



# Washing of Hands

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## THE UNDERCURRENTS

There is a well known and much thrashed out political background to the 1971 War. We all know that the war resulted due to a struggle for power between Awami League, the Army, and Peoples Party. This power struggle degenerated into a civil war, which was exploited by India to dismember Pakistan. We shall briefly recollect certain facts from the past with a view to evolve a clear picture.

Barely three months before partition, at a conference held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1947, Suharwardy, the Chief Minister of Bengal ( and a future prime minister in independent Pakistan), with the support of Sarat Chandra Bose (brother of Subhash Chandra Bose), floated a plan for a sovereign united Bengal. The plan had the support of Bengal's British governor. Since Both Nehru and Patel were against the proposal, Mountbatten revised the partition plan to take away any option for independence either for Bengal or for any other province (Ali, 1983; Jafferlot, 2004).

After the creation of Pakistan, Suharwardy remained in West Bengal for more than a year before finally migrating to Pakistan. Relations between East Pakistan and Pakistan's central government, located in Karachi, came under strain soon after the independence when Bengalis demanded that their language, besides Urdu, should be made the national language of Pakistan. The language riots in East Pakistan laid the foundation for Bangladeshi nationalism.

The undercurrents of irritants between East and West Pakistan kept resurfacing time and again and, during the 1960s, President Ayub conveyed to the Bengali speaker of Pakistan's national assembly that East Pakistan could have independence if the Bengalis were not happy with living in a united Pakistan. Comes 1965, the war between India and Pakistan remained confined to the western theatre as India did not open a front in the east. Soon after the war, riots erupted in East Pakistan when Awami League demanded regional autonomy on the basis of Mujibur Rehman's six points. A secession plan known as the Agartala Conspiracy came to the fore, and Mujibur Rehman, along with some of his co-conspirators, was tried for treason. The aftershocks of the 1965 war resulted in Ayub Khan's ouster from power in 1969. General Yahya Khan, Ayub's successor, promised elections, which were held in 1970. In these elections Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's Peoples Party had not fielded a single candidate from East Pakistan. On the other hand, Sheikh Mujib's Awami League contested only 7 out of 138 seats in West Pakistan. Were the two wings of Pakistan wittingly or unwittingly moving towards separation?

As a result of the 1970 general elections, Awami League emerged as the majority party in the parliament, but it did not have even a single representative from West Pakistan. Likewise Peoples Party, the second largest party in the parliament, did not have any member from East Pakistan. In a mature democracy, handing over power to the majority party would have taken place without a hassle, provided there were no hidden motives. As the pre-poll strategy of the two largest parties suggests, the personal ambitions of Mujib and Bhutto had already reached a stage where they were not thinking in terms of a united Pakistan but nurturing ambitions of ruling their respective wing as their independent fief. There was a

so-called Legal Framework Order (LFO) promulgated by Yahya Khan, which laid down the code of conduct for the elections. Both Awami League and Peoples Party had been blatantly violating the LFO by basing their election campaign on parochialism and hatred. That Yahya Khan remained indifferent to these violations amply shows that he had his own hidden agenda. Probably he was thinking that he would exploit the differences between the two politicians to perpetuate his rule.

Awami League's six points election manifesto suggested a loose federation where the central government would not have the power to levy taxes. The central government in such a setup would be completely dependent on the constituent units for running its day to day and long duration affairs. It was essentially a blueprint for, initially a confederation, and subsequently outright independence. Pakistan was carved out of India when Jinnah, instead of beating around the bush, laid down his cards on the table and demanded independence for the Muslim majority provinces in the northwestern and eastern India. It was a bitter pill to swallow for the Congress leaders, but they agreed to India's partition instead of living in perpetual hostility with the Muslim separatists. Whereas both Mujib and Bhutto were working for Pakistan's division for the fruition of their personal ambitions, they did not have the moral courage and integrity of character to say so openly.

Their true intentions, though, slipped out occasionally. After the postponement of the national assembly's inaugural session, Mujib addressed a mammoth public meeting at Dhaka's Paltan Maidan. Responding to the crowd chanting slogans of independent Bangladesh, Mujib said "Independence, no! Not yet". In another public meeting held at Lahore, Bhutto made his famous remarks, "There are only three forces; Peoples Party, Awami League, and the Army". Then, addressing Awami League, he said "Yahan Hum, Wahan Tum (We here, you there)". Had Mujib and Bhutto, instead of a tongue in cheek attitude, possessed the moral courage to clearly express their intentions, the unpleasant but inevitable partition of Pakistan would have taken place peacefully. We could have followed the example of Singapore leaving Malaysia.

On 16<sup>th</sup> September 1963, Federation of Malaya, North Borneo, Sarawak, and Singapore formed a new political entity known as Malaysia. For Singapore, this marked the end of a 144 year British rule. Like East Pakistan and West Pakistan, the relations between Singapore and the federal government of Malaysia were marred by mistrust and economic, financial, and political differences. As a result, Singapore became independent on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1965. Taking a cue, the two wings of Pakistan could have honorably separated instead of going through a blood bath caused by a prolonged civil war, which drew India, Pakistan's archenemy, into an armed conflict.

In the aftermath of the general elections, the situation in East Pakistan had become so critical, it needed a spark to explode into a raging fire. The politicians and the generals were not so gullible they did not appreciate the consequences of disturbing the political apple cart. However, Bhutto succeeded in taking Yahya Khan for a ride when the latter, on return from his trip to Dhaka, was invited to visit Bhutto's ancestral home in Larkana. It was after his consultation with Bhutto at Larkana that Yahya Khan announced the postponement of the national assembly's inaugural session scheduled to be held at Dhaka. The riots, burning of

Pakistani flags, and the killings of West Pakistanis that followed Yahya's announcement clearly indicated that a united Pakistan was no longer an option for the Bengalis.

[Pakistan Army](#) had launched [Operation Searchlight](#) in March 1971 in a bid to control the mayhem caused by the Awami League in reaction to the postponement of the national assembly's inaugural session. By mid-May, Pakistan Army had re-occupied all the major towns in East Pakistan and driven the battered remnants of the Mukti Bahini across the border into India, forcing the Mukti Bahini to seek training and guidance from the Indian Army for waging the insurgency in East Pakistan.

At the end of April 1971, Indira Gandhi asked General Sam Manekshaw during a high-level meeting if he were ready to attack East Pakistan. Manekshaw, showing resentment over not being consulted when Indira Gandhi's "comic-strip cowboys were helping and abetting the East Pakistani insurgents against Yahya Khan", refused to immediately attack East Pakistan. He told Indira Gandhi that the Indian armoured division, located in Jhansi, had only 13 out of 197 tanks fit for war due to non-release of funds by the ministry of finance. Indian Army formations were dispersed as far away as Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu-Kerala. He had to restore the armoured division to war fitness as well as move all these formations to their respective concentration areas. This would require all the available trains and road space. As it was harvest time in Punjab, Haryana and U.P., prioritizing the rolling stock and road space for the army's movement would hamper the pending harvest and may cause a shortage of food in these states. The Himalayan passes were opening due to the warm weather and the likelihood of the Chinese threat had also to be taken into account. Finally, the area of projected operations would soon be flooded by the coming monsoons, making military operations in East Pakistan extremely difficult. At the conclusion of the meeting, Indira Gandhi asked Manekshaw to stay back. During the one on one meeting with Indira, Manekshaw offered to resign on the grounds she chose. When she declined but asked for his advice, he sought permission to prepare for the conflict, set the date, and said he would guarantee victory. She agreed and permitted the general to prepare in his own way\*.

