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Doomed to Separate: A Neoclassical Realist Perspective of the Third India–Pakistan War of 1971 and Independence of Bangladesh

Shafiqur Rahman
University of Oregon, USA, mrahman@uoregon.edu

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Doomed to Separate: A Neoclassical Realist Perspective of the Third India–Pakistan War of 1971 and Independence of Bangladesh

Shafiqur Rahman
University of Oregon, USA
mrahman@uoregon.edu

Abstract: Within South Asian politics and society, events of the year 1971 with the bloody military crackdown on East Pakistan, the third India–Pakistan war, and subsequent emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country, still hold a living and outsized presence. Most popular historical accounts of the events argue that the separation of the two halves of Pakistan was not an inevitable outcome but a product of contingency, world historical developments, and choices made by political actors. In this paper, I argue from a perspective of Neoclassical Realist theory of international policy-making that not only the separation of the two halves of Pakistan was highly predisposed but also a violent parting was highly likely. I also argue that contingent and individual choice-based accounts of the events in 1971 help perpetuate misperception and friction in current politics of the subcontinent. Accepting the inevitability of the emergence of Bangladesh would go a long way in normalizing relations between the three large countries of South Asia.

Keywords: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India–Pakistan War, realism, Neoclassical Realism

The nine-month long civil war in East Pakistan in 1971, its culmination through the Third Indo–Pakistan War in December 1971 and emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country at the end of that war, arguably comprise the most significant series of political events in South Asia since 1947. Legacies of those events still play crucial roles in current domestic politics of the participating countries and cast a shadow over relations among them. A war crimes tribunal was set up in Bangladesh nearly 40 years after the war to bring to justice local collaborators of Pakistan Army who are accused of aiding in committing atrocities against civilians during the war. The Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal has widened the political cleavage within the country and sparked series of deadly and unprecedented political violence in a country already

famous for its violent politics ("The campaign trail," 2013). Meanwhile, refusal by successive Pakistan governments to acknowledge and apologize for the genocidal conduct of Pakistan Army in Bangladesh in 1971 has been a consistent source of aggravation in relations between the two countries. Moreover, continued resentment over India's role in Bangladesh's independence adds yet another historical grievance in Pakistan's sizable agglomeration of grievances against India.

Over the decades since 1971, scholarly literature on the war has focused on descriptive historical development, crisis behavior of the political actors and groups, (mis)perception of leaders, decision-making styles, and other narrative devices and accounts have immensely influenced the ongoing public discourse (Abraham, 1995). Comparatively fewer studies explained the conflict in terms of underlying systemic causes rather than contingent ones. Sidelining systemic determinacy of the 1971 conflict from public discourse has significantly contributed both in Pakistan's recalcitrance in assimilating the outcome of 1971 war and in Bangladesh's worsening division in politics and society. In this study, I seek to explain the 1971 India–Pakistan conflict from a framework of Neoclassical Realist (NCR) theory of foreign policy and argue that both Pakistan's military crackdown on civilians of East Pakistan and India's decision to midwife the independence of Bangladesh through military means, were highly predisposed events because of the systemic exigencies mediated through the nature of the polity in Pakistan and India. After the two countries set on a direct path towards conflict, military balance, strategic conditions, and global political context made an Indian victory overwhelmingly likely. Historical scholarship emphasizing contingencies while (mis)perceptions of leaders and their decision-making help perpetuate an account that, although riveting in dramatic content, fail to explain the underlying dynamics of the 1971 conflict.

Historical Background

Both India and Pakistan became independent countries in August 1947, when the British government handed over sovereign power to the newly created states fashioned from the British Indian Empire. Pakistan was created from Muslim majority regions in the North East and North–west of the subcontinent, thereby engendering a country with a western and an eastern part separated by 1,000 miles of Indian territory. The rivalry between India and Pakistan, one of the more enduring and seemingly intractable interstate rivalry of modern age, began right in the aftermath of the Partition. The bloody partition itself, in which tens of millions of people were forced to cross borders with all their possessions and many thousands of people lost lives in violence, created bitter memories among citizens of both countries. Moreover, Pakistan acrimoniously complained that India did not hand over the agreed upon share of military and industrial assets of British India (Ahmed, 2013, p. 68). The actual conflict that launched the enduring rivalry is the First India–Pakistan War of 1947–1948 over Kashmir region. Pakistan contended that Kashmir should be with Pakistan since it was a Muslim majority Princely State of British India, but the ruler of Kashmir acceded to join India. Pakistan considers Kashmir as an integral part of its national identity; the letter "K" in Pakistan stands for Kashmir. India and Pakistan fought a conflict lasting few months over the territory at the end of which one-third of Kashmir was in Pakistan's hand and the rest under India's control (Ahmed, 2013, pp. 72–80). Scholars also contended that one of the underlying cause of the "enduring conflict" is the great imbalance in power between Pakistan and India, and Pakistan's resultant perception of insecurity. At independence, the population of India was 340 million while Pakistan's was 73 million (32 million in the west, 41 million in the east; Madison, 2003, p. 152). India's GDP was more than four times the combined GDP of East and West Pakistan. Pakistan's insecurity vis-à-vis India is succinctly captured in the following lines in the 1967 memoire of Ayub Khan, Pakistan's first military ruler and head of the government from 1958 to 1969:

> India's ambition to absorb Pakistan or turn her into a satellite …. From the day of independence, Pakistan was involved in a bitter and prolonged struggle for her very existence and survival… Indian efforts in the field of foreign policy were all directed towards one aim, the isolation of Pakistan and its disintegration. (Fair, 2014, p. 155)

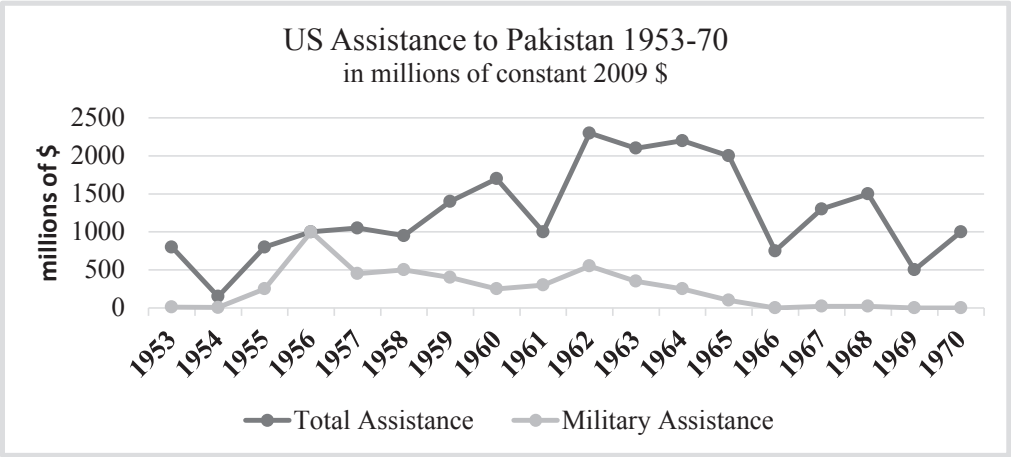

Figure 1. US military and economic assistance to Pakistan 1953–1970.

Source: "Sixty years of US aid to Pakistan," 2011

From the very early years, Pakistan looked for powerful allies from outside the region to counterbalance India's power. In 1954, Pakistan became a member of US led anti-communist group of nations called Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and later the Baghdad Pact (CENTO). Pakistan's military and economy greatly benefitted from the relationship with USA. Between 1954 and 1965, Pakistan received over US$1.2 billion in military assistance from USA and this allowed Pakistan to build up a well-equipped Army of nearly 4 hundred thousand troops and an Air Force with 250 aircrafts (Cohen, 1984, p. 138). A chart showing US assistance to Pakistan during 1954–1971 is shown in Figure 1.

Pakistan had its first of many military coups against civilian government in 1958 and General Ayub Khan became the head of government. Military rule by generals continued under various guises until the end of 1971. Meanwhile, border disputes between India and China led to a limited war between these two countries in 1962 that resulted in a limited but humiliating Indian defeat. China subsequently withdrew from the advances made deep inside Indian territory but Indian morale was hugely shaken and the political leadership became greatly sensitive to security concerns. Figure 2 shows the areas that were taken over by China, we can see that the advance in the eastern parts of India was quite close to the territory of Bangladesh, which was East Pakistan in 1962.

Figure 2. 1962 India–China border war. The shaded areas in the map mark the disputed areas between the two countries. Map created by stepmap.com.

Pakistan initiated the Second War over Kashmir with India in 1965 because the military leadership felt that India's rapid rearmament after the 1962 war with China and its efforts to integrate Kashmir with India are rapidly closing opportunity for a military solution to the Kashmir problem for Pakistan (Ganguli, 2001, pp. 31–48). The war ended through an armistice but both Pakistan and India claimed victory in the war.

One consequence of Pakistan's 1965 military adventure was that the USA suspended military assistance to both India and Pakistan. We can see from Figure 1 how the overall assistance to Pakistan plunged after 1965. The US withdrawal of support hurt Pakistan more than it did to India because India's economy was much larger. India also began to court Soviet Union as an ally to counterbalance China.

Meanwhile, the social and political divide between the two-halves of Pakistan continued to grow. At the Partition in 1947, East Pakistan was already a much poorer state with per capita income of only 84% of the West (Zaheer, 1994, p. 88). During the 1950s, the disparity only grew with the East becoming 78% in 1959–60. The people in East Pakistan mainly blamed three different policies for the widening disparity (Zaheer, 1994, pp. 49–60). First, they claimed that tax receipts were inequitably spent between the two halves. Second, while East Pakistan ran a foreign trade surplus because of export of jute, West Pakistan ran a trade deficit. Thirdly, East Pakistanis alleged that the central government pursued a development policy of centralized industrialization that favored the West. The drastic cut-down of US development assistance after the war of 1965 hit the East more than the West. East Pakistan's GDP grew only at 4% during the period 1965–70 while the West experienced 6.4% growth (Zaheer, 1994, p. 95). The disparity in representation in administration and politics of the state was even starker. In the mid-1950s, only 51 of the top 741 Civil Servants were from East Pakistan. Even by 1963, only 5% of the Officer Corps in Pakistan Army was Bengali (Sisson & Rose, 1991, p. 10).

