if I have it noted here.(Looks at notes)... Yea, so at 11:15 PM I got a telephone call from Sidney Shanberg, I don’t know if you know who that is. Sidney later went to Cambodia and he wrote a book called *Killing Fields*, which was made into a movie. It was a New York Times very prominent correspondent. And he called from the Intercontinental Hotel in Dhaka and said that... In fact, let me just read you what he said,

“Things are hopping and we’d like if possible if you could send out. We are not allowed to get out of the Intercontinental Hotel, we are held by the Army by the threat of getting shot. So we can’t get our story out. Some of the phone lines are disconnected. “

I guess he could call locally but not internationally. So he said,

“This is to New York Times, New York, NY: Unusual military activity is occurring in Dhaka, the guard around the Intercontinental Hotel where Mr. Bhutto was staying was increased heavily, and there were reports that many military vehicles was sent to the president’s house compound where President Yahya was staying. Guests at the Intercontinental Hotel,
where the foreign press was staying, were forbidden to leave the hotel after 11PM. One officer said that anyone who left would be shot and another said that a curfew as about to be put into effect. Many said that the troops of the intercontinental hotel after 11PM burned all the new Bangladesh flags that have been flying on the poles in front of the hotel. The new flag, officially unveiled two days ago, was designed by students for the Independent Bengal nations. No explanation regarding the unusual military activity tonight. One unconfirmed report said that President Yahya was about to return to West Pakistan.”

This was signed by a correspondent of the Baltimore Sun, John Woodroff, Henry Branch of NYT, and Sidney Shandberg. And then at 11:30 I got a call from Judy Clark at the Consulate General. The police guard there had been withdrawn from duty, and there were American personnel present in the office.

At midnight, I was finally able to reach Mr. Blood and Pearl at the Blood residence and I told Shandberg’s story to them. He said that another correspondent at the hotel gave him a similar report to them.

And then afterwards, a jeep with Awami League volunteers arrived at the nearby intersections. They ran a corner and crossed the bridge of Dhanmondi. And then we learned from our servants that the Army had reached Mujib’s house down the street where the EPR cantonment was immediately southwest of the Dhanmondi residential area.

I went outside during this time and I saw that young people making barricades out of trashcans and bricks and various stone blocks and things. And just a lot of clutter as people moved around Sheikh Mujib’s residence.

And little after midnight we heard 5 or 6 shots fired down the streets. Sheikh Mujib’s house sounded like just single shots from a pistol. We assumed that it was trigger—happy bodyguard of Bengali Police or Mujib’s. I called back and informed Bob Carl, my boss, at the Blood residence of the shots. And he reported that they had just sought medical treatment for a victim of a stabbing, not clear by whom. The victim was either a Bihari or Bengali laborer. And we received a call from a businessman that he heard Yahya had been deposed. And then a guy called from the SEATO cholera lab to ask if we were okay as they just heard that there was trouble in Dhanmondi and my wife and I went to bed.

And then were awakened by a jarring sound at 1:26 in the morning as automatic rounds were fired right outside our bedroom window. Our house was pretty far away from the street so it was pretty shocking to be startled awake like that.

What you do when a war is about to break out is that you just go to bed eventually because you don’t know when things are going to happen. So we
heard a lot of weapons fire and our impression was that the fire was coming from across the bridge towards Mujib’s house.

And we were kind of surprised because the army had come on foot because we thought we would hear the sound of tanks. Something louder.

At 1:30, I tried to talk to Blood residence and I told them about the gunfire shots, some sounded fairly close and heard voices that morning. It was Bengali with a loudspeaker on a vehicle. And we saw people remove their Joy Bangla flags.

And we heard a jeep with heavy machine guns. Two trucks came by. And then about 8:30 in the morning, we heard a radio broadcast that the Awami League was abolished and the complete curfew was on effect. I tried to leave the house at daybreak just to go out and look around. And there was a dawan, a Pakistani trooper with a rifle who pointed right at me and made clear that I wasn’t to leave the property so I went right back in.