*\*Abstract of Manekshaw's speech delivered at Ahmedabad, Gujarat (retrieved from [www.deshgujarat.com](http://www.deshgujarat.com))*

Though Manekshaw had sought a couple of months from Indira Gandhi to attack Pakistan, the Indian army had actually started its preliminary operations against East Pakistan in May 1971. On 15<sup>th</sup> May the Indian Army started a coordinated operation codenamed Operation Jackpot. To facilitate this operation, the Indian Army, under [Lt. Gen. J. S. Aurora](#), Commander Eastern Command, set up a network comprising six logistical sectors in the border areas around Bangladesh. Each sector was commanded by a brigadier from the Indian army. Through this network, Mukti Bahini forces communicated with the Mukti Bahini Headquarters, exiled in Kolkata, and coordinated all supply, training and operational efforts for the war. Overseen by Aurora, the operation was initially commanded by Major General Onkar Singh Kalkat and later by Major General B. N. 'Jimmy' Sarcar.

According to Clary (2013)

*"East Pakistan was surrounded by India on three sides, resulting in a more than 4000 kilometer border between present-day Bangladesh and India. In such circumstances, shorter interior lines of communication can sometimes compensate for inferior numbers. In this case, the quantitative overmatch by Indian forces in the eastern theatre included six full divisions, portions of an additional mountain division and several brigades, and the equivalent of three armoured regiments.*

*Pakistan faced this force with three infantry divisions (two of which were without their normal accompaniment of artillery and vehicles). Two additional divisions were raised on ad hoc basis out of spare brigades and division headquarters staff, and one regiment of light tanks (The terrain of East Pakistan substantially discounted the utility of tanks).*

*At the theatre level, it is easy to argue India enjoyed 2:1 superiority- even without assuming any combat power for the 50,000-100,000 Bengali guerrilla forces operating in Pakistan's eastern wing or on its periphery, a small portion of which had been organised into formal units by Indian trainers. Because Pakistani officials were wary that New Delhi would seize a portion of East Pakistan, from which they would announce a free Bangladesh state, the inferior Pakistan military force was arrayed along the perimeter of the eastern wing, rather than concentrating their forces in a smaller inner circle. The results were understandably catastrophic".*

## THE OPPOSING FORCES

### Eastern Theatre

#### Order of Battle

Table 5.1

S.No.	Area of Operations	Pakistan	India	Remarks
1.	Dhaka, Tangail, Mymensingh Distts.	36 Adhoc Div	<u>101 Comm Zone</u>  95 Mtn Bde FJ Sector Bde  167 Inf Bde  5 Mtn Bde	36 Adhoc Div had  only 1x Inf Bde, and 1x Mor Bty.
2.	Sylhet, Comilla, Noakhali, Chittagong Distts.	14 Inf Div  39 Adhoc Div  97 (I) Inf Bde	<u>IV Corps</u>  8 Mtn Div  57 Mtn Div  23 Mtn Div	14 Inf Div & 39 Ad hoc Div had only 1x Fd Regt Arty each.  97 (I) Inf Bde was without arty.
3.	Rajshahi, Bogra, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Pabna Distts.	16 Inf Div	<u>XXXIII Corps</u>  20 Mtn Div  6 Mtn Div  50 (I) Para Bde  71 Mtn Bde  MF Bde	16 Div had 2x Fd Regt Arty and 29 C (-)
4	Khulna, Jessore, Kushtia, Faridpur, Barisal, Patuakhali Distts.	9 Inf Div	<u>II Corps</u>  9 Inf Div  4 Mtn Div	9 Inf Div had 2x Inf Bdes, 1x Adhoc Bde, and 2x armd sqn.

<b>Indian Eastern Command Reserve</b>	6 Mountain Division less brigade HQ  2x Engineer Regiments and bomb disposal group
<b>Airborne Forces</b>	50 (I) ParaBrigade

Hence, the dice were so heavily loaded against Pakistan, and Maneckshaw was so confident of India's victory, that he had got the document of surrender prepared even before the start of war:

*"I was so sure that I will win that I had personally dictated the surrender document to headquarters Eastern Command and ordered them to make four copies .I asked them to give one copy to Jagjit Singh Sahib, one copy to Niazi, one copy to the government (of India, sic), and one copy I will keep in my office..... (After the ceasefire) I told Jagjit Singh 'this is a great day for you. Take your wife along (to accompany you at the surrender ceremony, sic)'.\**

\*Transcript of the interview given to Bharat Defence Kavach

China had clearly told Pakistan that in case of a war with India, it would not be able to help Pakistan. It had advised Pakistan to seek a political solution to the problem. According to Kissinger, the United States was favourably disposed towards the creation of Bangladesh, but in a peaceful manner. Under such a situation Yahya Khan should have 1) approached the United Nations as India did during the First Kashmir War, though Jammu & Kashmir was a disputed state, whereas East Pakistan was an integral part of Pakistan, and 2) initiated a dialogue with Mujibur Rehman, who was held in a Pakistani jail. And that was not the time to hold negotiations within the framework of a united Pakistan. If Mujib agreed to some form of linkage with the centre, that would be a bonus. Otherwise, it was time to let East Bengal go. In the eastern theatre, India enjoyed more than 2:1 superiority in ground forces and 10:1 superiority in the air. And it was spoiling for employing its sole aircraft carrier against the beleaguered Pakistani Eastern Command. In the western theatre, there was near parity of forces, but India had more infantry divisions. As in 1965, India had an additional advantage of transferring its mountain divisions from the China border to either of the war theatres, which it did. The Pakistan Army high command had no illusions about the outcome of the war in the east. What they were immensely bothered about was saving West Pakistan when three Indian corps, freed from the eastern theatre, would shift to the west. Ostensibly, they decided to save West Pakistan. However, instead of seeking a dialogue with the Bengalis, they decided to wash their hands off East Pakistan. As for Bhutto, he aimed at getting rid of both the Bengalis as well as the Pakistan Army. Why? As his subsequent moves substantiated, Bhutto was wary that he could not come to power in a united Pakistan. He also believed that the army was the biggest hurdle in his quest for untrammelled power. It is alleged that Air Marshal Rahim Khan, the Air Chief, and Lieutenant General Gul Hassan Khan, Chief of the General Staff of the Pakistan Army, were in cahoots with Bhutto. After the war, Gul Hassan was promoted as Army Chief, but shortly thereafter forced to resign unceremoniously along with



Rahim Khan. Later, both Gul Hassan and Rahim Khan were given ambassadorial assignments.