Pakistan state represented a geographical chimera that had few equals in the modern era. The two halves were not just culturally different; their ethnicity was very dissimilar too. The West had several spoken languages with Urdu being the official one. In the East, Bengali was spoken by the overwhelming number of people. Religious composition of the people was different also. The 1951 Census of Pakistan showed that even after partition, a sizable minority of Hindus remained in East Pakistan (77% Muslim, 22% Hindu) while West Pakistan was almost all Muslim (97% Muslim, 1.6% Hindu; Bureau of Statistics, 1951). These ethnic and linguistic differences helped to entrench institutionalized discrimination towards East Pakistan in the West and prickly nationalism in the East.

Leaving East Pakistan completely defenseless in the 1965 War and growing economic discontent created new impetus for autonomy in East Pakistan after 1965. Six months after the war, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of Awami League, the largest political party in the East, espoused a six-point demand (see Appendix 2B) that called for a federal Pakistan where the center will only be responsible for defense, foreign affairs, and currency. The demands were hugely popular in the East but they were viewed with suspicion in the West where the elites viewed the agenda of six points "as a poorly disguised prelude to secession" (Fair 2014, p. 146).

The Ayub Khan regime arrested Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and several other Awami League leaders in 1966 in the famous "Agartala Conspiracy Case" on charges of conspiring with India for the break-up of Pakistan. Before the trial could take place, a Pakistan-wide political movement began in 1968 for the restoration of democracy. Facing growing unrest, the government released Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and promised to hold elections for a constitutional assembly and handover of power to an elected civilian government. The election took place in December 1970 and the results surprised everybody. Awami League won 160 out of 162 parliamentary seats in East Pakistan but not even one from the 138 seats in West Pakistan. Similarly, no party from West Pakistan won anything in the East (Sisson & Rose, 1991, pp. 20–25). The result showed that the population of the two halves of Pakistan are divided more than ever. The military government now contemplated whether to hand over power to the majority party Awami League whose government, according to the view of the regime, will try to irrevocably weaken the military hold on Pakistan's society in the best-case scenario and completely break up the two halves of the country in the worst-case scenario.

Historiography of the 1971 Conflict

One of the first books to comprehensively study the "decisional structures and processes" before and during the conflict is *War and Secession* by Richard Sisson and Leo Rose (1991). Their study is one of the

most cited works on the conflict and their conclusion about the underlying dynamic of the war is that "the war…, was neither expected nor judged necessary by any of the major players before early fall of 1971. … India's decision-makers expected that Pakistan's leaders would find a political solution to the country's domestic problems…. Pakistani decision-makers at the outset neither desired this particular war with India nor anticipated it would occur" (p. 4). In short, Sisson and Rose argued that the main combatants were trapped in an escalating cycle of misperception that eventually led to war and secession.

Srinath Raghavan (2013) in a recent popular account of the conflict also emphasized decisive roles made by leaders but he argued that the decision-making only mattered because of global historical currents and contingencies. "There was nothing inevitable either about the breakup of united Pakistan… Rather, it was product of historical currents and conjunctures that ranged far beyond South Asia" (p. 265). Raghavan concluded that the outcome would be very different if the leaders have made different decisions in critical junctures. "Had Bhutto joined forces with Mujib, as several contemporaries expected, the breakdown of Pakistan could have been averted" (p. 266).

There have been several studies of India–Pakistan conflict from structural perspectives of international relations theory which emphasized that structural factors, material or historically developed, predispose the two countries towards unremitting conflict. Ganguli (2001) identified two explanatory variables for the underlying friction between the countries since 1947. The first is "fundamentally divergent ideological commitments of the dominant nationalist elites" (p. 4) and the second is irredentist/anti-irredentist relationship between the states, principally over Kashmir (p. 5). Rajagopalan (1998) presented a Neorealist perspective on the relation between the two countries where he argued that the gross imbalance between India and Pakistan and Pakistan's insecurity about the balance is the persistent cause of conflict. He further argued that Pakistan's internal and external balancing efforts to address the imbalance precipitate conflict. He, therefore, concluded that resolving specific issues like Kashmir is unlikely to lead to peace between the countries as the imbalance in power remains.

I contend that while Neorealist theories correctly identify the underlying cause of insecurity between the countries and show that balancing by respective countries can lead to conflict, they do not explain why the countries adopt specific policies in particular situations. To understand Pakistan and India's adoption of policies that set the course to war, we need to bring the nature of the state as variables within the realist framework. Thus, Neoclassical Realist theories present a more compelling account of the causal connection between structural conditions and policies, even if the policies were implemented after a lot of twists and turns of politics and diplomacy. To understand the conflict, we need to focus more on the ways decision-makers were constrained by systemic and domestic factors, and what they did rather than what they were saying during the crisis or recalling afterwards.

Neoclassical Realism as an Extension of Neorealism

Although historical accounts of conflicts between states are thick with the description of politics between states—individual inclinations of decision makers, contingencies and chance factors—the realist approach of studying international politics focuses on the distribution of power between the states as the primary source of friction and conflict. As there is no sovereign power in the international system of states to arbitrate and enforce rules among the states, they must rely on "self-help" for their own security. Thus, states are compelled to build up power, both military and state power, to secure their own place in the system of states. But a state seeking security through strength make other states insecure and create competition for more power and thereby reducing security for all, creating a "security dilemma" (Herz, 1950). Neorealism or Structural Realism has been the most influential realist theory of international politics developed in the recent decades. According to Kenneth Waltz (1979), the theory's main proponent, the first ordering principle of anarchy and self-help in the international system of states and the second ordering principle of distribution of power among the states lead to structural constraints that limit the policy choice of states seeking to protect its own interest by maximizing strength. Waltz's parsimonious theory is a system level

theory that explains patterns of states' behavior over time by explaining the constraints of its choices.

Dependence on constraints of state behavior as dependent variable make Waltz's theory indeterminate about the specific policies that states adopt in different situations because structures work indirectly and indeterminately through states.

> Structures limit and mold agents and agencies and point them in ways that tend toward a common quality of outcomes even though the efforts and aims of the agencies vary. Structures do not work their effects directly. Structures do not act as agents and agencies do...In itself a structure does not directly lead to one outcome rather than another. (Waltz, 1979, p. 74)

Neoclassical Realism was developed as a school of theory within realism to bring system level variables and state level variables within a coherent theoretical framework and add greater determinacy to the explanations. It borrows from Neorealism the idea that systemic factors determine the general direction of policy but it also recognizes that domestic variables intervene in the policy decision made by the decision-makers (Rathbun, 2008). While relative power balance establishes the parameters of states' foreign policy, the reason states pursue particular policy in an international context is dependent on variables within state. Gideon Rose argued

> there is no immediate or perfect transmission belt linking material capabilities to foreign policy behavior. Foreign policy choices are made by actual political leaders and elites, and so it is their perceptions of relative power that matter, not simply relative quantities of physical resources or forces in being. This means that over the short to medium term countries' foreign policies may not necessarily track objective material power trends closely or continuously. (Rose, 1998, p. 146).

The following diagram shows the basic process of policy decision-making according to Neoclassical Realism.

Because NCR integrates the variables associated with decision-makers with systemic variables, theorists believe that it addresses the indeterminacy of neorealism to a large extent. It should be emphasized that NCR theorists are not making claims about certainty, they are arguing that addition of intervening variables and their interaction with the systemic variables enable NCR theorist to hypothesize about "likely diplomatic, economic and military responses of particular states to systemic imperatives" (Lobell, Ripsman, & Taliaferro, 2009, p. 21). NCR theorizes a top-down conception of state where both the perception of threat and determination of state policy ultimately pass through a foreign policy executive (FPE) or a national security executive, comprised of head of government, ministers, officials (Lobell et al., 2009, p. 25). The FPE exists at the small juncture between

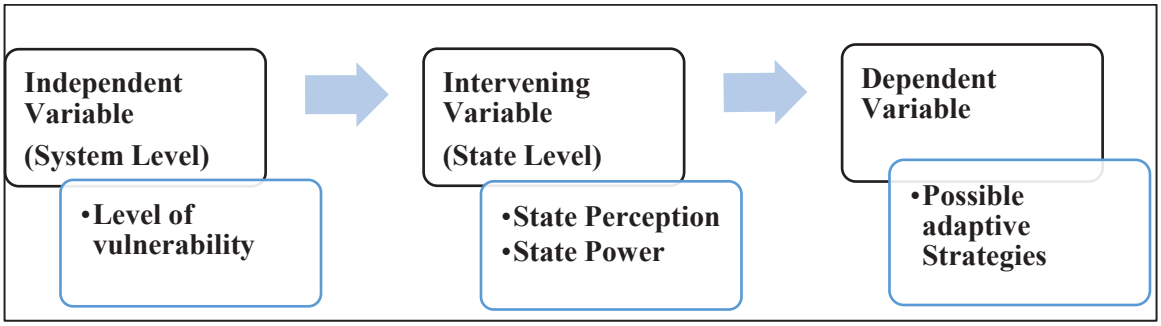

Figure 3. The Neoclassical Realist model of policy-making (Chart prepared by author from discussion in Taliaferro, 2006).

domestic and international politics; thus, it focuses both on domestic and international threat to the regime.

As NCR explanation of foreign policy adoption relies on several variables at two different levels—the accounts depend heavily on theoretically informed narratives that are supported by counterfactual analysis (Rathbun, 2008). While we can see general agreement among NCR scholars over the application method of NCR theories, there is considerable variation how scholars framed the theory to be applied in explanation of case studies.

