

REFLECTIONS ON INDO – PAK 1971 WAR THROUGH THEORIES OF WAR AND PEACE

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Abstract

The authoritative account provides an excellent overview of reflections on Indo-Pakistan 1971 war through theories of war and peace. He is of the view divergences of East Pakistan began to surface with West Pakistan soon after independence, when a group of students protested the Quaid-i-Azam's speech in Dacca in 1948, making Urdu the national language. Two years later in 1950, the East Pakistan Muslim League asked for maximum autonomy. Then in 1954, after elections in East Pakistan, the United Front, which won with overwhelming majority, asked for a complete autonomy according to the Pakistan Resolution. A West Pakistan dominated central government's manipulation to deny power to the elected majority in East Pakistan added to the accumulating grievances. Delays in constitution-making and holding national elections exacerbated East Pakistan's sense of deprivation.

Keywords: Reflections, Pakistan, War, Peace, Pakistan's Resolution, East Pakistan, Autonomy, Operation.

Introduction

Shared interest in the protection of cultural, economic and political rights brought the Muslims of British India to a common platform. The leaders of Bengal played a seminal role in the formation of the Muslim League and the formulation of the demand for Pakistan. After the state came into existence, the unity of the two wings came under strain as a result of several factors; some of which were inherent in demography, differential-colonial-legacy and resource endowment, while others arose from narrow and short-sighted politics.

Differences between West Pakistan began to surface soon after independence, when a group of students protested the Quaid-i-Azam's speech in Dacca in 1948, making Urdu the national language. Two years later, the East Pakistan Muslim League asked for maximum autonomy. Then in 1954, after elections in East Pakistan, the United Front, which won with overwhelming

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majority, asked for a complete autonomy according to the *Pakistan Resolution*. The West Pakistan's dominated central government's manipulation to deny power to the elected majority in East Pakistan added to the accumulating grievances. Delays in constitution-making and holding national elections exacerbated East Pakistan's sense of deprivation.

East Pakistan's isolation during the 1965 War and its lack of self-defence capabilities gave a fillip to the existing demand for autonomy. In March 1966, the Awami League (AL) leader Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman put forward the demand of Bengalis in the form of *Six Points*. Ayub Khan's highly centralised government equated this demand for autonomy with secessionism.

Monitoring the brewing trouble and growing alienation in East Pakistan, India encouraged the separatist sentiments. The same year, a group of nationalists in Agartala planned sabotage. A raid on an armoury led to the arrest of twenty-eight people including armed forces personnel in January 1969. The government also implicated Mujib-ur-Rehman in this case, though he was in custody during the Agartala Conspiracy period. Mujib's Six Points and his trial made him a hero out of nothing. As if this was not enough, the federal government's indifference to the plight of the people in East Pakistan after 1970's flood broadened the mistrust fissures.

The December 1970 elections further polarised the united Pakistan. As a result, Awami League, led by Mujib-ur-Rehman swept polls in East Pakistan, winning absolute majority in National Assembly. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan People's Party emerged as a runner up. These election results indicated with clarity the devastating polarization of popular feelings between East and West Pakistan. Faced with this unexpected outcome, the West Pakistani leaders sought for other means to maintain their hold on power. Bhutto in an ill-conceived move, with the help of military leadership, tried to stall the convening of the National Assembly; which at later stage proved a decision with fatal consequences.

Mujib, unable to get his fair share in power, took an extreme position. He declined any invitation to visit Islamabad for talks. The political situation worsened. Yahya - Mujib talks in Dacca broke down on 23rd March 1971 when the Awami League proposed Pakistan should be made a confederation. On 25th March 1971, the Army started a crackdown in East Pakistan to restore law and order situation. Though the military within a month reasonably restored the law

and order situation but unimaginative use of force further alienated the masses in East Pakistan. This element contributed in worsening of situation beyond control later on.

After Yahya Khan's military action in East Pakistan, Yahya Khan's military action gave a chance to India to play its role and cut Pakistan into two, the Indian Government with revisionist designs moved into a higher gear. India fully exploited this window of opportunity to cut Pakistan into two. Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) operatives facilitated move of Tajuddin Ahmed, an Awami League leader, to a border village in India to proclaim independence of Bangladesh and installed him as head of the Provisional Bangladesh Government in Calcutta rented by RAW. On 31st March 1971, the Indian parliament adopted a resolution assuring the East Pakistani insurgents that their struggle and sacrifices from will receive the wholehearted support of the people of India. The Indians first secretly, and later overtly, began building up a rebel militia force called the Mukti Bahini.