**Western Theatre**

**Order of Battle - 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1971**

Table 5.2

S.No	Area of Ops	Pakistan	India	Cbt Power	Remarks
1.	J&K	<u>Holding Role</u> 12Div, 23Div*(+) NA Scouts <u>Pen/CAttk Role'</u> 2(I) Armd Bde(+);@;	<u>Western Comd</u> <u>XV Corps</u> 3,10,19,25, &27Inf Div; 1x (I) Inf Bde	1.5:1 in India's favour	*Under Comd Bde ex 17 Div @Under Comd 2x Armd Regts ex 6 Armd Div.
2.	Ravi-Chenab	<u>Holding Role</u> 8Div,15Div <u>C Pen/ C Attk Role</u> 6 Armd Div(-), 17 Div(-) 8(I)Armd Bde	<u>I Corps</u> 36,39, &54 Inf Div; 2(I)Armd Bde, 16(I)Armd Bde	3.5:1 in India's favour	
3.	Ravi-Sutlej	<u>Holding Role</u> 10 Div,11 Div; <u>C Pen/C Attk Role</u> 3(I) Armd Bde,	<u>XI Corps</u> 15 Div,7Div,Foxtrot Div(adhoc); 1x(I) Armd Bde	1.5:1 in India's favour	

		105 (I) Inf Bde Gp			
4.	South of Sutlej	<u>Holding Role</u>  18 Div	<u>Southern Comd*</u>  11Div,12Div; 2x(I)Armd Sqns;  1xMsl regt	4:1 in India's favour	*Jaisalmer- Longewala (excl Reti- Ubairu)
5.	Strategic Reserves	1Armd Div; 7Div,33 Div	1 Armd Div;  14 Div	1.5:1 in Pakistan's favour	To be launched opposite Ganganagar- Anupgarh

Sources: Amin (1999); Katoch (2011)

## Summary

Table 5.3

Formation	Pakist an	India	Remarks
Inf Div	10	14*	*1xDiv deployed against Tibet
Armd Div	2	1	
Indep Armd Bde	3	3	
Indep Inf Bde	1	1	

Notes:

1. Brigade ex 17 Div Detached to Command 23 Div.
2. 2x regts ex 6 Armd Div Detached to Command 8 (I) Armd Bde.
3. Indian I Corps Sector stretched from Samba till short of the Dera Baba Nanak Enclave on the Ravi River. This was initially held by a division and presented to Pakistan the weakest gap in the Indian defences in the event of a preemptive attack. Located in the hinterland, 1 Corps was to assume responsibility of this sector on arrival.

## ESCALATION

Pakistan's military high command succumbed to the covert Indian misinformation that India was only interested in occupying a small chunk of East Pakistan to establish a government of independent Bangladesh in order to put pressure on Pakistan to abandon its Eastern wing. The original plan was therefore replaced by a new plan which called for dispersal of formations and their deployment along the border with India. These thinned out units were under orders to stand their ground until the very end. Meanwhile, the western front would be activated by Pakistan with the aim to divert Indian Army pressure away from East Pakistan.

Sajjad Hyder, Pakistan's High Commissioner to India, claims that in July 1971 he had sent the government a copy of the operational orders about the projected Indian army offensive against East Pakistan. The orders spelled out the date of commencement and the timeframe within which the operation was to be completed. Sajjad claims that in September 1971, when on a visit to West Pakistan, he went to see Gul Hassan, who dismissed the entire information as "airy-fairy tales" (Hyder, 1987).

On the other hand, Gul Hassan mentions that when, in November 1971, information started pouring in from the Eastern Command and other sources that the Indians had amassed eight to ten divisions around East Pakistan, Gul Hassan went to see Yahya Khan on 16<sup>th</sup> November, and the latter, having heard Gul Hassan, replied, not for the first time, that he and Gen Niazi were both fully in the picture and hence there was no need to issue any further instructions. However, a couple of days later, at the behest of General Hamid (COS), a signal was sent to headquarters Eastern Command, warning it "to be on its toes as there was information about an impending Indian attack on East Pakistan on 21<sup>st</sup> November (Khan, 1993).

According to Gul Hassan, after the signal was dispatched, the DMO and DMI asked him that, in view of the gravity of the situation, COS should be urged to order Eastern Command to discard the political objective given to it by HQ CMLA and redeploy to meet the impending Indian aggression. Gul Hassan had another session with the COS, but the latter did not agree to change the Eastern Command deployment plan (Khan, 1994).

According to Lt Gen Niazi, his COS (Brig Baqir Siddiqui), who was at GHQ, was told by the CGS to rush back to Dacca as Indian invasion was expected on 21<sup>st</sup> November. On 21<sup>st</sup> November, Brig Baqir rang up Major General Qureshi, Vice Chief of the General Staff at GHQ, and followed with a written signal about the Indian invasion. Niazi tried to speak to Gul Hassan, but he had gone to Lahore to celebrate Eid "knowing full well that the Indians were going to attack East Pakistan on 21<sup>st</sup> November."

*"I tried to contact Gen Hamid, COS. He too was not available. I learnt later that both he and President had left for Sialkot, ostensibly to visit troops but actually for a partridge shoot. The callous attitude of the three senior most officers of the Army shows that they were in the least interested in the affairs of East Pakistan or the integrity of Pakistan. This did not upset me because I had*

*guessed their intentions and had inkling through my COS that they had decided to quit East Pakistan and abandon us.” (Niazi, 1998)*

Indian forces crossing the border, launched a full-scale invasion in East Pakistan on night 20<sup>th</sup> /21<sup>st</sup> November 1971, attacking simultaneously as many as 23 salients along the border. The purpose of these attacks was to knock the Pakistani forces away from the border and gain space for the establishment of firm bases to be used subsequently for launching major attacks. At many places, these attacks were beaten back by the defenders. However, the much larger Indian forces kept the defenders embroiled. The Government of Pakistan just issued a proclamation of a state of emergency.