A main criticism of NCR can be of reductionism, a point on which Waltz was highly critical of multilevel theories. Although NCR regards structural conditions as the main causal variable, it also assigns causal roles to intervening variables, thus it may be accused of reductionism. According to Taliaferro (2006), the charge is mistaken because "reductionist theories locate the causes of systemic outcomes—such as the likelihood of interstate war or general patterns of alliance formation in the international system—in the internal attributes of states" (p. 481) but NCR does not locate the cause of systemic outcomes, it only locates causes of state behavior; systemic factors still explain outcome.

NCR theorists argue that the theory serves and vindicates structural realism rather than supplant it (Rathbun, 2008). Neorealism provides the sufficient framework of understanding when states perceive their material balance correctly and act as unitary actors. However, when states do not respond ideally to the structural imperatives, NCR tells us that we should look into domestic politics and ideas for the distortion in rational decision-making process.

Which Neoclassical Realism?

Gideon Rose (1998) first coined the "Neoclassical Realism" in a 1998 *World Politics* article and sought to develop the general theory of NCR. According to Rose, the main independent variable in NCR is the relative amount of material power resources that countries possess and states seek to maximize their influence in international system according to policies that their relative power afford them. The policy choice is intermediated by two domestic intervening variables, decision-makers' perception and domestic state power.

According to Rose (1998), "the international distribution of power can drive countries' behavior only by influencing the decisions of flesh and blood officials … analysts of foreign policy thus have no alternative but to explore in detail how each country's policymakers actually understand their situation" (p. 158). State power is defined by Zakaria as "that portion of national power the government can extract for its purpose and reflects the ease with which central decision-makers can achieve their ends" (as quoted in Rose, 1998, p. 162). Thus, the final policy adoption depends not only on how decision-makers perceive the relative distribution of power but also how much state power is available for policy implementation.

Randall Schweller (2004) gave a more full-bodied version of NCR in his paper where he sought to explain why states underbalance in face of adverse relative power distribution. His independent variable is similar to Rose— change in relative power but he formulated four intervening variables to represent the state and decision making. They are (1) Elite Consensus, (2) Regime Vulnerability, (3) Elite Cohesion, and (4) Social Cohesion.

Schweller sought to explain balancing behavior of states and his dependent variable can take four different values. Schweller (2004) defined balancing behavior as "creation or aggregation of military power through internal mobilization or the forging of alliances to prevent or deter the territorial occupation or political and military domination of the state by a foreign power or coalition … Balancing requires that states target their military hardware at each other in preparation for a potential war" (p. 166). Although Schweller defined balancing almost exclusively in terms of military power, Waltz (1979) defined Internal balancing as efforts to enhance state's power by increasing economic resources and military strength in response to a foreign power and to compete more effectively in the international system (p. 168). Thus, establishing state control over an internal territory or section of society is also a kind of balancing behavior if the balancing is done with respect to relative power of foreign states. His first type of balancing behavior is Appropriate Balancing when the state correctly balances against an aggressor that should not or cannot be appeased. The second is Overbalancing or Inappropriate balancing

which misperceive another state as aggressor and resulting policy decisions create a costly and dangerous spiral of military confrontation. The third is Non-balancing to meet a threat which can take form of buck-passing, bandwagoning, appeasement, distancing, and so forth. Fourth is Under-balancing, which is when the state balances inefficiently in response to an unappeasable aggressor. The main difference between non-balancing and under-balancing is in the nature of target power; if foreign power is appeasable then there is little difference between them.

Taliaferro (2006) proposed a "resource-extraction state" model of NCR where he characterized the intervening state-variables as factors that determine the degree a state can extract or mobilize societal resources to pursue adaptive strategies. His independent variable is the level of external threat or vulnerability faced by the state, which in turn is a function of structural conditions like the relative distribution of power (both in the international system and in the particular region), the offense–defense balance, and geography. The intervening variable of extractive ability of state is a function of institutions of the state—as well as nationalism and ideology. Taliaferro used "ideology" here to denote the values, causal relationships, and assertions about "proper relationship of the state to domestic society and the role of the state in the international system across a range of issues—political, economic, social, and military" (p. 492). His dependent variable is the variation in the types and intensity of the adaptive strategies the state will pursue: emulation, innovation, or persistence in existing strategies.

It is possible to generalize from these intervening variables to develop a broader and more robust NCR theory. The actual specification of variables used to explain policy-making during particular historical crisis must be context dependent but a generalization can enable us to make NCR a more versatile and transportable theory. With that in mind, I propose that three broadly defined intervening variables can account for most of the factors that influence decision-making during a crisis brought on by structural condition. They are: (i) State Power, (ii) Elite Ideology, and (iii) Elite-society relationship.

Following Zakaria, I also define State Power as the ability of the government or the ruling elite to mobilize national resources for security policy initiatives. A higher degree of state power gives decision-makers more autonomy to pursue balancing behavior according to the security perception. Elite Ideology covers nationalism, group identity, religious or secular ideology, and other belief or value systems that the ruling elite deliberately promote in the society and adopt for themselves. These ideologies not only shape how the elite perceive the international political landscape but also define how the state and its role in the world are viewed by the society. In general, high degree of nationalism generates social cohesion and greater mobilization ability, but higher ideological intensity can also "facilitate or inhibit elite efforts to extract and mobilize resources, depending on the content of that ideology and the extent to which elites and the public hold common ideas about the proper role of the state vis-à-vis society and the economy" (Taliaferro, 2006, p. 491).

Lastly, Elite-society Relationship covers not only the vulnerability of the ruling elite regime from the social and political forces but also the extent to which there is fragmentation or cohesion among the elite. There are many ways elite-society relationship affects policy behavior. According to Schweller (2006), when elites are fragmented, the state is unlikely to follow a coherent and effective balancing policy. Theorists have argued that an elite-regime with high state power but facing regime vulnerability through domestic unrest is more likely to pursue an aggressive balancing policy to increase regime's hold over state and society.

I follow Taliaferro in proposing the independent variable as the level of external threat or vulnerability faced by the state, which in turn is a function of structural conditions like the relative distribution of power, the offense–defense balance, and geography. For dependent variable, I follow Schweller's balancing behavior of states, but I modify it into three different values because a state cannot know beforehand whether target power is unappeasable or not. I also change the scope of balancing behavior from Schweller's "internal mobilization or the forging of alliances" only, to also include going to war to reduce opponent's power. Although Waltz (1979, p. 118) defined external

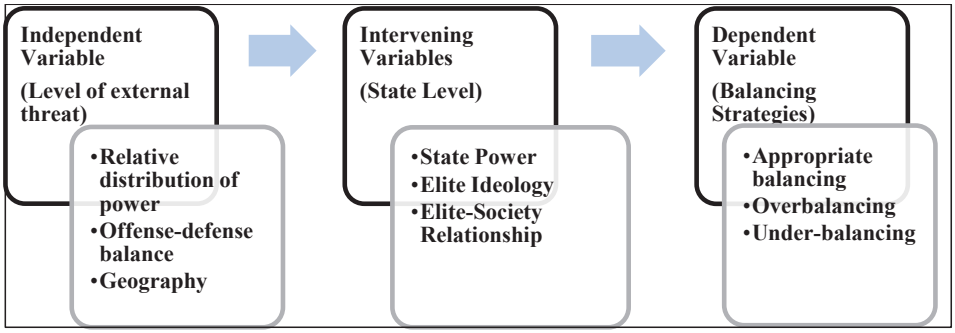

Figure 4. Proposed Neoclassical Realist theory of balancing policy adoption.

balancing in terms of alliances, "moves to strengthen or enlarge one's own alliance or to weaken and shrink an opposing one," military intervention to prevent an adverse shift in the balance of power can also be regarded as balancing behavior (Haldi, 2003, pp. 8–15). The main difference between balancing and predatory military intervention is that objective of predation is the acquisition of strategic assets like territory for enhancement of state power.

Thus, the dependent variable values are appropriate balancing, over-balancing or inappropriate balancing, and under-balancing. The schematic presentation of the theory would be shown in Figure 4:

The causal chain that links dependent variable with independent variable works generally like this. Change in relative power among states à states' choice of policy is constrained by mobilization power of state àIdeology of the ruling elite shape both perception of relative power and adoption of potential policy à policy adoption is circumscribed by cohesion among elite and elite-society relationship à continuity or change in policy. Although the causal chain gives the impression of additive nature of the variables, we cannot ignore that there are deep interactions among variables. For example, theorists have suggested that ideology of ruling elite can have an effect on the mobilization power of the state (Lobell et al., 2009, p. 21) or state power can affect elite cohesion or elite-society relations. Therefore, detailed case-history is indispensable in NCR explanation of policy. India-Pakistan strategic relations prior to the 1971 war and decision-making of FPEs of the two countries during the war, presents an opportunity for such a case analysis.

First, we will analyze Pakistan's decision-makers' perception of the security environment in early 1971 and explain how NCR informs us that a policy of military crackdown on East–Pakistan was very likely the balancing strategy of choice for the decision-makers. We will then show that India's policy to support the secessionist movement was also the likely strategy. When the respective balancing policies of the two antagonists were firmly in place, structural factors made Bangladesh's independence by far the most likely outcome.

Pakistan's Over-Balance in 1971: No Impetuous Policy

The Pakistan Army and the military-backed government started an extensive public-relations campaign after the 1965 India–Pakistan War targeting both domestic and foreign audience (Cohen, 1984, p. 69). The campaign's message was that the war clearly demonstrated the marital superiority of Pakistan over its larger neighbor. But the army and the government faced increasingly worrying prospect in balance of power vis-à-vis India. The most immediate impact was the cessation of US military assistance and drastic cut down in foreign economic assistance (Figure 1). Pakistan army built its reputation of a strong, modern army largely on the lavish supply of US arms and equipment from 1954 to 1965 (Cohen, 1984, p.138). Although both Pakistan and India's overall defense expenditure declined for some time after the 1965 War, the decline was steeper for Pakistan in percentage terms.