As per West Pakistan's assessment, Indians would restrict their assistance to moral and material support but the Indian government ordered plans for a campaign to take over East Pakistan. It however, deferred the implementation in light of their Army Chief General Manekshaw's view that the army needed six to seven months to prepare for war. The Indians planned their offensive in November 1971 when the weather in Himalayas would make Chinese intervention more difficult.

The Indians started an all-out war by end of November. With the complete numerical superiority in air, sea and land, its forces overrun the Pakistani Eastern Command leading to surrender on 16th December 1971.

Genesis of Issue

The Language Issue

The language issue started on February 25, 1948, when a Bengali Hindu member, Mr Dharendra-Nath Dutta, moved a resolution in the constituent assembly that Bengali, along with Urdu, should be used in the assembly proceedings.¹ To this development, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan responded, "It is necessary for a nation to have one language and the language can only be Urdu and no other language." This had negative implications for Bengalis as their language was spoken by 54.6% of the people of Pakistan while Urdu was the

language of only 7.2% of Pakistan's population.² The central government's insistence to bulldoze the issue resulted into *Language Riots of 1952*.

Constitutional-cum-Political Issues

The most serious challenge faced by Pakistan after independence was formulation of a constitution. The assembly however, failed to draft a constitution till its dismissal in 1954. The consequences were serious: politics reverted to provincial levels and trust deficit started to increase between both the wings and there were calls for more autonomy from East Pakistan. 1954 is sub-national tendencies started to appear in East Pakistan. AK Fazlul Haq pioneered these tendencies, when as Chief Minister of East Pakistan; he made statements which were suggestive of independent Bangladesh. It is unfortunate to point out that government failed to fully comprehend the consequences of such divide. This was made obvious by its almost inaction to the United Front's 21 points, which asked for greater autonomy for East Pakistan.³

The constitutional problem lingered on. Dismissal of various governments, formulation and abrogation of 1956 Constitution and introduction of a system of *parity* through *One Unit Formula* further aggravated the political crisis. Imposition of martial law in 1958 stalled political processes and thus paved the way for political polarization. Ayub's 1962 Constitution also failed to provide any solution to the problem, as it contained substantial executive powers for the president and thus became presidential in nature. As a whole, sub-national tendencies, which started surfacing in 1951, finally dominated the political scene in 1966. These were manifested in Mujib's Six Points, which ultimately led to the breakup of the country.

Economy

"East Bengal was the poorest part of the province of Bengal in undivided India." The economic activity suffered further at the time of partition by award of Calcutta – the economic hub of Bengal to India. Economic deprivation and its realisation by Bangalis though justified, need to be seen in this context. It may however, be noted that the central government did not do enough to alleviate the economic sufferings of East Pakistanis, instead its economic policies further alienated the Bangalis.

Comparative Share in the Government' Services

Notwithstanding the inbuilt inadequacies in representation of East Pakistan in the armed forces, civil services and other government institutions, and also the fact that government did quite a bit to improve the situation, the overall political and economic environment led many in the East to believe that enough was not being done to overcome the inadequacy of representation.

Major Events Leading to 1971 War

Mujib's Six Points

After 1965 War, Mujib and other East Pakistani politicians felt that West Pakistan cared less about them and also felt economically strangled by 1965 war. Consequently sub-national themes gained further support in East Pakistan and in March 1966, less than six months after the war ended; Mujib advanced a six point programme to resounding public response.⁴ The programme fundamentally called for a separate foreign exchange accounts for both wings and asked for permission to raise para-military forces at the provincial level.⁵ Politicians of West Pakistan felt that six points were secessionist in nature and therefore, did not support them. However, due to inept handling of essentially a political issue, the six points became a popular political demand in East Pakistan.