**Zaman:** Did they know you were American?

**Butcher:** I have no idea. My speaking a little bit of Bengali. I mean, I learned a little bit of Bengali, took some lessons locally. But it would not have helped with an Urdu speaking Pakistani soldier. Anyway, we were basically stuck in our house for 24 hours or so. We could see planes and hear shooting. One of the things that was really striking was that we could hear rhythmic shooting, which later we surmised at the time that these were sounds of executions. Just because the nature of it was not sporadic but rhythmic. Like people being taken out and organized in a line and shot. But we could see balls of smoke in the distance.

We had steps so that we could walk up to the roof and that’s what we spend a lot of time as to what was going on. Phones were dead, any news we were getting was coming over radio or through loudspeakers.

And then on the evening of the 26th, President Yahya made an announcement accused Mujib and his collaborators of treason and plotting against him, even during his presence in Dhaka. Mujib and his parties are enemies of Pakistan. Awami League has been completely banned as a party and complete press censorship was In effect.

And then the morning of March 27th, the curfew was lifted so we were able to move around. A vehicle came and picked me up and took me to our office. Anyway, it was a pretty traumatic period and we started getting reports of atrocities, of people being killed at the university, acquaintances.
A very prominent Hindu philosophy scholar who actually had a fan club in Philadelphia died. I knew him, he was a very jolly guy and a very nice person but he was killed because he was a Hindu and an intellectual.

And we went around, our AID director went around and came back and told us that there was a park filled with stacked up bodies. Did I want to come and see it? And I said, "No I believe you."

But no we did drive by bodies in one nearby village where one of the things that happened. And one of the things was happened was that after the Army cracked down so there was a lot of reprisals from vice versa and Hindus and so on. And there was, especially in the rural areas, a lot of breakdown of law and order.

And we went to this one village and they were kind of a makeshift hospital. There was a rotting body in the field. In the building itself, it was full of people and we saw that a lot of people were badly injured by machete wounds, knife wounds. And to this day I do not know who they were. I don’t know if they were a Hindu village or was it a Bihari village or Bengali Muslims. I had no idea. They were just victims. It was a very tragic period.

So as we got better picture of what was going on, the army, which had been restrained but had been spat upon and verbally abused. When they were given the go-ahead to crack down, boy they did it with a vengeance! It was extraordinary brutal, it was a “shock and awe” maneuver to break the will of the opposition.

It was clearly very serious, very bad. A lot of people disappeared. My Bengali instructor went missing. I later learned that he was a Mukti Bahini leader in the Sundarbans. He was a very frail guy with a heart condition in his early 1930s and he ended up being a gorilla leader.

But we duly reported these things and we just gave situational reports, item by item and what people had said. And if they were heresy, we noted that they were heresy. And on other cases, we had reliable eyewitnesses including some of our American citizens. And you know there were missionaries and there were other people walking around.

And I met with some of my acquaintances at the University in the political science faculty who were traumatized. One wife came to our house when I was at the office and met my wife and literally prostrated herself and grabbed my wife’s ankle, “Please please... you must do something to help us.” It was very very upsetting and moving in a very bewildered situation.

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332 Sundarbans refers to the largest single block of tidal halophytic mangrove forest in the world, located in Southern Bangladesh and parts of India.
So we were reporting all of those and indeed there was just not much feedback from Washington. We were feeling quite shunned.

**Zaman:** How about feedback from the Embassy in Islamabad?

**Butcher:** Well, because of our physical situation, we had looser ties with the Embassy than other Consulates in West Pakistan had. We were reporting directly to Washington, unless we were collaborating on some kind of an assessment where they would have something to say.

And frankly we were on the ground so as situations evolved and there were a number of different storylines. One was that our friends were being terrorized. And there were some very sad stories. Because it wasn't all just one sided because there were Bengalis who were very upset and retaliated against Bihari or West Pakistani neighbors. There was one West Pakistani who lived there for many many years who was very interested in Bengali culture. He collected Bengali artwork, artifacts and so on. And a mob came to his place at one time and tore up everything. There was a lot of sadness, lot of disruptions, lot of tragic involvements. And we reported this in a very matter of fact way and there was silence out of Washington.

Or to the extent that Washington said anything it was to decry violence from all parties. But what we saw was organized violence from an official security apparatus against the local people. Clearly there were reasons to decry both side’s violence. But a lot of what they (the army) did was pre-emptive. They attacked East Pakistan Rifles and others to decimate any potential sources of opposition to Pakistani authority.