Table 1

Defense expenditure, India, and Pakistan (in millions of 1973 dollars), adapted from Cohen (1984).	**1965**	**1966**	**1967**	**1968**	**1969**	**1970**
India	**2050**	**1850**	**1800**	**1900**	**1950**	**2050**
Pakistan	**500**	**350**	**300**	**370**	**400**	**420**

While the USA was progressively disengaging from South Asia in the 1960s due to engagement in Vietnam (Cohen, 1984, p. 139), India was developing a strategic partnership with the Soviet Union; particularly after the disastrous 1962 Border War with China. Pakistan counterbalanced the relationship by deepening its relationship with China since China is becoming a more important source of arms and equipment for the army.

The most important issue for the Pakistan government and military during the last years of the 1960s was the growing political movement for democracy and autonomy in East Pakistan and resulting regular political unrests. The bulk of the West Pakistan elite viewed the six-point demand for federalism and autonomy, an ill-disguised bid for complete secession. They axiomatically held that India never reconciled with the partition in 1947 and Indian policy and strategy are directed to isolate Pakistan and its eventual disintegration (Fair, 2014, p. 155). Indeed, decades later, some of the political leaders of East Pakistan who were accused in the famous Agartala Conspiracy Case of 1966–68, publicly claimed that the charge of conspiring with India was true ("Agartala conspiracy case," 2011). A significant section of nationalistic political leaders and intelligentsia in East Pakistan were not averse to seeking Indian assistance to secure freedom from what they saw as "neo-colonial rule" of West Pakistan (Zaheer, 1994, p. 98–99). The prospect of secession filled the minds of the decision-making elite in West Pakistan with fears of catastrophic consequences in the relative power of the country with respect to India.

In 1970, East Pakistan had nearly 52% of the population of Pakistan and 43% of its GDP (Madison, 2003). Loss of East Pakistan would not only deprive Pakistan of any strategic position in the East of India but also forever change the relative balance of power. Figure 2 shows that East Pakistan is very close to India's North-Eastern region, where India suffered biggest reversals in the India–China Border War of 1962. This had special strategic importance to Pakistan in view of its growing alliance with China. Moreover, Pakistan would overnight change from the most populous Muslim majority country in the world to the third most populous, irrevocably changing its standing in the Muslim world as a major regional power.

This potentially catastrophic downgrading of relative power was foremost in the mind of the Pakistani Military Junta as it approached the 1970 Parliament and Constituent Assembly Election. The government used its intelligence services in East Pakistan in all kinds of shady ways to manipulate the elections so that Awami League does not obtain majority and the parties favorable to central authority gain a sizable presence in the assembly (Shah, 2014, p. 108). However, the results were even worse than the government's worst imagined scenario. Awami League leaders with their commanding majority and widespread popular support became unyielding to the Six-Point demand as the major program of the government to be. The National Security Executive of Pakistan firmly believed, not without sufficient grounds, that Awami League leaders were already preparing contingency plans for declaration and struggle for independence with active help from India (Zaheer, 1994, p. 164). As the deadline for power transfer kept being postponed amidst frantic negotiations, the Pakistani Military government was faced with the inescapable choice of several policy options.

Considering the groundswell of nationalism in East Pakistan, widespread demand for autonomy and India's not so covert support for nationalists, the proper internal balancing policy for the Pakistan government should have been reaching an agreement with Awami League with accommodations of Six-Point demands and provision of special financial incentive to East Pakistan to redress the economic disparity and curb

secessionist sentiment. Economists and political leaders have been demanding such financial program but West Pakistan leaders refused with the excuse that West Pakistan economy will be severely compromised (Zaheer, 1994, p. 129). Democratic governments all over the world have successfully used structurally integrated financial program to check secessionist tendency in poorly-integrated regions. The under-balancing option would be handing over power to the elected majority party without any program for shoring up unity of the two halves. Lastly, the overbalancing option would be a nullification of the election and a military crackdown in East Pakistan to stamp out nationalism and secessionism among the people for the foreseeable time horizon. Let us now examine how intervening variables refracted Pakistan's FPE's perception of structural change and narrowed its choice of policy options by making one far more likely than others.

Pakistan's Intervening Variables

Since independence, Pakistan's military so dominated the politics of the country that Pakistan has been often compared with Prussia, an army with a state rather than a state with an army (Cohen, 1984). Pakistan Army's dominating influence went far beyond politics of state and reached deep within economy and society. Ayesha Siddiqa (2007, p. 19) in her groundbreaking analysis of Pakistan military's dominating reach into politics, economy, and society wrote that:

> The indigenous breed of military officers that took over the higher command of the three services of the armed forces around 1951 aimed at consolidating political power through increasing their influence in decision making and establishing the organization's financial autonomy. The need to bring affluence to individual personnel was done through Milbus (business and economic activity commanded by military). This enhanced the organization's ability to manipulate the national resources at a systematic level… In Pakistan there was an added factor of lax political control of the organization, which nurtured political ambitions among the top echelons of the army. In consequence, the Pakistan Army pushed itself into direct control of governance through sidelining the weak political class.

The Army not only directly and indirectly shaped domestic and foreign policy, it also had a dominating role in devising national educational curricula, textbooks, and public and private media (Fair, 2014, p 30). The Army's total control over policy and politics was amply demonstrated in its decision-making over 1965 war when the military government not only initiated the war but also managed public discourse of the war through tight control of media (Ahmed, 2013, pp. 135–155). If the real test of state power is the state's ability to decide on its own whether it would engage in warfare, then we can certainly say that the military regime of Pakistan in 1971 had state power and autonomy. States with high state power and autonomy are more likely to adopt ambitious foreign policies (Taliaferro, 2006).

Ideology or ideologies that the ruling elite deliberately promote in the state and society are very influential in shaping both the way FPE perceive structural threats and the way it becomes constrained in policy adoption. Arguably, few states in the modern era had more consistently adopted major security policies from ideological compulsions than Pakistan. The impelling ideology of the Pakistani ruling elite during this crisis can be analyzed through its three main components: 1) Pakistan as a standard bearer of Islam, 2) supremacism vis-à-vis East Pakistan Bengalis and Hindus, and 3) operational ideology of the Army.

Although Islamization of the Pakistan state is associated with President General Zia-ul-Huq's regime (1978–88), the process began much earlier. After Pakistan was carved out as a state for Muslims in 1947, the leadership in West Pakistan used the communal basis of identity as a mean to unify a geographically and ethnically diverse country (Fair, 2014, p. 86). The secular traditions inherited from the British rule largely remained intact in both politics and armed forces during the 1950s; although they were increasingly under assault from conservative quarters. During the Ayub Khan regime (1958–1969), Islam began to be emphasized as a state ideology both for the legitimization of a military regime and strengthening national cohesion. Ayub Khan's voluminous writings in local and foreign media made it clear that the regime

regarded "Pan-Islamic aspirations and fear of Hindu and Indian domination" as key elements of the ideology of Pakistan and Pakistani nationalism (Haqqani, 2005, p. 42).

The government mobilized national institutions like school curricula, print, and electronic media to socialize citizens to the ideology and restrict heterodoxy. Islamic ideology and identity were also extensively recruited for greater military cohesion and effectiveness of the army; from soldiers in the regular ranks to the officers in Staff College, indoctrination involved inculcation of a fighting for Islam spirit and portrayal of enemies of Pakistan as enemies of Islam (Fair, 2014, p 100).

Islamic identity was also integral in the second key element of the ideological make-up of Pakistani ruling elite, supremacism towards Hindus in India and Bengalis in East Pakistan. The military regime, social and cultural leaders of West Pakistan consistently conflated India as a Hindu nation and essentialized Hindu mentality and Hindu characteristics inferiorly with respect to Muslim Pakistan (Fair, 2014, pp. 159–163). India was regarded as a Paper Tiger that could not stand up to the religiously and morally motivated Pakistani armed forces. The recurring trope of "one Pakistani soldier was equal to five, ten, or more Indians" was not just propaganda but an implicit belief in West Pakistan. State-supported propaganda effort on Pakistan's superiority was particularly intensified after the 1965 war when the battlefield results did not match up to lofty Pakistani expectations. According to Cohen (1984, p. 69), "this PR apparatus was aimed at the outside world—particularly at the Americans—but it also influenced the military's judgement of its own competence and raised civilian expectations to excessive heights."

Behind such braggadocio, Pakistan's ruling elite always harbored apprehension and anxiety that their much larger neighbor never accepted the partition of 1947 as fait accompli and are relentless in the destruction of Pakistan which Indians regard as historic part of India itself (Sisson & Rose, 1991 1990, p. 44). This anxiety directly contributed towards mistrust and supremacism towards their co-nationals and coreligionists in East Pakistan. As shown in section 2, immediately after the 1947 partition, West Pakistan was almost exclusively Muslim (97%) while a very sizable minority remained in East Pakistan (22% Hindu). From the very beginning, West Pakistani ruling elite saw nationalism in East Pakistan and its demand for autonomy as poorly disguised manipulations by "wily Hindus" who were orchestrating behind the scenes in East Pakistan or from India itself (Sisson & Rose, 1991, p. 37). Pakistani elites also viewed that Hindus in East Pakistan, who were generally overrepresented in all strata of education, deliberately molding the ideals of Bengali Muslims away from Islam and towards secularism and syncretism. What the people in East Pakistan regarded as legitimate and fundamental political demand was viewed in West Pakistan as direct threat to the core ideology of Pakistan.

The syncretic nature of Bengali culture and ethnicity induced particularly unpleasant racism not only among ruling elites but also among religious leaders in West Pakistan who frequently urged the need to "purify" East Pakistan from Hindu recrudescence (Haqqani, 2005, p. 62). The supremacism also led the ruling elite in dismissing military resistance capability of Bengalis. President Yahya thought that a "whiff of grapeshot" and reimposition of martial law would be enough to quell any disturbance from disgruntled East Pakistanis (Siddiqa, 2007, p. 77).