Round Table Conference (RTC)

Frustrated by agitations in both wings, Ayub Khan decided to call a Round Table Conference (RTC) in early months of 1969. Mujib was acquitted from charges of Agartala Conspiracy Case to attend the conference. However, Bhutto and Maulana Bhashani refused to attend.⁶ Results of RTC further alienated the Bengalis, who felt that their basic demands were put under the carpet; and in doing so, most of the West Pakistani politicians also supported the government.

Outcome of Elections

After assuming office, General Yahya announced elections under universal suffrage to be held in December 1970. 'One Unit' was also abolished, which implied permanent majority for East Pakistan in the National Assembly. Awami League (AL) got thumping majority, winning 160 out of 162 East Pakistan National Assembly seats.⁷ In the west, PPP of Bhutto won 81 out of 120 National Assembly seats. As a result of elections, Bhutto insisted on some power sharing

formula, and continuously refused to go to Dhaka to attend the assembly session, which had been called on 3rd March 1971. Unfortunately, General Yahya, on 1st March 1971 postponed the assembly session, a decision which had disastrous consequences. Postponement of the assembly session resulted in a wave of protests and demonstrations. It is generally agreed upon that Bhutto's decision not to attend the assembly was very unfortunate.

Awami League called for civil disobedience. Political activists of Awami League took over the administration. Writ of the government virtually evaporated. Army and civilian mobs clashed, further deepening the divide. Mujib ran the administration through directives issued on his behalf. Dhaka was physically barricaded by Awami League activists. At this juncture, the government took the fatal decision to use the force, which was resented by Lieutenant General Sahibzada Yaqub Khan who tendered his resignation. A military operation code named *Operation Search Light* was launched on night 25/26 March, 1971.

Operation Search Light⁸

The unfortunate decision for suppressing the uprising in East Pakistan by military force was taken on 22nd March 1971 at a meeting between the president, the governor and the martial law administrator at Dacca. No party leader opposed the use of force to re-instate the government's authority.

However, it was not till 24th March 1971 that the final decision to crush the Awami League and its supporters was taken. No amount of persuasion, reasoning or discussion had made Mujib or Bhutto change their rigid stand. The point of no return had arrived. "The killing of a few thousand would not be too high a price for keeping the country together. Show them the teeth and they will be quiet," said General Yahya to General Tikka Khan.⁹

Objectives of Operation Search Light

- To seal-off the borders.
- To create conditions for selecting a civilian set up.
- To regain the administration of the province.
- To accommodate the non-radical elements of the elected representatives into a new political arrangement.
- Disarming all Bengali troops.

- Arresting of all prominent Awami League leaders.
- Imposing of martial law strictly.
- Controlling of all airfields.
- Securing of the Chittagong naval base.
- Ensuring the security of all towns.
- Cutting off East Pakistan from the rest of the world in terms of communication links.
- Taking away Radio and TV stations from the clutches of the Awami League and placing them again under the control of the government.

The Crackdown

In such an environment, Pakistan Army began the military crack-down on the night 25/ 26 March 1971. The next day, Major Zia-ur-Rahman's (a Bangali officer) voice on the radio proclaimed East Pakistan as People's Republic of Bangladesh. "Today Bangladesh is a sovereign and independent state,"¹⁰ said a voice from a clandestine radio station. Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman was arrested and all other leaders of the Awami League escaped to India. The Dacca University was made the first target of the military action on the night between 25 / 26 March 1971.

After Effects of the Military Action

Mujib claimed that over 3 million were killed during the military crackdown. Indians reduced the figure to 1 million. General Tikka Khan admitted 34,000 casualties. The missionaries in East Pakistan estimated a loss of life of about 30,000. Casualties suffered by the Pakistan Army in the counter insurgency operations between March to November, 1971 were 237 officers, 136 JCOs and 3,559 other ranks killed and wounded. Most of the history books give inflated figures of civilian casualties. Sarmila Bose in her latest Book has crystalized the figures with more accuracy.¹¹

By 31st May 1971, the writ of the government had been restored. However a large number of Bengali troops both from the regular army, the para military forces and the police deserted to India with their weapons. They formed the core of the Mukti Bahini. The military action, falsely projected as genocide, added to the antipathy against Pakistan in the international capitals. The bitterness against West Pakistan leadership in general and Pakistan Army in particular had increased manifold.

Out of the eight immediate objectives of Operation Search Light only a few could be achieved and that too partially.