Gul Hassan further writes:

*“On 22 November, in the afternoon, (the Air Chief and I) met the President on his return from Sialkot. I went straight up to him and told him that events in East Pakistan had reached the danger level and that he must come to GHQ as some vital decisions had to be taken.... We all drove to GHQ where he was brought up to date. He gave no decisions but told us to meet him at his residence at 6 p.m. as by then he would have time to think over the problem. ”*

*“The assembly (at his residence) included some civil servants, COS and Air Chief. The president addressed me, asking what should be done to deal with the situation. I replied that this as well as previous governments had directed GHQ that, in case of an attack on East Pakistan, it should plan to rescue that part by an offensive from the West”.*

*“On 30 November, Yahya held a conference in GHQ, which the COS, Air C-in -C, CGS and I attended. Yahya told us he had bent over backwards to meet all of India's demands on the so-called refugee problem, but India refused to accept any of our proposals and wanted war. He had also hoped that pressure from the UN, US, and Russia would stop India from committing aggression. However, India had not listened to anyone and attacked East Pakistan. He said he had consulted various politicians and they had all agreed that war was inevitable. However, he would have one more try to persuade India to stop her aggression against East Pakistan and settle whatever problems she had peacefully. If he failed, then he would go to war on 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 1971. The date was later changed to 3<sup>rd</sup> December, for reasons I do not know” (Khan, 1993).*

Kissinger (2011) writes:

*“For eleven days he had stood by while Indian forces pressed deeper and deeper into East Pakistan, in effect dismembering his country... On December 3 he launched his army into an attack in the West. The reaction in our government was to use the Pakistani attack as a perfect excuse to defer the statement attacking Indian transgressions”.*

## CONDUCT OF OPERATIONS

In his Order of the Day, broadcast on morning 4<sup>th</sup> December 1971, Maneckshaw spelled out two Indian military objectives: 1) Capture of East Pakistan, and 2) Destruction of Pakistan's military machine. Indian strategy was to remain on the defensive on the western front till its eastern command achieved its objective of reducing East Pakistan.

On the eastern front, the enemy overwhelmed the Pakistani defences by superior forces, armour, artillery, and air. When most of the defences could not be overrun, the Indian forces after suffering heavy casualties resorted to outflanking moves. Resultantly, till the cease-fire on 16<sup>th</sup> December, the Indians did not capture a single town except Jessore, which was not defended for strategic reasons. At Khulna, heavy fighting continued till 17<sup>th</sup> December and ceased only after repeated orders by the surrendering Eastern command.

The war in the western theatre began when, on the evening of 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1971, Pakistan Air Force launched a series of half-hearted attacks on the Indian airfields. About fifty aircraft were employed and the attacks failed to do any significant damage. This was followed by limited offensives the same night by the holding formations to secure footholds in the enemy territory. Both the armies held back from launching their main offensive and waited for the other side to make the major move. From Pakistan, no major operation was launched for fear that if territorial gains were made in the west, they might result in exchange for possible losses in East Pakistan, something that went against the strategy of letting East Pakistan go. Poonch was attacked by Pakistan Army on night 3<sup>rd</sup> /4<sup>th</sup> December through an infiltration operation. The Indian garrison at Poonch consisted of an infantry brigade (93 Brigade) while 12 Division had planned to infiltrate with two infantry brigades. The plan was practicable, but failed because of irresolution at divisional level, loss of surprise, poor logistic arrangements and stiff resistance by the Indian forces (Amin, 2002; Katoch, 2011).

The attack on Chamb, by 23 Division, was also launched on night 3<sup>rd</sup> /4<sup>th</sup> December. It was partially successful with Pakistan reaching up to the Munawar Tawi. Thereafter, the division established a bridgehead opposite Pallanwala across the Tawi to conduct further operations against Jaurian. However, Pakistan's attempt to secure a bridgehead was halted on 10<sup>th</sup> December when Major General Iftikhar, GOC 23 Division, was killed from injuries suffered in a helicopter crash, and the defences were stabilised along the Munawar Tawi.

In the Sialkot sector, Indian forces advanced up to Basantar Nala and, after fourteen days of fighting, contacted the town of Shakargarh (approximately 20 kilometers from the international border).

Map 5.1



In the Jammu Region, the Chicken's Neck area was captured by the Indians. Pakistan's 4 Corps, holding the Ravi- Sutlej Corridor with two divisions against an equal number of Indian divisions, captured the Indian enclave opposite Hussainiwala Headworks. Pakistan's 105 Brigade carried out a small- scale but highly aggressive operation in Sulaimanke area opposite the Indian town of Fazilka, capturing the Bund ahead of Sabuna Distributary and ensuring the safety of Pakistan's most crucial Sulaimanke Canal Headworks which was just 1,500 metres from the border. The Northern Areas, defended by scouts, were given very low priority. The Indians were, therefore, able to capture important posts overlooking Kargil-Leh Road and in Partapur Sector.

## AIR AND NAVAL BATTLES

According to Singh and Rikhye (1991):

*The PAF had a one point programme: survival, hopefully living to fight another day. Pakistan believed that India was going to make this a final war. Accordingly, it withheld four of its 13 or 14 squadrons in the West from combat, to be conserved for the support of Tikka Khan's last ditch II Corps offensive.*

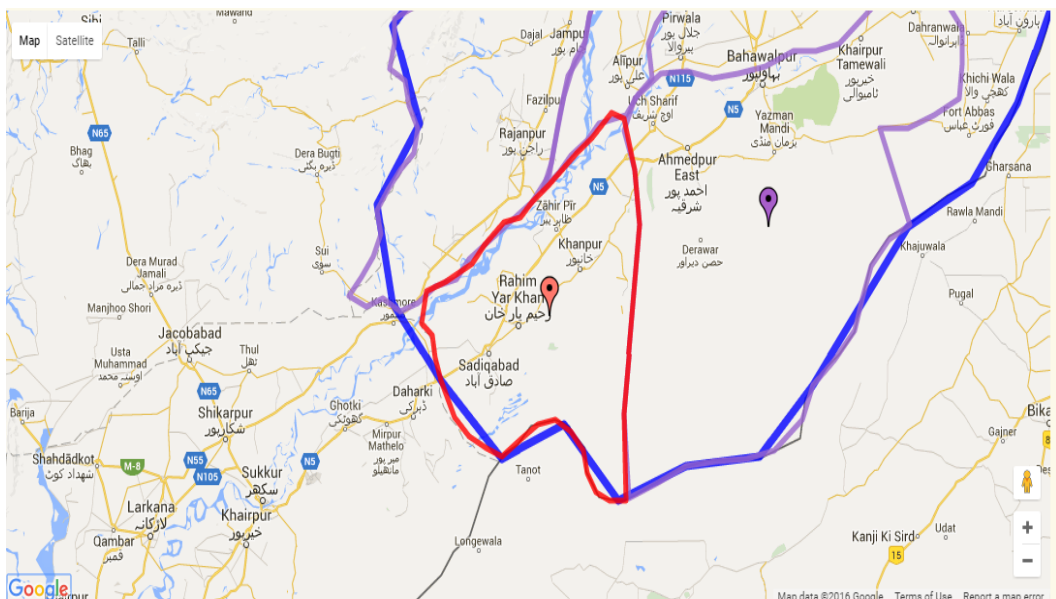
*The PAF's attack capability in 1971 consisted of exactly 16 B-57s and 20 Mirage IIIEP, but the latter were trained and utilized for air superiority, so that it had a negligible capability in this area. There could, then, be no question of an offensive strategy. Nonetheless, since no air force would like to fight just a defensive battle, Pakistani strategy called for a pre-emptive strike to reduce the odds, and throughout the war it continued to send B-57s singly or in pairs for harassing attacks to keep the Indian defences on its toes.*