These deep and ingrained beliefs about domestic and regional issues created a strategic culture in the Pakistan Army that was more ideologically driven than security. Fair (2014, p. 7) recounts how an action-oriented revisionism pervades the Pakistani military elite. "For Pakistan's men on horseback, not winning, even repeatedly, is not the same thing as losing. But simply giving up and accepting the status quo and India's supremacy, is, by definition, defeat. ……. Pakistan's generals would always prefer to take a calculated risk and be defeated than doing nothing at all" (p. 7). This strategic culture was true in 1971 as is now and this culture served as the lens through which the military elite perceived its security environment and formulated policies to meet challenges. As numerous studies of war and conflict in modern era have shown, hyper-nationalistic states with military dominated elites are very predisposed to overbalancing through military means; thus, we can understand how the ideological nature of Pakistan's ruling elite constrained it towards adopting a certain policy in East Pakistan in 1971.

There were socio-political divisions within the society in the West but the prominent feature in elite society relationship in Pakistan in early 1971 was the divide between the regime in the West and people in the East. Divisions within the West became secondary when the political crisis in the East became critical and the threat of secession loomed. During the post-election crisis, the West Pakistan political establishment was effectively represented by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, whose Pakistan People's Party won 82 of 138 seats in the West. Bhutto was a minister during the previous Ayub Khan regime and had cultivated extensive relations with military generals. Bhutto was even more adamant than the military regime in refusal to hand over power to the Awami League, which won 160 seats, because he felt he will be a powerless minority party in such a government. During the post-election crisis, Bhutto closely consulted with the regime and continuously urged not to accept the demands made by Awami League. Immediately after the military crackdown in March, he exclaimed, "By the grace of God Pakistan has at last been saved!" (Zaheer, 1994, p. 322).

The business leaders in West Pakistan, the middle class, and the media also welcomed a crackdown on East Pakistan separatism. A West Pakistani elite group of businesses had commanding control in East Pakistan's industry. Six West Pakistani industrialists controlled over 40% of total assets, 32% of production in large manufacturing, and 82% of Jute industry, which was the principal export of East Pakistan (Zaheer, 1994, p. 144). The business and professional class feared the worst about losses in assets and income from a total economic autonomy of East Pakistan and therefore supported the military crackdown. The West Pakistan media also fully supported the military regime in abandoning political negotiations and indulged in nationalistic fervor through jingoistic banner headlines, editorials, and inflammatory commentaries (Zaheer, 1994, p. 325). The only dissent within the administration came from top governmental and martial law administrators stationed in East Pakistan, who, being more familiar with the widespread nationalist fervor in East Pakistan, professed that a military crackdown would be ill-advised (Sisson & Rose, 1991, p 85). Their objections were brushed aside. Neoclassical realism tells us that when all relevant domestic factions agree to a threat, FPE becomes relatively unconstrained in policy choice (Lobell et al., 2009, p. 64).

Although all classes of Bengalis in East Pakistan were in grip of nationalistic fervor before and after the Election 1970, the demand for autonomy had a much earlier origin. Since the early 1960s, students and educated professionals in East Pakistan were imbued with socialism and nationalism (Zaheer, 1994, p. 126). Many of them concluded that an egalitarian society can only be achieved in a country independent from the West and, thus, regarded election and autonomy only steps towards independence. Many of the more radical members and leaders of political organizations pushed for the unilateral declaration of independence when the military regime showed recalcitrance in accepting the Six-Points and handing over power. In East Pakistan, the month before the crackdown in March, were filled with countrywide demonstration, non-cooperation, strikes, and bloody political violence. According to Sisson and Rose (1991, p. 91) while "the Awami League leadership was able to capitalize on the tension, although it was also to become a captive of it".

Pakistan's Decision and Consequences

Neoclassical Realism says that major policy choices result from a "crosscutting inter-relationship between national identity formation and reproduction, domestic political struggles for control of the state and external actors and conditions" (Lobell et al., 2009, p, 116). NCR tells us that an FPE in the mold of Pakistan's military regime and placed in the strategic context of 1971, would be highly likely to pursue an aggressive over-balancing policy to re-consolidate domestic power.

The Pakistani military regime decided on such a policy long before the March 25, 1971 crackdown in East Pakistan. On 11 December, 1970, just four days after the Assembly Elections, an operational directive for a plan code named "Operation Blitz" was signed and issued by the commander of the eastern command and martial law administrator of East Pakistan (Nawaz, 2008, p. 264). The plan called for the army to take control of the entire civil administration and to be given "complete freedom in exercise of … powers" to restore law and order. Lt. General Yaqub Khan suggested that the operation be carried out with,

> the greatest vigour and determination to create an unmistakable impact and remove any doubt regarding the type of martial law which is being imposed in contra-distinction to the deliberately watered-down martial law to which people have become conditioned. Shock action would therefore be imperative … There would not be no hesitation in using force for effect. (Nawaz, 2008, p 265)

In early 1971, Lt. General Yaqub Khan was replaced by Lt. General Tikka Khan, who had the reputation of a ruthless follower of directives and earned the sobriquet of "Butcher of Baluchistan" for his vigorous military action against West Pakistani tribesmen in the eponymous province in 1958 (Nawaz, 2008, p. 266). All the frantic negotiations with Awami League leadership that were taking place in March, 1971 were a camouflage; troops were being secretly sent into East Pakistan from the west for months earlier.

The implicit objective of the plan was nothing less than a "final solution" to the problem of Bengali nationalism (Shah, 2014, p. 111). Outwardly the immediate objectives were to de-capitate Awami League by arresting all mid- and upper-level leaders, neutralize radical students and intellectuals by killing and arrests in the East Pakistan capital Dhaka, and disarm Bengali police and army personnel to prevent potential mutiny. The second phase called for fanning out throughout the country and secure all cities and town. The crackdown began on the night of 25th March. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader of Awami League, was arrested but most of the upper leadership escaped to India. At least several thousand—students, general people, police personnel, educators, and politicians—were killed in Dhaka on that night alone (Bass, 2013, p. 75). However, the disarming of Bengali army personnel did not go according to plan. Only 4,000 of 17,000 Bengali officers and soldiers could be disarmed, most of the rest escaped with their weapons and began an armed insurgency against Pakistan Army almost immediately (Zaheer, 1994, p. 169). Independence from Pakistan was declared over radio airwaves several times on 26–27 March and Bangladesh's bloody struggle for freedom began.

As the Pakistani Army moved from large cities to towns and villages throughout Bangladesh to secure the countryside, many thousands of the general people were killed. While Bengalis of all shades were victims of murderous atrocities, a terrible pattern borne out of the ideology of Pakistan Army and state began to emerge. East Pakistan's sizeable Hindu minority was "doubly marked out for prosecution" (Bass, 2013, p. 81). The motive of this targeting was hardly political because Bengali Muslims were at the forefront of the nationalist struggle for autonomy and they formed the core of resistance while Hindus were mostly poor, apolitical villagers. The US consul general in Dhaka sent a cable to Washington on 25th May that said, "evidence of a systematic persecution of the Hindu population is too detailed and too massive to be ignored. While the Western mind boggles at the enormity of a possible planned eviction of 10 million people, the fact remains that officers and men of the Army are behaving as if they had been given carte blanche to rid East Pakistan of these 'subversives'" (Raghavan, 2013 2014, p. 52). The US State Department publicly admitted in late June that it estimates at least 200,000 people have already died in East Pakistan (Bass, 2013, p. 148). The lightly armed Bangladeshi rebel soldiers could not provide sufficient resistance to units of Pakistani Army. By end of May, all major town and district headquarters were securely in hand of the Army and resistance appeared to be faltering (Zaheer, 1994, p. 170).

The crackdown and atrocities caused an enormous exodus of Bengalis to leave home and cross the border into India. According to official Indian estimates, the total influx up to the middle of June was about six million, of which 5.3 million were Hindus, who only comprised 20% of East Pakistan's population (Bass, 2013, p. 121). Reeling under this huge wave of refugees, India mounted an international diplomatic push to pressure Pakistan into taking the refugees back and seek a political settlement with Awami League. However, the Pakistan government appeared to be adamant in refusal to readmit "traitorous" Hindu Bengalis and continued the targeted atrocities, which was fueling refugee exodus itself (Sisson & Rose, 1991, pp. 147–148). The Pakistani regime was seeking not only political subjugation of Bengalis but also an irreversible demographic change. Indian diplomatic efforts to pressure Pakistan also appeared to be ineffectual, with country after country officially taking up the position that the whole thing is Pakistan's

internal matter and Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity should not be violated.

The Indian Response, Masterful Realpolitik

In the aftermath of the Pakistani crackdown in Bangladesh from March 1971, the Indian republic found itself in one of the worst security predicaments of its 25-year history. The Indian intelligence service Research and Analyst Wing (RAW) reported earlier in March that it expected a political settlement by the military regime with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Bass, 2013, p. 45). Instead there was not only a hostile military takeover of East Pakistan but also an unbearable economic burden of nearly 10 million refugees seeking safety in India. The demographic composition of the refugees was also a deep security concern. India's half a billion population in 1971 comprised of 70 million Muslims and more than 400 million Hindus. India greatly feared of sectarian violence engulfing the country if this genocidal prosecution against Hindus in East Pakistan was not addressed and therefore tried to keep the information about demographic composition of refugees classified for domestic media (Bass, 2013, pp. 121–122).