Mukti Bahini Activities

Bengali representation in the armed forces and para military forces in East Pakistan in March, 1971 was about 21,000. After 3rd March 1971, a de-facto Bangladesh had come into existence and the loyalty of the Bengali officers and men had become questionable.¹² Ex-servicemen had already formed a para-military force in support of the Awami League. The turning point came in the form of a military action when the East Bengal Regiments and the Bengali elements in the East Pakistan Rifles were ordered to hand over their weapons to West Pakistanis. As expected, they rebelled and fought their way and joined separatist forces.

On 10th April 1971, Syed Nazr-ul-Islam, so-called acting president of Bangladesh, proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh from Calcutta, formerly the offices of the Deputy High commission for Pakistan. A 'war council' was formed with Bengali Colonel MAG Osmani as its Chairman. Other members of the council included middle tier Bangali Army officers.

The strength of the Mukti Bahini and other allied organizations kept growing and when war broke out, it had reached around 100,000. "The resistance needed planning, weapons training and leadership and only India could provide them," accepted Brigadier Jagdev Singh.¹³ Six training centres were established in India, each commanded by an Indian brigadier with arms and ammunition provided by Indian Army.

Conduct of 1971 War

Sustained operations for about eight months in an unfavourable environment of climate, terrain and hostile population had battle fatigued the Pakistan Army. Casualties were mounting and could not get proper attention because of inadequate facilities for their evacuation. Thus there was a steady erosion of morale, aggravated by propaganda in the international media.

The Indians started an all-out invasion of East Pakistan on 21st November 1971. It was the day of Eid-ul-Fitr. Pakistan Army gave an excellent account at tactical levels and fought gallantly in sectoral battles; however tactical brilliance could not compensate the systemic operational and strategic failures.

When the battle of Dacca started, Army formations of the Eastern Command had already been seriously imbalanced and had lost cohesion. Indians closed in toward Dacca from north and east. The feeling of impending defeat and insecurity pervaded Dacca. The UN had arranged an airlift to evacuate foreign nationals on 8th December and requested India to guarantee safe air evacuation from Dacca. On 9th December, Governor Malik sent his second message to General Yahya Khan to consider an immediate ceasefire and political settlement. The same day General Niazi informed Islamabad about the critical military situation in East Pakistan leading to surrender on 16th December 1971.

Theoretical Lens at Individual Level

Application of Theories

Conduct of key individuals, organizations, groups, states and international actors before, during and in the aftermath of 1971 War can best be analysed through application of some of the established theories explaining the behavioural patterns of individuals, organizations and states.

Rational Choice or Rational Actor Theory

It is a framework for understanding social behaviour based on cost / benefit analyses. The theory therefore focuses on the determinants as to how individuals make certain choices. Rational actors optimize given opportunities. Therefore, from the perspective of rational choice theorists, any rational actor model assumes that actors (such as decision makers) make choices that the actors believe will lead to the best feasible outcomes for them as defined by their personal values or preferences.¹⁴ The rational actors may be individuals in decision making positions as leaders in states or non-state entities.

Sub-Nationalistic / Ethnic Politics of Mujib-ur-Rehman as a Rational Actor

Mujib's role and attitude in 1971 can best be analysed by applying *Rational Actor Theory* if studied in historical perspective. He rose in Bengali politics as a student leader. He was a forceful orator, charismatic leader and became popular for his opposition to West Pakistan's ethnic and institutional discrimination against Bengalis by exploiting their sense of alienation and victimization. In 1963, Mujib's Awami League Party had dropped the word "Muslim" from its name in a shift towards secularism and a broader appeal to

non-Muslim communities. Hence projection of ethnic and sub-nationalist interests far above the interests of Pakistan as a federation became a rationale choice for Mujib as it served both - the Bengali Nationalism as well as his personal aspirations to be the rightful Prime Minister of the country.

Lust for Power and Egoistic Politics of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as a Rational Actor

Bhutto wanted to be the Prime Minister of Pakistan at all costs (regardless of the circumstances) despite losing elections. He never reconciled with the ground realities and considered Bengalis / Mujib to be far too inferior to govern the country as Prime Minister. Following developments amplify Bhutto's behaviour as a rational actor pleading for self-glorification.