And even before the unrest, before the Army crackdown, some of the foreign governments had evacuated their personnel. In some cases by commercial transportation, in other cases, there were some emergency flights that came in. I think the British sent in some C1-30s from Singapore to take people out. And we wanted to evacuate our dependents and other American citizens who requested evacuation flights. And what was authorized was not to bring in US military but to have our dependents go out on special evacuation flights by PIA.

So what happened was that the PIA flight came in bringing troops. And I actually saw this myself because my family, my wife and daughter, evacuated, we saw the planes at the airport unloading the white pajama style West Pakistani attire all marching off in military formation. They did not look terribly civilian to us, so were upset since we were subsidizing the movements of military personnel from the West to put down the opposition in the East.
Zaman: What did you think of Ambassador Farland’s instructions to call the evacuation a “thinning out”? 

Butcher: We get involved in this type of language even up to the current times. They do not talk in terms of evacuations. They talk about “departure of non-essential personnel.” They are often very diplomatic in its usages, especially if we are evacuating from a friendly country. And remember at that time, Pakistan was an ally both via SEATO and CENTO. In fact, it was the only member of both. So it kind of linked our Asian Anti-Soviet alliances. It was a lynchpin.

But we were very frustrated and a number of us got to the point where we were pretty disgusted that by whole variety of circumstances, not the least of which was that we were not being very well informed by what our policy was. And we were just kind of in the dark and frustrated, so we decided that we would send a dissent letter for what appeared to be a very negligent policy not speaking out against the crackdown, the annulment of a democratic election and what we saw as a crackdown legitimate dissent, because at that point it was not a separatist movement or anything.

So I, and a number of others, talked about putting together a telegram. I was actually the lead drafter of this letter.

Zaman: So the letter originated from you?

Butcher: Well, someone has to sit down and write it. There was a kind of a small group and number of us felt like we had to say something or do something. So I drafted and showed this to two of my colleagues. Then there were maybe six of us and we did some wordsmith on it. And then, I don’t recall how we exactly did this, I don’t know if this was over the phone. I think it was when people were coming over for some staff meetings that we did this.

And with some trepidation I took it into Arch Blood and I don’t remember if I handed it over personally or left it with his secretary. We had practically adjacent offices, very close by. And we had a very good relationship. And you know, he was a Senior Officer, a veteran Foreign Service Officer and we thought he was a very polished diplomat. We knew he was very concerned about things but we did not know if he was going to authorize us sending this telegram.

Well, he not only authorized it but he had part of it retyped to include his own comments on the end, which in essence associated himself with our views. And that was just something that was really striking to us. We thought frankly, not pejoratively, he was kind of a company man, an established diplomat. A very suave and very dignified individual. He and his wife were a very striking couple. He was clearly a high riser in the Foreign Service. And we thought, “my goodness, he is not only authorizing this to go on, as a confidential message, but he is also associating himself with it”.

One of the funny little sidebars to this is that my boss because he was deputy principal officer did not join us in signing it. He said, I agree with it but it would not be proper for me because I am basically part of management to sign this protest cable, this dissent cable with US policy. And when it came out of the boss’s office, he retyped it and my boss took a pencil and wrote his name under the list. If you look at the names, there is one that is out of alphabetical order. It’s supposed to be Robert Carl (Bob Carl) and in fact the initial copies show his name to be CARCE because he hand-wrote it at the bottom of the cable. And these are just little sidebars.

The point is that a number of us were concerned that a number of us... None of us had the risk associated with us as our careers as Arch Blood did. He was a high riser, he was a senior officer and he got an award from the State Department for courageous dissent. It did affect his career.

In my own terms, I actually had my transfer notice because I was going back to the Pakistan desk officer, because they wanted someone with East Pakistan experience because of all the unrest and so on. So I actually had my orders and my wife was evacuated the first week of April and I stayed on for a couple more weeks and went on. I actually went with Arch Blood to Islamabad for some consultations from your posts to brief. Then he went back to Dhaka and I went with Sid Sober, the Deputy Ambassador. And we went to Embassy New Delhi to brief them about the situations.

Zaman: Did you return to Dhaka afterwards?

Butcher: O yes, I actually had my pet cat in a bag, because it was a long flight. We had to fly to Sri Lanka and back because we couldn't fly over India. So I dropped off our cat with the general services people and they sent him back to the US.