The changed military balance in the East was particularly worrying for India. Until 1971, Pakistan concentrated its military power in the West and left East Pakistan largely demilitarized because the strategic doctrine called for concentration of force to face numerically far superior Indian forces. With the crackdown, the regular Pakistani military force in the East increased from about a brigade strength to more than 45,000 in March and still rapidly increasing (Nawaz, 2008, p. 267). More ominous for India was positioning of the troops in East Pakistan. Significant numbers of Pakistani mechanized units were concentrated on the North-East corner of Bangladesh where India had only "neck" of corridor territory connecting the North-East provinces with rest of mainland India (Ganguli, 2001, p. 61). Many Pakistani units were within a couple of hundred miles away from the furthest point of Chinese advance in the 1962 Sino–Indian War (Figure 2). A war with Pakistan and China together was the worst-case scenario for Indian political leaders and military strategists. Moreover, Pakistan Army units positioned near the western border of East Pakistan were very close to Indian provinces Nagaland and Mizoram where India was fighting its own separatist insurgencies. A militarized and hostile East Pakistan potentially could create a host of problems in the already fragile North-East India.

In the months after the crackdown in March, India actively looked for international help to roll back Pakistani military's onslaught against democracy in East Pakistan and returning of refugees but in that diplomatic campaign, India found itself almost alone. Countries told India that the crackdown is Pakistan's internal affair and India must negotiate directly with Pakistan about the refugees. Almost all Muslim-majority countries were firmly on the side of Pakistan. Although West European government leaders expressed sympathy and moral support to India privately, almost all of them took the official position that the atrocities and the consequences are Pakistan's internal matter and urged India to negotiate with Pakistan directly.

The most curious geo-political aspect with respect to the 1971 conflict was the involvement of US presidential administration. At that time, the Nixon administration was pursuing groundwork for its most famous foreign policy coup, "opening to China" (Raghavan, 2013, pp. 85–87). Because USA did not have any formal diplomatic relationship with China, it was using Pakistan as an intermediary to China since 1969. Moreover, both Nixon and Kissinger developed a personal rapport with Pakistan's president, Yahya Khan, while they regarded India's political leadership with distrust and suspicion (Bass, 2013, pp. 11–12). Throughout 1971, the US administration not only tried to preclude Indian military action against both East and West Pakistan but also supplied weapons and military equipment to Pakistan, even to the extent of breaking US laws (Bass, 2013, pp. 294–296). Kissinger and Nixon were doing this while consistently receiving advice from the aides that violent crackdown in East Pakistan was very likely to fail and the separation of the two countries was almost inevitable (Bass, 2013, pp. 29–31)

The bright spot in the Indian efforts to seek international support came from the Soviet Union.

After Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister in 1966, India had been steadily abandoning Non-Aligned posture in international relations and moving closer to the Soviet Union. Soviet Union became a principal supplier for Indian military and industrialization efforts in the late 1960's. During 1971, Indian diplomacy with Kremlin culminated in a Treaty of Friendship between India and Soviet Union in August 9, 1971. While much of the treaty terms were vague, importantly it had an article declaring that if either country was attacked, the other would help to remove such threats and "take appropriate measures to ensure peace and the security of their countries" (Bass, 2013, p. 220). The treaty gave India much-needed assurance of deterrence from an aggressive intervention of outside powers, namely China and USA, in the matters within South Asia.

While India did not receive much outside help in rolling back the Pakistani crackdown, the very norm of non-interference in international society in what they saw as a regional issue created a historic opportunity for India. The strategic situation in 1971 for India was aptly encapsulated two decades later by famous diplomat J.N. Dixit (as quoted in Ganguli, 2001, p. 62):

> India was also getting tired of having to confront and possibly fight Pakistan on two fronts whenever a conflict situation arose, specially so when the eastern front would strategically attract a China–Pakistan nexus. So, if the people of East Pakistan, because of their socio-ethnic and linguistic considerations and in the face of obstinate negation of their aspirations, wished secession from Pakistan and independence, India had no objections. If Indian endorsement and support resulted in this new entity being friendly to India, it was all to the good.

Barely a week after the March 25 crackdown in 1971 a brutally frank argument for war was put forward by K. Subrahmanyam, India's foremost strategic thinker at that time (Bass, 2013, pp. 92–93). He proposed that India use the "historic opportunity" to bid for hegemony in South Asia by escalation into all-out war. He reasoned that the Bangladeshi guerrillas would not be able to defeat Pakistani army on their own, even with full Indian support. The Indian Army would be able to defeat Pakistan in both fronts, capturing East Pakistan while aggressively defending against the West. If India can use the "genocide" in East Pakistan as a casus belli, China, let alone the USA, would not really intervene to rescue Pakistan. Subrahmanyam's argument was not unopposed; several other important military thinkers and politicians urged caution because a separation of East Pakistan could fuel separatism within India's diverse and vast polity itself (Sisson & Rose, 1991, p. 150).

Table 2 shows the military balance between India and Pakistan in 1971. We can see that India had an overwhelming advantage over Pakistan but the most important factor in this balance was China. China of course had far greater military power than India and if China intervened in favor of Pakistan in any time during the conflict, India would be in a very precarious situation. On the other hand, if the intervention was postponed until the winter months, heavy snow on the Himalayan mountain passes would make a Chinese attack from the north very unlikely (Bass, 2013, p. 94).

Table 2.
Military Balance Between India–Pakistan in 1971

	India	**Pakistan**
Total armed forces personnel	980,000	392,000
Main Battle Tanks	900	350
Artillery guns	3,000	1,100
Combat aircraft	625	285

Source: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1972.

Let us now assess Indian policy options in terms of Neoclassical Realist theory. For India, appropriate balancing would have been seeking independence of Bangladesh without being perceived as aggressor in the international community. The legitimacy of intervention depended on highlighting the genocidal conduct of Pakistan, the plight of nearly 10 million refugees, and determined armed struggle of Bangladeshi freedom fighters for independence. The opinion of the general people in the world, particularly the western democracies, was massively in favor of Bangladeshi people and growing with each passing week. India should only directly intervene militarily when not

only an easy victory is certain but also likelihood of outside intervention is considerably lessened. Most importantly, India should not be perceived to be seeking territorial gain itself at the expense of Pakistan or Bangladesh.

The under-balancing policy would have been to accept Pakistani military takeover of East Pakistan and exodus of mostly Hindu refugees as a fait accompli. Another way India could have under-balanced was relying only on military support of Bangladeshi resistance; which was widely deemed by experts to be insufficient for forcing a decision within foreseeable time horizon. The overbalancing policy for India would have been to militarily intervene prematurely without sufficient conditions of clear victory or development of legitimacy. Not only would India be perceived as an aggressor but also there were higher likelihood of outside intervention in favor of Pakistan in that scenario. Moreover, relations with most Muslim countries would have become poisoned for a long time.

India's Intervening Variables

Ever since its independence in 1947, India has been often called the world's "biggest and perhaps boldest experiment in democracy" (Ward, 1997, p. 3). India has been famous for its incredible diversity in ethnicity, language, religion, as well as for its widespread, appalling poverty. The politics reflected this rambunctious diversity with democracy regularly challenged by extreme left and right politics, separatism in many regions, and frequent tensions between the central government and powerful state governments. Although these endemic factors suggest that the Indian state power was greatly constrained in its freedom to choose and execute national security policy, there were other factors that affected freedom of FPE in different ways.

Although India had been a democracy since 1947, the Indian National Congress (INC), the party that led the independence movement during British colonial rule, was at the seat of power continuously until 1978 through election victories. The INC led by Indira Gandhi won a landslide general election victory in March 1971, the very month of Pakistani crackdown in the East, winning 352 out of 518 parliamentary seats. The second largest party had only 25 seats (Raghavan, 2013, p. 55). Since independence, India Foreign Policy Executive was characterized by dominance of politics over military. The political system of security decision-making closely followed the British parliamentary system, with a Defense Committee of the Cabinet at the apex (Thomas, 1986, pp. 110–130). Although the committee consulted military leadership in national security matters, the decision-making rested on the cabinet, in particularly on the Prime Minister. During eras of strong Prime Ministers, their own office, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) had great influence in decision-making.

While India had a large and strong military, the country was economically underdeveloped and mired in poverty. Indian development and poverty alleviation programs were heavily dependent on foreign assistance. Much of the aid came from USA; annually about $200 million aid, $220 million development loan and $65 million worth of food aid (Bass, 2013, p. 242). This was substantial as the total overseas development aid and assistance to India was about $900 million in 1970–71. The Nixon administration threatened to shut down or significantly cut the aid amount if India went to war with Pakistan. The more pressing economic concern was the huge cost of sheltering refugees from East Pakistan. In the third week of September, Indian government assessed that it would require $576 million to take care of 8 million refugees for six months only. By that time, relief assistance pledged by foreign governments amounted to $154 million only; barely $21 million of which were received by that time (Raghavan, 2013, pp. 206–207). Analyzing projected cost of harboring refugees if no political solution to the crisis were reached within near future, several Indian experts counseled that a short war to resolve the crisis will be less expensive in economic terms than sheltering refugees for a long time

India was a poor country beset with many economic problems in 1971 but it had a relatively strong military and the political power of the FPE was high. Within the constraints set by international system, it had considerable freedom of action in pursuing a robust security policy. Whether the FPE would correctly balance, overbalance, or under-balance against the security threat, greatly depended on the ideological makeup of the FPE.

Nationalism and realism were the two mainstays of the ideological makeup of Indian political elites who were crucial in policy formulation and implementation in 1971. Indian nationalism was a core ideology going far back into the days of independence struggle against the British, while the realism turn was a relatively new transformation in the policy-making elite. The partition in 1947 and creation of Pakistan was a direct affront to Indian nationalism, which held that the contiguous and integrated Indian Subcontinent is home of all its people (Sisson & Rose, 1991, pp. 36–37). Two nations theory, the basis of Pakistan and which posited that Hindus and Muslims should have a separate homeland, was a deep anathema to the Indian nationalists. Break-up of two halves of Pakistan, which only had Islam in common, was an appealing prospect to Indian nationalists long before 1971 because it directly undermined that religion is a legitimate base of nationhood. Indian policy-makers have been using their intelligence services to develop relations with Bengali nationalists in East Pakistan and encouraged separatism long before 1971 with a view of undermining, what they perceived as the weakest link in the artificial construct of Pakistan (Raman, 2012)

Although the Indian republic was founded as a secular democracy, Hindu values, concepts, and symbols pervaded the elite culture because of large Hindu majority in the population and even larger Hindu predominance in various elite categories (Sisson & Rose, 1991, p. 36). As the legacy of several hundred years of Muslim imperial rule of India remained a bitterly contested legacy, one cannot easily dismiss that subsurface strands of reciprocation through victorious war lay hidden in the mind of elites.