Immediately after the elections, Bhutto issued statements which generated inter-regional tension and provoked the Awami League leadership by emphasizing the importance of Awami League - Pakistan People's Party compromise and at same time adopting a threatening posture. On 21st December 1970 at Lahore, he expressed his desire to form a coalition government with the Awami League at Centre. It is generally agreed upon that Bhutto's decision not to attend the assembly session, which was to be held in Dhaka on 3rd March 1971, was very unfortunate as perhaps, proved last straw on camel's back for negotiated settlement of the issue.

Ill Fated Efforts by General Yahya Khan as a Rational Actor

In March 1969, once General Yahya took control of the state, Army stood completely discredited, struggle for restoration of democracy had assumed character of an organized movement and many feared that another long period of military rule was in the offing. Therefore, his top priority was to dispel these apprehensions and deliver message to the public that he was there only for transitional period.

General Yahya sensitive to Bengali grievances endeavoured to give them equal representation in the administration and discussed the system of elections and government with political parties. Subsequently, he issued 'Legal Framework Order' carrying guidelines for election including the grant of universal adult franchise by discarding 'principle of parity'; which favoured Bengalis.

He ensured the conduct of 1st free and fair elections by remaining neutral and became the 1st military ruler to keep his word. The picture that emerges from available material highlights Yahya's efforts to bring Mujib and Bhutto on negotiating table to arrive at a compromise for transfer of power to an elected government.

Aspirations of Indira Gandhi as a Rational Actor

Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi did exactly what a rational actor in those circumstances could have done.¹⁵ As a whole she fully exploited the window of opportunity. She provided extensive diplomatic and political support to the Bangladeshi movement. She toured a large number of countries in an effort to exploit Pakistani atrocities against Bengalis. It proved vital later during the war in convincing the international community military action by India was justified. Also, following Pakistan's defeat, it ensured prompt recognition of the newly independent state of Bangladesh.

Based on the internal dynamics of East Pakistan and glaring division in Pakistan's political and military leadership, Indira Gandhi decided to use the military instrument. Having analysed the diplomatic situation and evaluation of public opinion, the key political trio, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram and Foreign Minister Swaran Singh, are said to have weighed the likely consequences of different and complex courses of action and adopted a strategy which not only minimized the adverse impact of the East Bengal crisis on India's national interests, but leveraged that challenge to militarily split Pakistan and create an independent Bangladesh.¹⁶

Theoretical Lens at Sub State Level

Groupthink Theory

Groupthink was first coined by William H. Whyte, Jr. in Fortune magazine, March 1952.¹⁷ In 1972, Irving Janis, a research psychologist in USA published a thought provoking book dealing with Groupthink.¹⁸ Later studies were built on his model. As a psychological phenomenon it occurs within a group of people, having harmony and cohesiveness resulting in poor decision-making. Group members endeavour to reach a consensus decision without deep analysis and have tendency to suppress dissenting viewpoints by isolating themselves from external influences. Loyalty demands conformity thus leading to loss of creativity and critical thinking.

Groupthink was amply reflected at sub state level within political and military institution of Pakistan. In this context, some examples are given below:-

- Pakistan's military suffered from illusion of invulnerability thus based its decisions on wrong assessments.
- Political elites of West Pakistan had unquestionable belief in their ethnic superiority and their undisputed right to lead the Country.
- Military 'internal cohesiveness' led to lack of free and critical thinking. Difference of opinion was ruthlessly curbed. Resignation of Lieutenant General Sahibzada Yaqub Khan, General Officer Commanding Eastern Command amply reflects the groupthink phenomenon.

Awami League headed by Mujib-ur-Rehman

Criticism of Ayub after 1965 War coupled with resignation of Bhutto as foreign minister followed by a campaign against the government led to a chaotic situation. In East Pakistan, Mujib advanced a six point programme to resounding public response.¹⁹ Politicians of West Pakistan felt that six points would lead to disintegration of Country and therefore, did not support them considering them to be 'Out-group'. However, the six points became a popular political demand in East Pakistan and later became the basis of secessionist struggle of Awami League leaving no room for some voices of sanity (by Jamat-e-Islami) supporting the federation.