*Since the strategy was just survival, the PAF succeeded in this sense. On December 17, at the time of cease-fire, it was still strong enough to protect itself against the superior IAF. Had the war continued, of course, it would have been wiped out. But it was a limited war, and surviving was good enough.*

*Nonetheless, otherwise the IAF succeeded. It achieved and maintained complete air supremacy in the East. It had local air superiority in the west where required, for example, over Karachi, Sind, and Shakargarh where Indian 1 Corps was making its big push. It prevented the PAF from damaging in any meaningful manner any of its airbases or infrastructure.*

Air power played a significant role only in the battle of Longewala where the Indian air force harassed a Pakistani infantry brigade group (51 Brigade with under command 22 Cavalry). This force was launched into action without air cover and was without even troop carrying vehicles (TCVs) for the infantry. The author says it with certainty because his own unit was part of the attacking brigade and, due to non-availability of TCVs, it had to commandeer tractor trolleys from the locals. Moving those trolleys over the sand dunes was a nightmare, so they were abandoned well short of the international border. IAF action disabled 50% of the enemy tanks (around 20) and many vehicles carrying ammunition and POL. A large number of surviving soft vehicles had to be abandoned as they got bogged down in deep sand.

Map 5.2



According to Clary (2013), before the Hunters could reach Longewala, the Pakistani attack had already been repulsed by the Indian ground forces. Baweja (2008) counters this by asserting how could a company minus (around 100 persons), along with a lone recoilless rifle, stop an infantry brigade group. More than three decades later the Indian Army and Air Force were locked in a battle over which service should get the credit for repulsing the Pakistani attack. Baweja writes that the Indian 12 Infantry Division had not even expected trouble on this western part of the border. The likelihood of a Pakistani infantry brigade with under command armour regiment crossing the international border and advancing deep inside Indian territory was unpalatable for the Indian Army top brass. Instead, they had laboured over an extensive counteroffensive plan to cross over into Pakistan and go all the way up to Rahimyar Khan. The opposite happened.

IAF claims that there was no ground battle at Longewala (the subject of an Indian blockbuster movie), it was their show all the way, and that India was saved from humiliation because of the four Hunters that blunted Pakistani thrust entirely by air action. Rebutting the Indian Army's narrative, the War Diary of IAF's 14 Care and Maintenance Unit based at Jaisalmer records that on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1971 when 12 Division was building up in its concentration area for advance towards Rahimyar Khan, the enemy sneaked in with an infantry brigade and an armour regiment from Gabbar, via BP 638, towards Longewala. The leading armour bypassed Longewala post and was seen advancing towards Ramgarh past midnight. The enemy movement was passed by the company commander at Longewala to 12 Division Headquarters (via his battalion Headquarters), but the same appeared to be discarded. According to Baweja (2008), the advancing armoured column reached the outskirts of Ramgarh but had to recoil as it had lost contact with its rear. The force, thus withdrew all the way to Longewala. The company commander at Longewala again reported to the division headquarters about more tanks rolling in. On receipt of this message, the GOC tried to get through to the base commander at Jaisalmer but he found that Mujahids had cut the telephone line at Ramgarh. The radio relay link was established between the



GOC and the base Commander in the early hours of 5<sup>th</sup> December. At around 0715 hours, the enemy was engaged by the IAF aircraft. As a result of the Pakistani raid, 12 Division's offensive (Operation Dare Devil) was postponed till the Indians, smarting over what would have happened if the Pakistani force had entered Ramgarh, regained balance. Ramgarh, we are told, was without any defences whatsoever.

Before the 71 War, the Soviet Union had offered Ossa missile boats to Pakistan. These were rejected by the Pakistan Navy due to their limited range, which, according to the naval top brass, would have reduced Pakistan Navy to a coastal defence force. In 71 War the same missile boats were employed by the Indian Navy in an imaginative manner for bombarding the Karachi port. They towed these missile boats behind frigates and, when in the vicinity of Karachi, used them to sink PN destroyer Khyber and two other non-combatant ships, though sections of Pakistan Navy still maintain that Khyber was sunk by a Soviet submarine.

A naval task force under Admiral Vladimir Kruglyakov had reportedly left Vladivostok on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1971. It comprised a Kynda anti-ship missile cruiser, a diesel-electric submarine (possibly the Juliet class), an anti-aircraft missile destroyer, and a Foxtrot class (diesel-electric) attack submarine already in the Indian Ocean. After the war, Admiral Kruglyakov, in an interview, stated that he had orders to stop the U.S. fleet from interfering with Indian Navy's operations. ([www.history.stackexchange.com](http://www.history.stackexchange.com)). In his interview, Admiral Kruglyakov makes contradictory claims. He says that his task force had entered the Bay of Bengal three days after the arrival of USS Enterprise which, given the distance from Vladivostok to the Bay of Bengal, seems true. On the other hand, he says that on arrival, he had ordered his submarines to surface and make their presence felt to the American task force. By that time Pakistani forces had already surrendered and fighting had ceased in the Eastern theatre. With the fighting, all the chances of USS Enterprise helping in the evacuation of the Pakistani garrison had also ceased. Hence there was no requirement for a show of force by Admiral Kruglyakov's task force\*. So, if the Soviet task force had started off from Vladivostok on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, it could not possibly sink PNS Khyber on 4<sup>th</sup> December (when the Indian Navy launched Operation Trident against Karachi harbour). However, the Foxtrot class Soviet submarine, which was already in the Indian Ocean (we do not know which group it belonged to before being regrouped with Kruglyakov's flotilla), could have regrouped with the Indian Navy's task force and taken part in Operation Trident. Foxtrot class submarines were armed with 10x torpedo tubes (6x bow, 4x stem) and carried 22 torpedoes. The claim by a Pakistan Navy source is based on submarine signatures. Prior to the 71 War, Indian Navy had no experience in employing missile boats. Was Operation Trident a joint Indo-Soviet Operation?

\*The US Task Force 74 was led by the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise. Performing its routine duties in the Gulf of Tonkin, the task force was ordered into the Indian Ocean on 14<sup>th</sup> December, 1971, crossed Malacca Straits on night 14<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> December and entered the Bay of Bengal on the morning of 15<sup>th</sup> December. The surrender of Pakistani forces took place on 16<sup>th</sup> December. Going by Kruglyakov's account the flotilla commanded by him reached the Bay of Bengal on the morning of 18<sup>th</sup> December.

PAF responded to the attack by bombing Okha, from where the Indian naval task force had commenced operations against Karachi, the next night. However, the Indians had already withdrawn their naval assets to Bombay. PN's response to the Indian raid on Karachi was sinking of Indian frigate Khukri by submarine Hangor, the first sinking of a surface ship by a submarine since WW2. Contrary to Indian perceptions, what to talk of a submarine base at Gwadar, in 1971 Pakistan Navy did not have any naval presence west of Karachi. Gwadar, at that time, was a sleepy fishermen's village (despite the construction of some jetties, not much has changed to date). It was only after the 71 war when a surface ship was deployed at Gwadar. If Indian Navy had any plans to attack Gwadar, it shelved them after the sinking of Khukri. We also heard about Indian plans to land a brigade minus at or near Gwadar. Without any logistical support, how long would such a task force survive?