The second important aspect of elite ideology for foreign and security policy was a turn to realism in the aftermath of the War of 1962 and the War of 1965. After independence in 1947, Indian foreign and security policy was dominated by the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who was in power until his death in 1964. Nehru's foreign and security policy was characterized as idealistic and was built on several pillars of principles. They were opposition to colonialism and imperialism; non-Alignment and pan-Asianism; negotiation between powers; nuclear disarmament and peaceful co-existence (Bajpai, Basit & Krishnappa, 2014). It is debatable that to what extent these principles were really adhered to during Nehruvian era but most historians agree that policy and diplomacy during this period showed a misguided idealism. The aftermath of shock of the wars of 1962 and 1965 and ascension in Premiership of Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi in 1966 are regarded as beginning of a period of "hard realism" in Indian politics that lasted until mid 1980's (Malone, 2011, p. 47).

Among other policies, the realism-turn entailed abandoning non-aligned posture all but in name only and rapid development of military capability. India's closer relations with Soviet Union in the 1960s resulted in the country becoming India's principle source of military hardware. A new security policy adopted a doctrine of "sufficient defense," calling for maintenance of superior military capability against Pakistan and a minimum border defense capability against China for holding until superpower intervention can forestall further Chinese advance (Thomas, 1986, pp. 16–18).

While nationalism among India's elite made it more likely that India would not hesitate to exploit the "historic opportunity" in 1971 through military means, factors like the realism in Indian FPE, India's democratic political structure, and the military balance with respect to China and Pakistan were likely to cause prudence and pragmatism in devising policy.

India was beset with many ethnic separatist and political extremist movements in 1971 and the problem was particularly acute in the areas surrounding East Pakistan. Most worrisome of those extremist movements for India was leftist insurgency by Communist Party Marxist-Leninist (CPML) in the Indian states bordering west of East Pakistan. Those Indian states not only had linguistic and ethnic ties with the people in East Pakistan but extreme left movements in both countries maintained close contact and support through a long and very porous border (Sisson & Rose, 1991, pp. 179–180). The influx of the huge number of refugees and ongoing armed insurgency had the potential to greatly exacerbate secessionist and extremist movements, particularly if the crisis went on for far too long.

India's own secessionist movements created a problem of legitimacy for military intervention in East Pakistan. It was hypocritical to argue for rights of self-determination of East Pakistanis when India itself was using military and internal security forces to stamp out secessionists in Kashmir, Mizoram, and many other places. The official line of argument against this accusation was two-pronged: India highlighted the racial and genocidal aspect of Pakistani crackdown that made Pakistan's internal affair an, India's internal affair as well through the exodus of nearly 10 million refugees. Secondly, India emphasized the democratic nature of its polity, where political organizations were free to pursue their legitimate political grievance through contested elections (Bass, 2013).

Indian media and society were not only largely in support of military intervention to roll back the Pakistani crackdown and aid Bangladesh to gain independence, they were also more belligerent about intervention. India always had a very boisterous press and the press took up causes of "heroic" resistance of the Bengali people and the suffering of refugees with much gusto (Bass, 2013, p. 195). They kept urging the government to take quick and decisive action through banner headlines and fiery editorials. Political parties other than the ruling INC also were very vehement and vocal in their support of intervention. Indira Gandhi's main political opponent, the leftist leader Jayaprakash Narayan, consistently urged for recognition of Bangladesh as a sovereign nation and full support for its independence (Raghavan, 2013, p. 65).

India's Decision and Consequences

The Indian FPE took an early decision to eventually go into war. Within days following the Pakistani crackdown, the Indian Cabinet Committee of the parliament met with the chiefs of staff of the three forces to discuss military options (Ganguli, 2001, p. 63). The chief of Army Staff, General Manekshaw pointed out several difficulties for immediate military action. Firstly, several divisions of the Army were tied down in fighting insurgency and political extremists in different regions. Disengaging and repositioning them would take some time. Secondly, the Air Force needed time to restore and upgrade airbases around East Pakistan to prepare them for launching airstrikes. Thirdly, the rainy Monsoon season will soon arrive in June, at that time the flat and riverine land of East Pakistan essentially becomes a vast body of water, making military movements virtually impossible for 3–4 months. Lastly, the Generals pointed out that by November, not only the land will dry out enough for movement of tanks and heavy vehicles, snowfall in Himalayas will also lessen threat of Chinese military incursion from the north very considerably.

The Indian political leadership took the counsel of the generals and decided to postpone conventional military intervention until November 15 (Bass, 2013, p. 262). Meanwhile, India decided to militarily support the Bangladeshi rebels, known as "Mukti Bahini" Freedom Force, militarily to keep the resistance ongoing and weaken the interior lines of Pakistani Army within East Pakistan. Also, India decided on a diplomatic and public relations campaign about the plight of refugees and Bengali aspirations of self-determination, throughout the world for drawing international support and sway the world's public opinion. While the endorsement from foreign governments was disappointing, support from the people of the world was an altogether different matter. The high point of that public support was the famous "Concert for Bangladesh" in New York's Madison Square Garden on August 1, 1971 (Bass, 2013, p. 212). Arranged by Beatles musician George Harrison and participated by famous artists like Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Eric Clapton, and many others, Concert for Bangladesh was the first global popular-music event held for a humanitarian cause and generated huge interest and sympathy for the cause of Bangladesh in the global community.

Meanwhile, the Bengali resistance was facing difficulties in presenting significant challenge to the Pakistani Army. After the lightly armed guerillas failed to meet expectations, India decided to increase the pace of training new guerrillas, integrate Indian Army with training and command and provide them with heavier weapons. By the end of November, nearly 100,000 guerillas had been trained (Raghavan, 2013, p. 210).

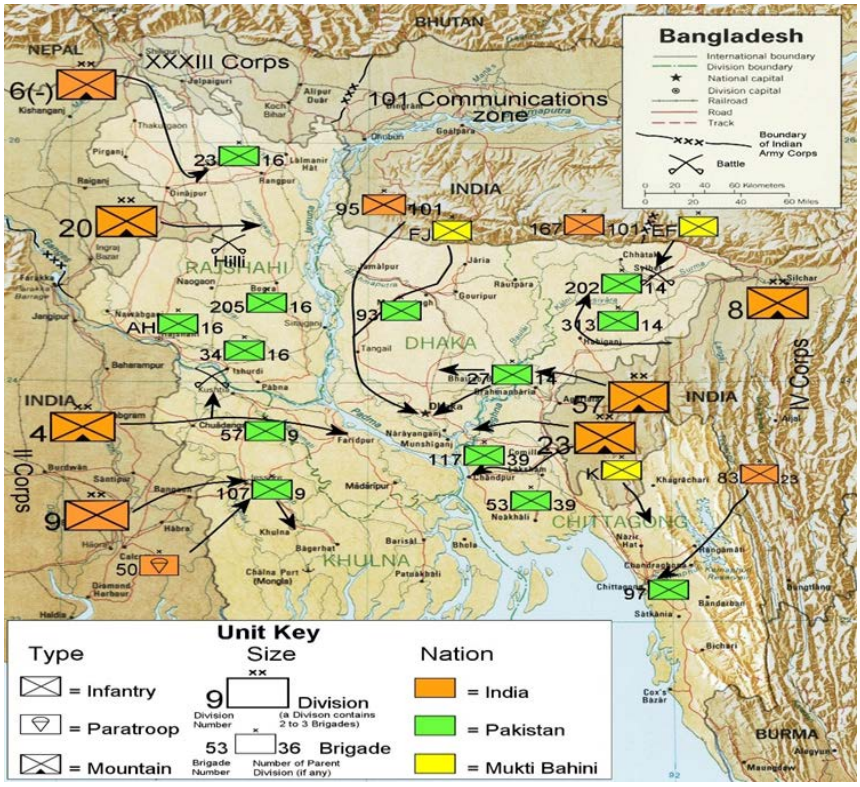

Figure 5. Pakistani and Indian Army units in the Eastern Front during December, 1971.

Source: Mike Young, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Mike_Young?rdfrom=commons:User:Mike_Young)

By November, India had three Corps of eight Army Divisions positioned surrounding East, North, and West of Bangladesh (Nawaz, 2008, p. 290). Indian regular Army had more than 2:1 superiority in men over Pakistani Army in the East; 100,000-plus Mukti-Bahini only made the inferiority of Pakistani forces more lopsided. After the 21st November, Indian Army units launched incursions into East Pakistan and held on strategic areas around principal Pakistani defensive positions (Sisson & Rose, 1991, p. 213). There were some pitched battles but no all-out war. India did not launch deep strikes within East Pakistan. From the very early days of military planning, India hoped to goad Pakistan "into drawing first" and thereby mitigate the stigma of aggressor (Zaheer, 1994, p. 303).

Meanwhile, the people, media, and the Army officers in West Pakistan were seething with patriotic fervor against India and demanded all out military action (Zaheer, 1994, p. 359). Pakistan Army's decades long policy of nurturing a militaristic, hyper-nationalism caught up to them. Pakistan decided to attack India in the West even though there were little hope of influencing events in the East. General Yahya confessed after the war that the army could not have tolerated the ignominy of losing East Pakistan without an all-out war with India (Zaheer, 1994, p. 360). Pakistan launched air strikes against Indian positions in the West on the 4th December and opened the Western Front in the hope of gaining some territory to bargain for the Army in the East. But Indian Army easily defended the western front and launched an invasion of East Pakistan from all three sides. Although some Pakistan units in the border areas fought very well to frustrate plans of several large Indian units (Sisson & Rose, 1991, p. 215), the outcome

was never in doubt. Many of the Indian mechanized units bypassed Pakistani strongpoints and headed straight towards the capital Dhaka at the center of the country. On 16th December, 1971, General Niazi, the Pakistani commander in East surrendered to the joint India–Bangladesh command.