I've seen subsequent commentary from Kissinger and others complaining that we were naïve, and victims of localities. And Kissinger, of course is known as a leading member of the realpolitik school of political analysis. But the reality is that we were the ones who were realistic and our hands were tied because Pakistan facilitated our opening to China. And later that summer, I was actually in US at the time, we got word that Kissinger had made the secret trip to Beijing.

A friend of mines, Dennis Kux, was his control officer, and when they said that he had gotten Delhi-belly or something, or some sort of digestive disorder, and was taken to the Ambassador’s residence to recuperate. We all thought that was what happened. None of us knew what was actually going on.

So Pakistan played a key role, even though we were having conversations in other areas, Opening Up with China was seen as a critical strategic move by the US because at that time we were bogged down in Vietnam and being able to open
relationship with China, in worldwide terms and in Vietnam terms was seen as extraordinarily important. And the problem was that it came at the price of being able to act freely, which we might have done in denouncing what was happening in East Pakistan, in humanitarian and human rights grounds.

Of course, we were totally in the dark and I think we would have been more understanding if not agreeing of our policy had we known more. If they come back to us and said, “alright guys, we hear you, we can’t be too outspoken because of other sensitive things that are going on. But please bear with us and hopefully this will all be resolved in some kind of an equitable way.” But we were totally in the dark while others were speaking out against the crackdowns and the atrocities and the encroaching of the democratically election process.

If you are a political officer, if you are a reporting officer in an embassy, you really need to be very objective. Often times you have wishful thinking, but if you want to do a good job, you report faithfully, do not distort the realities as you see them. You can add your comments but you really try to get to the facts as much as you can because you are not doing anyone any service otherwise. So we really tried and as I said we had a number of people who were very well plugged into the situation. So I think we had a number of people who knew what was going on. Arch Blood said, after the crackdown, that was the end of United Pakistan and he was right. It took some additional support from India, yea, but this was all precipitated by Pakistan’s actions in cracking down and making what had been an autonomy movement into an Independence movement.

**Zaman:** I am curious about how you saw India’s role in this matter. Obviously, they were struggling with the refugee problems. It just seems that when you were really frustrated with US policy, the American Ambassador Ken Keating, was the only one that was supporting your position on your cables. It seemed from Archer Blood’s accounts, your stories were not believed by West Pakistan or State Department.

**Butcher:** I am not sure about how much of it was not believed but again there was a certain amount of denial.

I have a lot of respect for Kissinger, who I had met subsequently and worked with. Frankly, my career was not harmed one bit by this protest. Because I was sufficiently junior, I was sufficiently below the radar. Arch Blood’s career was definitely impeded; he suffered greatly in his career from his support of this dissent. The thing here is that Kissinger is a great strategic thinker, he is able to have a vision of certain things that others have not. At the time after the Yom Kippur War or Arab-Israeli war of 1973, he saw it not as a catastrophe but he saw it as an opportunity to move some of the pieces around and have a more stable situation in the tumultuous MidEast in ways that many other people would not have had. The guy was able to wield and assess power equations.
Having said that, he is a man whose huge failings, and I talked to some people, and maybe this is because he grew up in a violent background. He does not see the legitimacy which comes out of treating your citizens well and observing human rights and due process and so on, which is indeed a component of power. And he was less concerned with some of the micro-components of power, which he didn’t get. Now, maybe he has changed but certainly that was a fault. So he saw us as a troublesome to his global strategic assessment. And the reality was that we were seeing things on the ground that were undermining his prognosis of how things would go. It wasn’t just a matter of tradeoffs, I just don’t think he saw some of the finer points. We could see it very clearly.

Again, to give credit where credit was due. Yahya Khan presided over the first free elections in Pakistan’s history. It’s just that no one predicted the outcome, which would ultimately come to be, because of mishandling by the Pakistani power elite and maybe some stubbornness on the part of Mujib too. We don’t know how much all of these things have been thought through. He was a victim of his own success.

What happens to a guy who suddenly found he was in charge of a United Pakistan? How do I bring the others on board? That may have just been his capabilities to even envisage such a thing. As I said, it was written like a Shakespearean tragedy playing out.