Pakistan People's Party headed by Bhutto

Ayub decided to call a Round Table Conference (RTC) in early months of 1969. Mujib was acquitted from charges of Agartala Conspiracy Case to attend the conference. 'Groupthink' psyche prevailing in West Pakistani politicians against Awami League led to irrational decision making. Bhutto and Maulana Bhashani refused to attend.²⁰ Roundtable conference, therefore, further alienated the Bengalis.

Pakistan Army headed by General Yahya

In the national perspective, military hierarchy misconceived that application of force can resolve political problem and Country can be kept united through coercive means. Group thinking was fully reflected in the usefulness of military, 'one pill for all ills phenomenon' or once you have a good hammer all

problems look like nails. Mounting a military solution to essentially a socio – political and economic problem proved fatal.

General Niazi and his aides in Eastern Command were obsessed with the notion of defending every inch of motherland, without understanding its implications in the context of its negative implication of dilution of forces in vast spaces and underestimating full scale Indian invasion. He kept telling his troops “not an inch of territory would be allowed to be lost.” Obsession with the idea that a withdrawal from the border that is from the forward posture would be construed as a stigma leading to an unrealistic land strategy, which hastened the defeat of military forces.

Theoretical Lens at State Level

Democratic Peace Theory

It takes time to mature into a stable democracy. Usually transition is volatile as mass politics mixes with authoritarian elite politics. Authoritarian states under a process of democratization are more likely to go to wars than stable democracies. States that make a big leap, from total autocracy to extensive mass democracy - are about twice as likely to fight wars in the decade after democratization as are states that remain autocracies.²¹

Democratization generally creates a syndrome of weak central authority leading to unstable political coalitions, and confrontational politics.

Since its inception, democratic culture could not be successfully nurtured in Pakistan. Resultantly even after 24 years (from 1947-71) the state of Pakistan (in comparison to India) was still struggling with weak institutions, imperialistic coalitions, incompatible interests and short sighted bargains of politico-military elite.

West Pakistan

Corrupt / Inept political elites marred by moral bankruptcy, ethnicity and lust for power were unable to accommodate any diverging views or conflicting opinion thus played politics of division and confrontation based on ethnic and nationalistic concepts.

- Failure of democratic dispensation as per electoral mandate.

- Failure to reconcile divergent threat perception as West Pakistan perceived Indian military aggression as the main threat to territorial integrity but this perception was not shared by East Pakistan. They perceived economic problems as the main threat.

East Pakistan

Despite the Hindu-Muslim socio-cultural divide, Bengalis were comparatively more accommodative to Hindu culture and were very proud of their own values. This was partly due to the influence of nationalists like Rabindranath Tagore and Romesh Chunder Dutt and partly because Calcutta remained the capital of the country till 1911. The intensity of their sentiment was vividly displayed when the partition of Bengal carried out by Lord Curzon in 1905, had to be undone in 1911. However, their sentiments were overshadowed by the overwhelming force of the “Idea of Pakistan”, resulting into landslide victory of Muslim League in 1946 elections. Political elite of Pakistan could not fully grasp the power of Bangali sentiments, the nature of local politics and its apt handling with visionary statesmanship.

Bengal projected a very vibrant socio-cultural environment, which cut across the Hindu-Muslim divide. It was largely dominated by Hindu traditions, which were willingly accepted and followed by the Muslims. Except for religious values, Bengalis did not share any common grounds with West Pakistanis. Their language was also looked down upon by the West Pakistani aristocrats.²² As a whole, these disparities led to different identities in East and West, which gave rise to different interest. Weak institutions, lack of matured political culture, led to politics of confrontation which could not be managed by the Central Government thus leading to disintegration of Pakistan.

Theoretical Lens at Dyadic and International Levels

Theory of Balance of Power

The international system is defined by anarchy. Every state endeavours to maximize its power and if states fail to do so, they may become subservient to other powerful states. This anarchical structure thus compels states to increase their power. States, especially small ones, often cannot achieve security on their own. So they have to depend on powerful states for attaining a balance of power against a powerful enemy.²³ States are also security maximizers. When Italy find a window of opportunity, the opposing state may be weakened through direct or

indirect means, a point worth noting in Indo-Pak relations. When confronted by a significant external threat, states may balance or bandwagon. Balance of power encompasses three concepts—hard balancing, soft balancing, and asymmetric balancing.²⁴

Application of Balance of Power Theory at State Level

Since its inception, the festering ideological differences and lingering territorial disputes impinged on regional stability and dyadic rivalry were enduring between India and Pakistan. Both India and Pakistan sought power maximization, manipulating hard, soft and asymmetric means. Resultantly a state of relative stability / uneasy peace existed prior to 1971. Sensing the opportunity arising from Pakistan's failure in internal balancing, India capitalised on it fully.

