

Nixon's Decision to Send the Enterprise During the India-Pakistan Conflict over Bangladesh: A Zero-Sum Game

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This study seeks to explain Nixon's decision to send the Enterprise to the Bay of Bengal during India-Pakistan conflict over Bangladesh from the point of zero sum game between US-USSR. The US and the USSR were faced with difficult choices as the crisis developed and both the superpowers made decisions, which are analyzed based on game theoretic assumptions. The conflict was finally concluded once both the United States and the Soviet Union realized that continuing the conflict any further would escalate into full scale war to the detriment of both the superpowers.

The decision of President Nixon to send the nuclear powered Enterprise to the Bay of Bengal on December 9, 1971 during the India-Pakistan conflict over Bangladesh has resulted in inadvertent escalation. "The feature of inadvertent escalation that distinguishes it from other paths to war is that the escalation was not intended by the national leaders when they ordered military action" (Bouchard 1991: XXIV). According to Haendel (1977: 221), South Asian conflict moved from low level crisis in March-April 1971 to mid-level crisis in November-December. "As the dynamic events unfolded and the inputs changed, the events in South Asia may have evolved into a "Routinized Situation" (Low Threat/Extended Time/Anticipated) between April and November 1971. With the Nixon Administration's emphasis on a multipolar world and the U. S. efforts to initiate relations with China, the Indo-Pakistani war may have evolved into a "Reflexive Situation" (High Threat/Short Time Anticipated), which has been previously characterized as middle-level crisis" (Haendel 1977: 221-222). Once the outbreak of the war occurred, the Nixon administration explained that its policy was dictated by global considerations (Haendel, 1977: 256). When both superpowers faced each other, the policy options became uncertain and each move is followed by counter move by the opposing party. The policy decisions can be explained from Zero Sum Game. "In a two-person ZSG, a rational strategy is based on the minimax principle: each player should seek to maximize the minimum gain that can be assured or to minimize the maximum loss that needs to be sustained" (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 2002).

The conflict between India and Pakistan arose when the military rulers of Pakistan carried on massive atrocities in March 1971 to crush the demand for autonomy by the East Pakistanis. The East Pakistanis led by the Awami League

leader, Sheikh Mujib won the majority of the seats in the election of December 1970 on a platform of greater autonomy. Though the Awami League won majority of the seats in national parliament, it failed to win any seat from West Pakistan, where Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples' Party won the majority of the seats. East Pakistan comprised about one-third of the land of Pakistan but had the majority of the population. However, based on the principles of parliamentary democracy, Sheikh Mujib and his party the Awami League was entitled to form the government. Bhutto viewed that allowing Sheikh Mujib to form the government was tantamount to splitting the country in half because he considered the Six Point Formula on which Sheikh Mujib won election was nothing but a ploy to divide the country into two wings. The feeling toward Mujib was expressed during a conversation with Assistant Secretary Sisco, Pakistani Ambassador Hilaly said, "great tragedy had befallen in Pakistan and army had to kill people in order to keep country together."² Sisco indicated, "We have said that our military aid agreements imposed no bar on use of such arms for internal security; however, we are concerned over any situation in which US arms were used."³ Sisco reiterated US concern over situation and bloodshed and stated we would like to see peaceful solution as soon as possible."⁴ Hilaly remarked that Mujib's tactics had been unacceptable. "The Awami League's 6 points were not equivalent to secession but Mujib fooled the Bengalis and fooled us. Mujib ultimately revealed he is a secessionist in proposal of two Constituent Assemblies. Secession could not be tolerated." Sisco stated that US was not intervening in internal affairs but would like to see bloodshed ended in East Pakistan.⁵

Bhutto organized agitation movement in West Pakistan in March, 1971 to force Yahya to postpone the convention of the National Assembly (National Parliament) for an indefinite period. This led to non-cooperation movement and protest in East Pakistan against Yahya's decision to postpone the holding of the meeting of the National Assembly because the East Pakistanis believed that it was a ploy to deprive them from forming government based on democratic election. There was total chaos and confusion and the rule of law was totally absent. Bhutto and Yahya both came to Dhaka, East Pakistan to have a meeting with Sheikh Mujib to settle the constitutional crisis. But on March 26, 1971, Yahya and Bhutto left Dhaka abruptly blaming the failure of the talk on Mujib. Mujib was arrested and the military carried on massive atrocities in East Pakistan. Almost 10 million people went to India to escape the atrocities by the military. India, an arch enemy of Pakistan sided with the people of East Pakistan, which brought the involvement of the United States, the Soviet Union and China to the conflict. President Nixon was in a dilemma because Pakistan, a

² Nixon Presidential Materials Project, NSC Files, Bo578.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Nixon Presidential Materials Project, NSC Files, Box 578.

close ally during the period of the Cold War committed a political blunder. Nixon wanted to support Pakistan because it was instrumental in his efforts to normalize relations with China. Nixon a staunch anti-communist from his early political career was influenced by the Soviet support for India. India also angered Nixon by entering into a defense treaty with the Soviet Union in August 1971.