But in terms of the Indian draw. Certainly early on, India did not figure, except from the perspective of Islamabad seeing Easterners being soft on India. The Indians were as caught off guard as anyone else. I don’t think they thought that the Pakistanis would crackdown with a vengeance that they did and that it would take on a Hindu aspect too. I think the West Pakistan looked at themselves as racially and religiously superior to the Muslims of the East. I think it’s very sad because we met lots of people good-willed from all sides. Immigrants from India, Bengalis, West Pakistanis, none of whom wanted this to come to pass but it did.

And I think the Indians, I remember going over to the Indian Deputy High Commission, it was called, and looking into the welfare of the Indians there because they were facing a lot of their own problems. But if you talk about Indians having a played a hand in all this, we didn’t see any evidence of that.

And then as the Army crackdown, the refugees poured across the river, as it was a real insurgency against Pakistani authority, the Indians started helping the Mukti Bahini with variety of support. I’ve talked to people, the author Joe Galloway, who wrote a very fine obituary of Arch Blood, who was the co-author of We Were Soldiers Once Again. I had a couple of meals with him. He’s talked about how he has been taking on a press trip from the West Pakistani Government to show that everything was under control. He said, as he flew over, he was a former combat journalist in Vietnam, and he could tell things were not
going well. He’d seen lots of burned out buildings, broken roads, burned rice fields, jute fields and so on. He could see that obviously there was active insurgency and there were reprisals by the military trying to clear fields of fire from the roadways they were using as lines of communications.

And I was back in the department as first secretary as Pakistan desk officer and then East Pakistan desk officer and the first Bangladesh desk officer. I saw things on the ground and then I saw the evolution back in Washington.

Zaman: *When did you exactly leave the Consulate?*

Butcher: Like the third week in April. I don’t know the exact date.

Zaman: *One of the interesting storylines from Blood’s book that I figured out was that you guys called yourself “the miscreants”.*

Butcher: Someone referred to us as that and we picked that up. It was a funny term in South Asia because someone who was up to no good was called miscreant. But we just all got a kick out of that so I think there were people who attached a certain amount of pride being attached to calling themselves “miscreants.”

It was a difficult period and we viewed ourselves as very patriotic professionals doing our duty.

Zaman: *It seems that your view of the Indians as an innocent bystander is different from, if not Kissinger, definitely Nixon.*

Butcher: Remember I am situated in a constituent post far away from the US. We were very much aware of the Cold War. In Burma, I had been snubbed by a Chinese Ambassador. The Cold War was something we just lived with. You have no idea how it was an organized motive force and the strange thing that I often felt over many years was that we had a strategic alliance with Pakistan, whereas the Soviet Union had a strategic alliance with India. They weren’t formal treaty partners, but they had friendship treaties together. And if you were to scratch the surface, it struck me from my trips to India, that Indian public was more pro-American than the Pakistani public was.

Part of it may have been the influence of Islam and what was seen as the decadents of the West. I assume, you are Muslim, are you not?

Zaman: *I am*

Butcher: Most of my career was in Muslim countries. A lot of my friends are Muslims and I understand that some of the Western behaviors seem vulgar and just very different. But most of the East Pakistan Muslims were much more
tolerant than their East Pakistan brothers in the West. And it just comes from the fact that in West Pakistan, the main divide is between the Shia and Sunni, whereas in the East, there are Christians, Muslims and Hindus. Muslims were the vast majority, but there still were sizable minorities of other religions. And they lived pretty well together.

**Zaman:** Could you speak a little bit more about the crackdown of the Hindus. The Consulate definitely put an emphasis in reporting this and Blood even called it a “Selective Genocide.”

**Butcher:** It was aimed at pockets of oppositions. It included student groups, political science instructors, the local police, local para-military such as the East Pakistani Rifles etc. And then the next step was Hindus.

We heard stories that seemed to have some veracity of Pakistani troops stopping people, having the males take down their lungis, their saris, to tell if they were circumcised or not. And if they were circumcised, they were assumed to be Muslims, if they weren’t they were assumed to be Hindus, therefore suffered accordingly.

I don’t know how much of this was led by the Pakistani officers in terms of singling out Hindus. Very clearly, the Hindus were most affected by this. The stories that were reaching us seemed to have validity because they were from people who were respected in the Consulate. But there was a special emphasis on singling out Hindus.