Talking of Vikrant, it remained elusive during the 71 War also, till submarine Ghazi was sunk, accidentally, or by the Indian Navy, as claimed by them. Fearing Ghazi, Vikrant was moved from Bombay to Vishakapatnam, and thence to the Andamans. Only when it was confirmed that Ghazi had been sunk was Vikrant moved to the Bay of Bengal. Never before was an aircraft carrier relegated to the role of attacking enemy gunboats, merchant navy ships, and cargo ships. In the absence of PAF and PN, Vikrant threw a naval blockade of East Pakistan and its Sea Hawk aircraft destroyed about a dozen Pakistani improvised gunboats and civilian ships. However, PNS Rajshahi, the only proper Pakistani gunboat in the Bay of Bengal, slipped through the blockade and reached West Pakistan some time after the war. According to the Indians, the Sea Hawks emerged unscathed, achieving the highest kill ratio for any aircraft in the entire war". They had to. As for the Ghazi, India refused the US and Soviet offers to salvage the wreck of Ghazi. Perhaps salvaging it would have confirmed if Ghazi were sunk by a depth charge fired by INS Rajput, as the Indians claimed, or as a result of hitting one of the mines it had laid in Vishakapatnam's navigation channel.

The most debatable question about 71 War's naval dimension remains if Indian Navy could have slapped a naval blockade on West Pakistan. Given the Indian ambitions to destroy West Pakistan's military machine also after the fall of East Pakistan, it would have taken Vikrant more than a week to reach the western sea-board from the Bay of Bengal. Even if Indian Navy had deployed all its naval combatants to block Pakistan's sea lanes of communications, the likely Pakistani response would have been to deploy its three remaining submarines in an arc south of Karachi where, due to the shallow waters of the Arabian Sea, they would be very difficult to detect by the Indian Navy's frigates and Alize ASW aircraft. Lying there quietly, they could very effectively ambush any intruding enemy ship. Thus, it would have been easier for Pakistan to deny India control of its sea lanes of communication, than for India to establish and maintain positive sea control.

Unlike the 65 War, PAF possessed Mirages against which the Sea Hawks on board Vikrant would be no match. If we go by the thesis that Pakistan's military junta and Bhutto had relinquished East Pakistan even before the war, it makes sense that the PAF had used its Mirages very sparingly during the war, saving them for the final round in case India attempted to destroy West Pakistan also.

Without a potent organic air capability to counter Pakistani Mirages, the Indian navy would be forced to rely on the IAF, or to deploy at sea without adequate air cover. Going by Clary's (2014) argument, with the IAF engaged in support of land operations, it is doubtful if it could provide meaningful air cover to the Indian Navy, calling the Indian sea control efforts into serious doubt. India's ability to successfully interdict vessels would weaken further west because of the decrease in air cover and because of the dangers of hitting neutral shipping coming out of the Gulf of Oman.

## ANALYSIS

### Aims & Objectives

- If Pakistan's military leadership were serious about East Pakistan, it would have pre-empted India before the Indian Army had fully mobilized and the Himalayan passes had not become snow bound. It could have done this by attacking India in May or September 1971 in the Ravi-Chenab Corridor. The area between Samba and Dera Baba Nanak was initially held by a division and presented to Pakistan the weakest gap in the Indian defences for launching a pre-emptive attack. Located in the hinterland, 1 Corps was to assume responsibility in this sector on arrival (Amin, 1999; Katoch, 2011).
- According to Major General Sukhwant Singh (2015):

*I met K.K.Singh (Commander I Corps) near the Thakurpur ferry in the middle of October (1971), when his leading elements had just moved in and the rest of his corps was trickling in at an agonizingly slow pace. He smiled and commented: 'Our weakest hour is now, another four days and Yahya would have missed his opportunity.' Yahya did exactly that, and by the third week of October K K was firmly poised in his defensive posture...*

According to Amin (2002),

*Indian Western Command C in C Candeth admitted the fact that all Indian plans to attack Pakistan would have gone to winds had Pakistan attacked in October 1971. Thus Candeth's remark that "Yahya Khan had tarried too long and had missed the boat".*

- After the fall of Dhaka, Indira Gandhi, ostensibly under pressure from the Soviets and America, declared a unilateral ceasefire in the west also. Since then, a spirited discussion has ensued in the Indian, international as well as Pakistani circles that had the superpowers not intervened, Indian Army would have finished West Pakistan also. In this discussion, which is continuing to date, praetorians, defence analysts, diplomats, and media persons, particularly from India have propounded various theories. J.N. Dixit, an Indian diplomat, remarked that, if ordered, Indian Army would have marched into Rawalpindi. After reading various Indian analyses, the author has identified three common Indian war objectives:-
  - a) Defeating Pakistan Army in East Pakistan and creating Bangladesh.
  - b) Destroying Pakistan's war potential for a period (depending upon the analyst) from a few years to half a century.
  - c) Capturing Azad Kashmir, or at least it's southern portion.
    - a. That the superpowers played a role in bringing about a cease-fire in the western theatre also is beyond doubt. India was successful in achieving the first objective. As discussed earlier, Pakistani military and political leadership, due to its contorted thinking, helped India in achieving this objective. The Soviet Union, India's ally in the war, wanted to keep it under leash, hence the Soviet pressure. India had to pay the price of

borrowing Soviet power. The United States had to make some cosmetic gesture to avoid being labeled as an impotent superpower, so it also made some noises. As for destroying Pakistan's war potential and "recovering Azad Kashmir", was the Indian Army capable of achieving these objectives? It could have if it were prepared for a protracted war and the sacrifices such a war demanded, not for a period of weeks, but for more than a year, maybe longer. Let us have a look at the psyche of the Indian civil and military leadership.

- b. During the first Kashmir war, Indian Army fought essentially against a ragtag force of tribesmen, locals and retired/serving army personnel on leave. Pakistan Army entered the fray only when the Indian Army was threatening to advance beyond line Uri- Poonch- Naushera. Indians captured two- thirds of the disputed state but failed to get the mountain barrier separating the Valley from the Potohar plateau vacated from the raiders/Pakistan Army. It also could not dislodge the enemy from Gilgit and Baltistan. Even when the things were going in favour of the Indian Army, Nehru, being a very cautious man, knocked at the United Nations door. After the war, the Indian generals claimed that had they been given a few more weeks, they would have driven Pakistan out of Jammu& Kashmir. Similar claims were made by the Pakistani generals – had they been allowed to go ahead with Operation Venus, they would have liberated the Valley.
- c. According to Rikhye (1988), India's operational strategy on the western front was 1) I Corps to eliminate the entire Sialkot salient, prior to turning north to outflank Azad Kashmir. In conjunction with frontal attacks by 19 and 25 Divisions in Kashmir, this would have cracked the front and Azad Kashmir would have fallen. 2) XI corps to remain in a defensive role in the Lahore sector to conserve strength before attacking the enormously strong Lahore defenses. 3) Southern Command to launch a corps size operation in Sindh to i) cut the line of communication between Karachi and Lahore at Hyderabad and Rahim Yar Khan to ease the pressure on Indian forces operating in the north, and, ii) to occupy maximum territory in Sindh for future bargaining.
- d. After the surrender at Dhaka, India had started moving its forces to the western front. The table below shows the comparative strengths after the cease-fire in the east:

Table5.3

India		Pakistan	Remarks
3 Dec	17 Dec		
15x Inf Divs	16x Inf Divs*	10x Inf Divs	*9Div HQ along with 3x bdes had been transferred to the west.
1x Armd Div	1x Armd Div	2x Armd Divs	
2x (I) Inf Bdes	2x (I) Inf Bde	1x (I) Inf Bde	
1x (I) Armd Bde	1x (I) Armd Bde	3x (I) Armd Bdes	

Rikhye (2014)

### ***Outflanking Azad Kashmir***

- In Sialkot Sector, Indian I Corps moved very slowly in the face of determined Pakistani opposition. After fourteen days of fighting, Indian forces were still on the eastern outskirts of the town of Shakargarh, meaning they had gained territory only at a pace of about one kilometer a day (Clary, 2013). This was not the way if they had aimed at eliminating the Sialkot salient prior to turning north to outflank Azad Kashmir.
- Talking of outflanking Azad Kashmir from the south. It looks very neat on paper, and impressive in a model discussion, but ground realities are different. The Indians had to first clear the Sialkot salient, and they had barely contacted Shakargarh town. Swinging north after contacting G.T road involved attacking with armour, infantry following in zone. In Ravi–Chenab Corridor, Indians had three infantry divisions (36, 39, and 34) and two independent armoured brigades (2 and 16). Pitted against the Indians in this corridor were Pakistan's 8 and 15 Divisions and 8(I) Armd Bde. Moreover, after the fall of Chamb, brigades ex 6 Armd Div and 17 Div, detached to command 23 Div and 2 (I) Armd Bde, had reverted to command their parent formations. So the final tally was Indian 3x inf divs and 2x (I) armd bdes against Pakistan's 3x inf divs (8,15, and 17), 1x armd div, and 1x (I) armd bde. These Pakistani formations were attrited during the war, so were the Indian formations. The Indians had an advantage that they could move additional divisions to this area from the China front. Switching of Indian forces from the Ravi–Sutlej Corridor (say, 1 (I) Armd Bde) would have created imbalance in that sector. We have seen how Pakistan's 7 Division slipping to the south had unnerved the Indians. We agree that the only fresh formations available to Indian Army would come either from the China front or the eastern theatre (available after three weeks).
- Swinging north to outflank Pakistani defences, Indian Army would have to:
  - 1) advance west of the foothills to first reach the Grand Trunk Road. This was necessary to create space west of the international border for launching a large offensive. In such an eventuality Pakistan's 17 Division would occupy a new defensive line on the northern bank of River Chenab, north of Gujrat, whereas 6 Armoured Division and 111 Brigade\* would have constituted the reserve in general area Jhelum. In case the Indians tried to probe west of G.T. Road, Pakistan had 8(I) Armd Bde which could have been employed in a delaying role.
  - 1) 111 Brigade, located at Rawalpindi, is actually a brigade plus. This brigade, along with the line of communication troops deployed between Jhelum and Rawalpindi, constitutes a division. Besides, elements from FC and other paramilitary outfits would be available in and around Rawalpindi.
  - 2) Cross Chenab River in an encounter/deliberate crossing, depending upon how quickly the defender organised his defences on the northern bank.
  - 3) Invest Gujrat, Lalamusa, and Kharian. These towns/Kharian cantonment cannot be bypassed. Even if the Indian Army managed to bypass any of these towns, there was no Mukti Bahini to protect their rear.
  - 4) Cross River Jhelum south of Jhelum city in an encounter/deliberate crossing.

- 5) Invest Jhelum.
- 6) Negotiate the Tarraki Ridge (an extension of the Salt Range) north of Jhelum. The Tarraki defile zig zags along a gorge and can be easily defended with a small force.
- 7) All the time protect the eastern flank from Pakistani 23 Div and 12 Div. There were chances the Indian flank protection force (minimum one infantry division) would be sucked in by 23 and 12 Divisions.

Map 5.3



- Had the Indian Army instead of swinging north after reaching the G.T. road, tried to roll down Pakistan's 23 and 12 Division defences by remaining close to the mountains, hopping from one mountain feature to another, it would be another slogging match. Trying to dislodge the enemy from its prepared defences would be a very time-consuming and frustrating experience. Besides, the Indians would have to negotiate Chenab and Jhelum Rivers anyway.
- So, 12 Division and 23 Division would not abandon their defences to save Rawalpindi, Pakistani front in Azad Kashmir would not crack, and Indian attempt at outflanking from the south would get bogged down somewhere between Gujrat and Lala Musa. Having said this, the author would like to

ask this fellow J.N. Dixit if he has ever heard a blast other than one from a tire burst?

## CONSERVING STRENGTH BEFORE ATTACKING LAHORE

- It is said that the Indian XI corps remained in a defensive role in the Lahore sector to conserve strength before attacking the enormously strong Lahore defenses. The Indians claim that during the 1965 war, they had deliberately stopped at the BRB canal because entering Lahore was a prohibitive option. This claim has been rebutted by Pushpinder and Rikhye (1991). They would know that in 1965 Pakistan had deployed troops from the Frontier Constabulary in Lahore and other major cities. Fighting a prolonged war was not a palatable option for Pakistani military top brass, yet they had deployed the Frontier Constabulary to embroil the attacking Indians in a war of attrition had the Indians entered Lahore. In 1971, the military junta and Bhutto had written off East Pakistan, but Pakistanis had to fight for their very survival in case the Indians tried to absorb West Pakistan. In 1982, the Israelis had stopped short of entering Beirut, which was held by the PLO. Would the Indians take the risk of entering Lahore?

## CUTTING PAKISTAN'S LINE OF COMMUNICATIONS

- And lastly about operations in the south. The Indian Southern Command was to launch a corps size operation in Sindh to cut Pakistan's line of communications between Karachi and Lahore and to occupy maximum territory in Sindh for future bargaining. The Indian Army did take large areas in the deserts along the southern border, capturing 7,500 square kilometers of Pakistani territory. Even so, the Indian Army penetrated approximately 50 kilometers during the two-week conflict, at a rate of four kilometers per day. Most of the territory was gained against essentially no Pakistani opposition and the strength of the Indian attack had dissipated considerably by the end of the war when it finally did face Pakistani forces. It is doubtful that future gains would have been at a similar rate. In the south, the Indian offensive was stopped well before it reached the valuable irrigated greenbelt areas to the east of the Pakistani city of Hyderabad (Clary, 2013).