Conclusion and Historical Accounts Revisited

According to renowned Pakistan scholar Anatole Lieven, the catastrophe of 1971 was the "terrible circumstances" through which Bangladesh came about, not the fact that it happened. He believed that the separation was all but inevitable (as cited in Bass, 2013, pp. 329–330). Ayub Khan, the general who ruled over Pakistan for most of its formative period, 1958–1969, wrote in his personal diary on 16th December, "The separation of Bengal, though painful, was inevitable and unavoidable" (as quoted in Caldwell, 2011, p. 32).

Nothing in politics and interstate affairs is preordained and inevitable but there are patterns in broad strokes of historical events that, social scientists argue, lend to theorizing about behavior of large social units such as states. Explaining and predicting likely behavior of states have been holy grails for international relations study since its inception in antiquity. Modern realist theories of international affairs argue that when the nature of threats faced by a state within an international system is relatively clear, behavior of states follow general patterns (Lobell et al., 2009, pp. 282–283). When the nature of threat within the system is clear but the system does not offer foreign policy actors in states clear information on the best way to respond, structural realist theories do not offer predictions about likely foreign policy of individual states. Waltz (1996) argued that

> a theory of foreign policy would explain why states similarly placed in a system behave in different ways. Differences in behavior arise from differences of internal composition. Foreign policies are governmental products. A theory has to take the performance of governments as its object of explanation in order to be called a theory of foreign policy (p. 55)

By incorporating and analyzing interaction of international system structure, domestic political system and domestic variables, NCR is well-placed in explaining international events that can be characterized by greater clarity about the nature of threats but less clear information for the actors on the appropriate policy response (Lobell et al., 2009, pp. 282–283). The multilevel framework of NCR sacrifices some of the parsimony in theory of structural realism but achieves greater explanatory accuracy through application of the multilevel theory in detailed historical case studies where the abovementioned conditions apply.

This study also shows that the structural context leading up to 1971, and the nature of the state of India and Pakistan, made the events of 1971—decision-making of the state actors and the eventual outcome—highly predisposed. Despite preponderance of historical evidences supporting a high degree of structural determinacy, the historical account of 1971 in popular discourse of the three countries is still dominated by contingent factors and decisions made by main actors. A major reason for popularity of such accounts could be that they feed into the politics and popular discourse that the events of 1971 still inspire within South Asia.

Defeat in the 1971 War and the separation of East Pakistan is the most traumatic event in Pakistan's history and legacy of that period still reverberates in Pakistan's politics and society. While a small fraction of Pakistan's intelligentsia now acknowledge that the roots of separation lay in the flawed centralized nature of the state from its very inception, the rest of the country remains mired in either a "fog of amnesia" or in bitter recrimination of Pakistani military and political leadership during 1971 (Bass, 2013, pp. 229–231). Above all, they blame Indian machination and design. Per Sumit Ganguli (2001, p. 73), "the collapse of Pakistani polity is simply blamed on the professional laxity and flawed personalities of particular individuals- and, of course, Indian and, more specifically, 'Hindu' perfidy."

While in India, victory in the 1971 war has long been regarded as one of the triumphant high points of the republic since 1947. The realism and opportunism behind Indian decision-making has been consistently understated in public discourse. Instead,

the humanitarian dimension of Indian intervention and villainy and foolhardiness of Pakistani leaders have been emphasized. One reason is that although realism has been the dominant ideology of Indian foreign policy elite from the mid-1960s onward, public conversation on current affairs and Indian policy have not gotten out of the shadow of the two giants of Indian polity in the 20th century, Gandhi and Nehru (Malone, Raja Mohan, & Raghavan, 2015). Gandhi's articulation of philosophy of non-violence and moralism in national life, and Nehru's avowed ideal of progressive multilateral engagement in the international arena, held sway over the rhetoric of popular discourse on Indian foreign policy and recent history. But from the 1990s onwards, as ethno-nationalists became a significant presence in Indian national politics, assertive realism has become an increasingly popular perspective in articulation of Indian history and foreign policy objectives.

The events of 1971 created deep cleavages in all sections of the Bangladesh polity. The role and contribution of individuals and groups before and during the war became contentious among politicians, bureaucrats, military officers, even in civil society after the war. These contentions have been crucial in many of the critical political conflicts of Bangladesh until the present day.

Narrative style of history writing that has predominated popular account of the 1971 conflict is partly responsible for sustaining the perception of historical contingency and actor responsibility surrounding the events of 1971. Narratives are stories told about something that happened. A narrative explanation presents an account of linkage among discrete events as a process that has led to an outcome that the narrator is seeking to explain (Roth, 1988). Narrative accounts are different than positivist approaches of Social Sciences in that they do not invoke universal hypotheses and general laws to explain human social phenomena. According to Polkinghorne (1988), narrative construction corresponds to a "narrative rationality," which "understands synoptically the meaning of a whole, seeing it as a dialectic integration of its parts." The validity of historical narratives depends on whether things "have actually happened in the way reported in the sentences of the narratives" and synoptic coherence among the statements, that is, a configuration in a plot structure (Polkinghorne, 1988, pp. 62–63).

The goal of weaving together one coherent story or plot structure in a narrative explanation often compels narrators to incorporate inconsistent information that violate "narrative rationality." Historical narratives significantly depend on memoires, autobiographies, interviews, and so forth to reconstruct past events into a story that corresponds to human experience. Historical actors who are also the interviewee in these narrations most often come to understand and give meaning to past event retrospectively (Polkinghorne, 1995). Apart from personal and ideological interests of actors in reshaping understanding of the past events, memory itself is selective and plays a complex psychological tricks in recollections and reconstructions. We can see the pitfalls of depending on memoires and interviews to construct a narrative plot of historical events while neglecting critical role of structural conditions in Sisson and Rose, 1991).

Sisson and Rose's (1991) main thesis is that while the 1971 political crisis and conflict precipitated in fully conventional war between India and Pakistan, the outbreak of war was not envisioned by the decision-making elite in the two countries but resulted from the sum of individual decisions that trapped the countries into a spiral of escalation to war. Per Sisson and Rose (1991, p. 4), "the Bangladesh war was neither expected nor judged necessary by any of the major players before early fall of 1971."

Much of the rich detail in Sisson and Rose's work is derived from interviews with a long list of officials who worked in upper echelons of government in India and Pakistan in 1971. While editing and interpreting primary evidences in the form of interview records and other testimonies, the authors must have been aware that many of the key information thus obtained are inconsistent, even factually wrong. It is apparent that many interviewees furthered information that are not only self-serving but also conform to a narrative that supports a political position about the origin and prosecution of war. Despite that, they knitted the strands of information together for a "consistent" narrative to support their hypothesis about the war.

Sisson and Rose undermined their own hypothesis about the war by the frank admission that "it is unlikely that the policies pursued by either side in 1971

would have differed very much without these mutual misperceptions since many other important factors influenced their decisions at that time" (Sisson & Rose, p. 45-46). Even more damaging, they evaluated that the Indian core decision-makers "did not face pressure for precipitate action from within the bureaucracy, including the military. On the Indian side, the decision to go to war was deliberate, not taken under duress, or with a sense that immediate action was needed to stave off disaster" (Sisson & Rose, p. 277–278). This is a direct support for a "realist" theory of rational and deliberate decisions for war to change structural security context. Itty Abraham (1995) concluded on Sisson and Rose's work by saying,

> In the end, the author's inability to excise successfully all the contradictory strains they must have felt in the processing of these interviews points to the difficulty of producing a single narrative based on multiple interviews, yet the meta-narrative demanded that there be not only one story, but only one reason for the outcome. (p. 38)

Narrative accounts can ignore contradictions in testimonies because narrative logic is not same as causal logic (Roth, 1988). However, there is a normative goal in positivist, causal explanations of historical events, like the 1971 India–Pakistan war, that have living-breathing presence in current politics and society. NCR explains historical events with causal patterns that are generalizable across time and place, and attribute agency not to contingent individual behavior but to international and domestic systems, socialized ideas, and entrenched interest groups. Prevention of repeating historical catastrophes is therefore not dependent on arbitrary individual behavior but on collective, deliberate action.

Appendix A: A Brief Timeline of Events

1947 Independence of India and Pakistan from British Colonial Rule
1948 First India–Pakistan War over Kashmir
1952 Bloody Protest Movement in East Pakistan for Language Rights
1956 First Constitution passed
1958 Military takeover of government. General Ayub Khan becomes president and military-backed rules lasts till 1971
1962 India–China Border War
1965 Second India–Pakistan War over Kashmir
1966 Awami League launch Six-Points for democracy and autonomy of East-Pakistan
1968 Movement for democracy all over Pakistan
1969 General Yahya Khan replace Ayub Khan as the new President of military regime
1970 Election for Parliament, Awami League emerge with commanding majority
1971 Army launches brutal crackdown, India help separatists. Eight months after crackdown, India–Pakistan third war, Bangladesh becomes independent.

Appendix B: The Six-Point Program (Ahsan, 2012)

1. Pakistan would have a federal structure of government based on spirit of the Lahore Resolution of 1940, with a parliament elected on the basis of universal adult franchise;
2. The central government would have authority only in defense and foreign affairs and all other subjects would be handled by the federating units of the state of Pakistan;
3. There would be two freely convertible currencies for the two wings of Pakistan or two separate reserve banks for the two regions of the country;
4. The power of taxation and revenue collection would be vested in the federating units;
5. There would be two separate accounts for foreign exchange reserves for the two wings of Pakistan;
6. East Pakistan would have a separate militia or paramilitary force as a measure of its security.

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