There were several other categories of people who were being targeted but most generally Hindus. I think part of this was because of indoctrination of Pakistani troops. You often demonize your enemies and this was a way of demonizing. They were pro-India and Hindus were fifth column and such.

**Zaman:** When you learned about the China trip of Kissinger. Did that affect your thinking of US policy towards East Pakistan?

**Butcher:** It was one of these “AHA moments” in a sense. When I came back to Washington. Until the word got out of the trip, which was sometimes after it occurred. And then it was very clear because we could not speak out because of the role the Pakistanis were taking.

It might be that there were some people who would not have spoken out anyway but the point was this was a huge inhibiting factor. And we had thousands of American troops bleeding and dying in Vietnam at that time and this was a very important move to try and get us extricated from that.

So there were a number of times in diplomacy where you have trade-offs. One bad situation for a worse situation. This may have been one of them. But it would
have been heartening to speak more forcefully. We might not have been able to do too much to change the situation on the ground. We might have thought the nation of Pakistan was fighting for its existence but in fact it was creating the conditions for its breakup.

And there are a number of times where our hands have been tied. I've been involved in countries our surface friendships with the ruling elements has enabled us to be fully intrusive in terms of helping to promote human rights on the ground because the governments think we are friendly and therefore allow us more access.

In those cases, you might not be publicly be as outspoken but on the ground you are doing a lot of good. The reality was that the time of the crackdown to the time we recognized Bangladesh, we had a lot of people to people contact. We had the AID program, which couldn't do as much work, but we still had people who were around. Various NGOs were operating; we had missionaries who were very active in people-to-people ties.

There was a lot of rhetoric from the Bangladesh side who said that while we do not agree with the US government, we were very happy with the individual Americans who helped us through different organizations. It really did help carry an unofficial relationship.

Even back in the State Department, a number of Bengali diplomats at the Pakistan Embassy became defectors. I actually had met a number of them. One of them is the current finance minister, Muhit. And several of them I knew, Kibriah, who was assassinated, Karim, who was foreign secretary at one point, died earlier of a heart attack. These were all really fine people and our State Department colleagues were very open to them. They knew that we were quite sympathetic. They knew we were supportive of them even though we could not be public about it.

**Zaman:** I am just curious about the Cold War mindset that was going on. So there was never a possibility that you guys were thinking U.S. could possibly intervene, maybe not militarily, but more than just outcry against violence.

**Butcher:** The reality is that a lot of things did stop. The AID program did stop. The Pakistani authorities wanted to have a business as usual thing for a variety of reasons, we could not operate like this was business as usual. The issue of cutting of military assistance: Again, that probably would have been a bridge too far because of the issue of the Cold War and not wanting to break off the relationship. It did not even come up as related to China before we knew about it.

On a strategic level, that cannot be ignored. That was a HUGE problem hindering our ability to be more forceful against its actions in the East.
A lot of this happened very suddenly. They went from months from being seated a National Assembly to a huge crackdown in a matter of months leading to the breakup of Pakistan. Lot of people could talk for years about how odd the indentation of Pakistan is, in terms having two wings, separated by a hostile India. My view is that had you had more enlightened leaders, certainly in West Pakistan, that you could have had a confederation between East and West Pakistan that would not have been as hostile to India to hinder the ties there. Because there were familial ties and economic ties that were broken off. And that would have been a much more stable environment.

The East issues would have put a brake on some of the issues over Kashmir that were seen as such a loaded issue in the west. However, many thought that this marriage could not last. But there were just irascible differences; it was not a friendly divorce.

**Zaman:** On a structural note, it seems that the Consulate basically acted like an Embassy.

**Butcher:** Well, it had more autonomy than a regular Consulate because of the geography. Sometimes it was not that easy to communicate.

You can drive from Rawalpindi to Lahore, or Rawalpindi to Karachi. you couldn’t do that with Dhaka. On my way back by the way, we passed by Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore and then Dhaka. And over West Pakistan we saw the deserts and the browns, and then we hit the Emerald Green of Bangladesh (East Pakistan). It was much more South East Asia that I was familiar with. Climatically, it was more like Burma and so on.