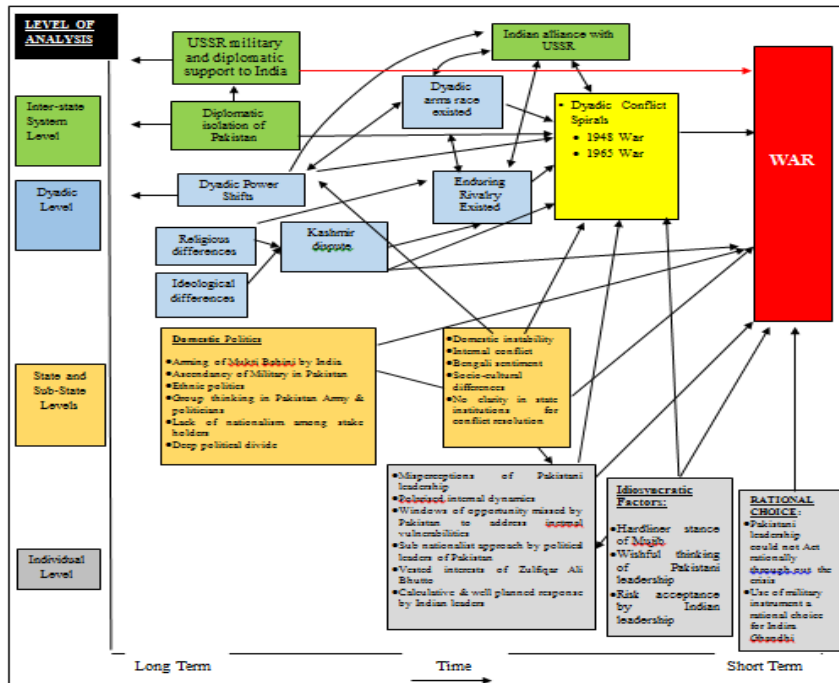
Application of Balance of Power Theory at International Level

In a bipolar world of 1970s with Cold War at its climax; Pakistan was in the Western Camp whereas India (though trumpeting non-aligned mantra) was effectively in USSR Camp as a strategic ally of USSR.

Pakistan was an ally of USA being a small state since 1954.²⁵ It joined SEATO and CENTO and had been given written and unwritten assurances that USA would support Pakistan, in case of aggression from any country including India.²⁶ However, due to Indian factor, USA was hesitant to interfere in a bilateral dispute between the two neighbours. The leverage emboldened India to use the military instrument in East Pakistan.

USSR had a reasonably balanced policy towards India and Pakistan after 1965, but openly supported India in the months before and during the conflict. Soviet Union's support to India was formalized through the *Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation* signed between India and USSR on 9th August 1971.²⁷ During the conflict, Soviet Union provided military equipment to India, acted as a counter balance to China at the regional level and USA at the international level. It also played a major role at the UN Security Council by vetoing resolutions directed against India thus actively facilitating dismemberment of Pakistan.

Causal Factors in 1971 War – Linkages



Conclusion

1971 War is a story of systemic failures at individual, sub-state, state and international levels. Existence of state in this anarchic world becomes questionable if:-

- Aspirations of its key politico-military figures (in their own best interest) run tangent to national interests, once interpreted as per **Rationale Actor Theory**.
- Its politico-military elite suffers from ills of dysfunctional decision making no room for opposing views once viewed with the lens of **Group Think Theory**.
- Weak state institutions and powerful groups / lobbies with vested interests can push the state towards war as enunciated in **Democratic Peace Theory**.

- A state which makes little or no effort in restoring the rapidly swinging ***Balance of Power*** in opponents favour can face serious consequences.

Badly marred by preceding ills, the State of Pakistan failed in successful prosecution of war politically as well as militarily, resulting into dismemberment.

NOTES

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