## THE AFTERMATH

- We have discussed it in detail how the outcome of the war in the eastern theatre was foretold. A beleaguered eastern command of Pakistan Army, cut off from its logistics base in West Pakistan, devoid of air cover, with a hostile population breathing down its neck, had two options 1) fight till death 2) surrender. It did not choose the first option because GHQ had ordered the eastern command to lay down arms, otherwise West Pakistan would also be lost (?). Till it was the fighting in East Pakistan, it was fine with India. But they were not sure about the outcome of war in the western theatre. As mentioned earlier Maneckshaw, in his order of the day on commencement of hostilities in the western theatre, had committed



himself to destroying Pakistan's war machine. However, in the west, Pakistan had held its hand and kept its powder dry. PAF was still a potent force, so was the army. And Pakistan navy still had three submarines. Most of all, there was no friendly population and Mukti Bahini to augment the Indian war effort. It has already been discussed why the Indian Army could not out flank Azad Kashmir by attempting to roll down Pakistani defences from south to north.

- Once the defender is fighting for its survival, the invader cannot be sure if capture of this or that territory will break the front. Had Indian Army even contacted G.T. Road, the only way to break the rest of Pakistan was to threaten Rawalpindi–Pakistan Army's nerve centre. We have discussed this possibility in detail and proved it impracticable.

## THE POLISH RESOLUTION

On 14<sup>th</sup> December the most talked about and debated Polish resolution (S/10453/Res-1) was tabled before the Security Council. It said:-

The SECURITY COUNCIL, GRAVELY CONCERNED over the military conflict on the Indian sub-continent, which constitutes an immediate threat to international peace and security

HAVING HEARD the statements by the Foreign Minister of India and the Deputy Prime Minister of Pakistan, DECIDES that:

1. In the eastern theatre of conflict, the power will be peacefully transferred to the lawfully elected representatives of the people headed by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who would immediately be released;
2. after the immediate commencement of the initial period of cease-fire, the Pakistan armed forces will start withdrawal to the pre-set locations in the eastern theatre of conflict with a view to evacuation from the eastern theatre of conflict;
3. similarly, the entire West Pakistan civilian personnel and other persons willing to return to West Pakistan, as well as the entire East Pakistan civilian personnel and other persons in West Pakistan willing to return home, will be given an opportunity to do so under the supervision of the United Nations, with the guarantee on the part of all appropriate authorities concerned that nobody will be subjected to repressions;
4. As soon as within the period of 72 hours the withdrawal of the Pakistan troops and their concentration for that purpose will have started, the cease-fire will become permanent. As soon as the evacuation of the West Pakistan armed forces will have started, actually upon consultations with the newly established authorities organised as a result of the transfer of power to the lawfully elected representatives of the people headed by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman;
5. Recognizing the principle according to which territorial acquisitions made through the use of force will not be retained by either party to the conflict, The Governments of India and Pakistan will immediately begin consultations through appropriate representatives of their armed forces

with a view to the speediest possible implementation of this principle in the western theatre of military operations.

Commenting on the resolution, A.G Noorani (2012) writes:

*"The Revised version of the next day, 15 December, was substantially identical except for one significant change. References to the release of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and to the government headed by him were dropped. This could not have been done to please India. It was done to persuade Pakistan. If it had shown any interest at all, more concessions might have followed. It was preeminently a formula for negotiations and was eminently negotiable..... Tersely put, the Resolution provided for a direct transfer of power from Islamabad to Dhaka; for the withdrawal of Pakistan's forces as well as India's forces and a return to the status quo ante bellum. Not a single prisoner of war would have been held by either side nor an inch of the territory of the adversary state. The cease-fire line would have stayed put. There would have been no surrender of Pakistan's forces to the Indian Command. And there would have been no Simla Agreement, either".*

Noorani quotes an excerpt from Sher Baz Mazari's book (A Journey to Disillusionment; Oxford University Press; p. 217):

*If the Polish resolution had been accepted, the ignominy of 17 December (surrender) would have been avoided. The fact that it demanded the transfer of power to the elected representatives rankled Bhutto. It meant a return of Mujib and the Awami League. Bhutto would then have been reduced in political rank. As a parliamentary minority leader, he would have been relegated to the peripheries of power".*

## CONCLUSION

Starting 1947, the elite in both the wings had gradually lost their romance with a united Pakistan and were looking for an excuse to get rid of each other. The separatist tendency in East Pakistan found open expression and was translated by the Bengali intelligentsia into a popular movement, abetted strongly by India. That the West Pakistani centres of power, particularly the Punjabi and Sindhi feudal, had also gravitated towards separating the two wings, is generally ignored.

The outcome of the 1971 War was foretold. Pakistani leadership had been divorced from reality. No Borrowed Power was available to Pakistan, either from the United States or from China, whereas India enjoyed full support from the Soviet Union. The dice were heavily loaded against Pakistan. That was the time when the Pakistani decision makers, instead of remaining in a state of limbo, should have tried to reach a rapprochement with Sheikh Mujibur Rehman who was in a Pakistani jail. Instead, they waited for a hallucinatory Seventh Fleet. The author has read the transcripts of the telephone conversations between Nixon and Kissinger during the 71 War. He appreciates the magnanimity of the United States when Nixon told Kissinger to expedite the transfer of a few F-5 fighter aircraft from Jordan to Pakistan. For the Pakistani public, however, nothing else could have created a greater humour. And the language Nixon used in these conversations against Indira Gandhi was unbecoming of any self-respecting man.

During the 1971 War, India used the instrument of psychological war to subvert East Pakistan, which was 1000 miles away from West Pakistan with a sea in between and surrounded by India from three sides. But for the Indian military trained 2,87,000 strong Bengali rebels who engaged Pakistani forces in high intensity insurgency for nine months, all out support of the former Soviet Union and the deleterious role of USA, Indian ten divisions together with 32 BSF battalions and Mukti Bahinis backed by massive artillery, tank, air and naval support could not have defeated the marooned force of 34,000 regular troops and 11,000 paramilitary forces devoid of air and armour support and cut off from rest of the world. In order to glamorize its so-called victory, Indian writers have been repeatedly mentioning a false figure of 90,000 Pakistani soldiers surrendering to Indian forces.

Brigadier A.R. Siddiqui mentions that, upon hearing of the surrender in Dhaka, General Riza leaned on his shoulder and started crying. This episode reminds the author of a piece from M.J. Akbar's book. Mentioning the fall of the last Moorish fortress in Spain, Akbar (2002) writes:

*"In 1491 the Castilians laid siege to the last Muslim Fortress in Spain, and the most glorious of them all, Alhambra. In December the terms of surrender were negotiated. On the first day of 1492 Christian troops entered the castle. On the morning of 2 January, 1492 Boabdil (the Last Moor, sic) handed over the keys of Alhambra. From the summit of a hill, now known as El Suspiro Del Moro, or the Last Sigh of the Moor, as he turned, in tears, to take a last look at Alhambra, Ayesha told her defeated son: "Do not weep as a woman for what you could not hold as a man".*

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