The people themselves were different. There is a huge cultural and behavioral gap between West Pakistanis and East Pakistanis. Eastern Pakistanis are more verbal, they are more poetic, more culturally expressive than people from more harsh desert type climatic zone.

**Zaman:** So you were allowed to directly cable the State Department?

**Butcher:** Spot reporting, event reporting, we could. But if we were getting into country wide analysis – for example if we had an election synopsis, for each of these reporting officers, from various provinces, would come in and then we would send our report to the Embassy and the Embassy would put the reports together and package it up and send it to Washington.

But especially when you have fast moving events, you have spot reporting. You have the man on the ground analyzing and the Ambassador, of course, can say what he thinks. But the Ambassador is the person who is ultimately managing
the relationship with the government of Pakistan. It’s a problem then if you break with a promise in East Pakistan.

It was an arrangement, frankly, that worked. And we would go over periodically we would go over consultations. We would have political officer conferences. We would have a number of colleagues come over from West Pakistan and we would sit around and have open discussions.

**Zaman: From my understanding though, it seemed that Ambassador Farland was not as sympathetic to the East Pakistani cause as you guys were.**

**Butcher: Well we weren’t sympathetic to the breakup cause. He is sitting in Islamabad. The influences on him are the people he’s talking to and he’s managing an overall relationship with a strategic ally and we are out in a provincial post and our perspectives and responsibilities are different. He is ultimately responsible with dealing with the government of Pakistan. We acted a foreign ministry liaison officer. We were not involved in the foreign policy aspect. So the power centers were in Islamabad and their Ambassador in Washington. And also there were probably Pakistani Consulates throughout the US, but the guy who called the shots were in terms of reporting back in both directions was the Pakistani Ambassador.**

**Zaman: But would you agree that this was one of the problems going on in the structure of foreign policy there because this majority of the people were in East Pakistan and the Ambassador being in West Pakistan and not equally as forceful in its**

**Butcher: It usually doesn’t come to that because a lot of capital cities are not in the main city center. Like Brasilia is an artificial city. The power influences like Rio and other cities might have larger populations elsewhere. So that’s the strangeness of Pakistan that had two wings. It was an artificial construct in some regards to begin with and they had to overcome geography. Well, they didn’t overcome geography very well.

There were a lot of things that happened that was not foreshadowed at all. The thing that was troubling was the lack of responsiveness and the lack of outspokenness by our administrators and our government. And a lot of this became clearer when we saw that the Pakistanis played such a key role in facilitating the Opening of China.

Unfortunately, it was subordinated to a strategic move and if you look at the rest of the diplomatic history of the period, when the fighting began between India and Pakistan, the U.N. Security Council took up the issue. And guess what that was the first issue that China, not Taiwan, the mainland of China, the new member of the [UN] Security Council was involved with. There were all kinds of complicating factors. But the China angle was very much evident.
**Zaman:** One last question that I want to bring to your attention. It seems that there's a policy within the State Department FSO that you guys were constantly moved around. You were stationed in Burma, then in Dacca, and back in the State Department and somewhere else. Could you speak to the rationale in the State Department to constantly move diplomats around?

**Butcher:** In some areas, it makes very little difference. In other words, if you are in administration, you could serve anywhere. The fact is that people may have more of a tendency to serve based on their language background. So if you have a Spanish and French background, you are likely to serve in Latin American countries or French speaking or African countries.

Political Officers tend to be more specialized. So my region was South Asia, so my languages are Burmese, Indonesian and Malay and I had a smattering of Bengali. But then I went into the State Department and I have been director in the India, Nepal and Sri Lanka Affairs and also director of Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore affairs. So we do have, depending on your field, have more specialization.

They have tried to make sure that people do not become too narrow or too specialized because then you can lose track of other functional issues. I've had political and military background and so I've had to deal with political and military issues. More recently, things like the war on terror and how to deal with the militant Islamic extremists and things like that.

I still work part-time in the State Department but not specializing in any geographic area. But the moving around of people is based on positions. If you are a political officer or an economic officer, and then if you are a Consul or administrative person, you can be moved around much more freely. If you have language ability, it makes more sense to go where you can speak the language.

Some of the smaller countries I've involved myself with one day their ambassador is in South Africa and then the next time he is in Japan or U.S.

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