Nixon's strategy was to settle the disputes diplomatically that would keep Pakistan intact but would allow for East Pakistani autonomy. Moreover, he was under pressure from Congress and the public at large not to support Pakistan because its military ruler had committed massive atrocities against the people. His efforts to solve the crisis through the UN also failed because of the Soviet veto. The efforts to persuade both Pakistan and India to make a political settlement did not make any progress. The Nixon administration did realize the inevitability of the independence of Bangladesh but it tried to come about through diplomacy without significant damage to Pakistan. Nixon, a firm believer in balance of power theory, was convinced that the weakening of Pakistan would seriously upset the balance of power in South Asia to the disadvantage of the United States and China. Moreover, Nixon regarded Soviet support for India as an attempt to punish Pakistan for its help for U. S- China rapprochement. From the point of Sino-Soviet relations, the partition of Pakistan removed a pro-Chinese buffer state between China and India and replaced it with a pro-Indian one and the Soviet Union succeeded in its containment of the People's Republic (Thornton 1989: 115-116).

When Indian troops were deployed along Pakistani border in November-December 1971, Yahya wanted the US to fulfill the commitment of the Article 1 of the 1959 bilateral agreement, which obligated the government of the United States to take appropriate action, including the use of the armed forces, as may be mutually agreed upon and as is envisaged in the joint resolution to Promote Peace and Stability in the Middle East in order to assist the Government of Pakistan at its request (Thornton 1989: 110).

“Moscow had a nominal contingent of four ships on station in the Indian Ocean when India attacked Pakistan on November 21, 1971. There were a destroyer, a minesweeper, a tank-landing ship, and a diesel powered attack submarine. On December 5, a SAM-equipped destroyer and second minesweeper entered the Bay of Bengal. Whether intended as relief for the ships already on station or not, ‘routine rotation became a timely reinforcement. A few days later, on December 9, two more ships- a Kynda class, cruise missile-carrying cruiser and a similarly fitted submarine-were sighted passing through the Tsushima Strait between Japan and South Korea on their way to the scene. They would reach the Bay of Bengal on December 18” (Thornton 1989: 113).

However, the Soviet Union was increasing its naval forces in the Bay of Bengal by over thirty naval craft in the Indian Ocean, but only a third of them would be combatants (Thornton 1989: 113). Since there was no American ships in the vicinity, “Washington was left with two alternatives either accept the defeat of West Pakistan as a *fait accompli*, which the loss of Azad Kashmir would accomplish, or meet the challenge Moscow was so subtly orchestrating” (Thornton 1989: 113).

On December 3 1971, Yahya decided to carry on a pre-emptive strike against airfields in the Indian portion of Kashmir and Punjab. The air strike without accompanying ground assault produced little impact but it only allowed Indira Gandhi to justify her planned attack on West Pakistan in response to Pakistani attack (Thornton 1989: 110).

The United States tried for a ceasefire and mutual troop withdrawal through the United Nations on December 4, 1971, but vetoed by the Soviet Union. Another resolution by Ambassador Bush on December 12, 1971 for ceasefire and withdrawal of armed forces was again vetoed by the Soviet Union (Stebbins and Adam 1976: 239-240). As a result, it sparked the old suspicion of Nixon about the real intention of the Soviets. “Richard Nixon was a child of the Cold War, the prevailing ethic of which on both sides was that power had to meet power. Only power could thwart or even contain power. Only fire could fight fire. A missile system had to be met with another missile system, and topped with an anti-missile system. Nixon was not alone in saying and undoubtedly he believed, the communists only respect force” (Wicker, 1996: 256). On December 10, 1971, President Nixon decided to meet the Soviet challenge because Yahya invoked the 1962 commitment (Thornton 1989: 113). Kissinger called in Dobrynin’s deputy Vorontsov, and revealed to him that the United States promised to assist Pakistan in case of Indian aggression. Moreover, the urgent appeal of help from President of Pakistan prompted Nixon to send the Enterprise to prevent the collapse of Pakistani defense. Pakistani Ambassador Raza wrote, “I have been instructed by my government to appeal the US government and point out that different interpretations could always be given to treaty commitments should a contracting party decide to avoid involvement. The main question at the moment is whether or not USA is willing to help Pakistan at this critical juncture.”⁶

The Possible Outcomes

Once the decision was made to send the Enterprise, the stage was set for the superpowers’ game. To continue the war would be very dangerous because the US would be forced to intervene which might have far reaching consequences. Under the circumstances, four outcomes could have been possible in December, 1971 in the crisis over Bangladesh (Figure 1).

⁶ Nixon Presidential Materials Project, NSC files, Box 573

Figure 1. Different Outcomes of Enterprise Game

	Soviet Union	
	Acceptance of Ceasefire	Continue the War
US Does Nothing	A. Compromise Liberation of Bangladesh, the Integrity of West Pakistan restored	C. Indian Victory Permanent weakening of Pakistan, dominance of the Soviets in South Asia
US Intervenes	B. Pakistani Victory Independence of Bangladesh stopped	D. Superpower confrontation

- A. *Compromise the acceptance of ceasefire after the fall of East Pakistan with the surrender of the Pakistani troops; and India backed by the Soviet Union was instrumental in avoiding further confrontation with the United States. At the same time for the United States, it was prudent to accept the fall of East Pakistan leading to the creation of Bangladesh because otherwise, US had to intervene militarily with the probability of success being very slim.*

Nixon administration understood the inevitability of Bangladesh independence when the overwhelming majority of the people of the then East Pakistan wanted separation from Pakistan. Nixon and Kissinger wanted the separation to take place diplomatically without any recourse to military action. The diplomatic solution would give Pakistan an easy exit from East Pakistan keeping intact its military personnel and keeping West Pakistan stable with the status quo in Kashmir. McGeorge Bundy recommended that what was going to happen in the subcontinent would be positive for both India and the US.⁷ The reality of the situation was expressed in Bundy's paper; "The underlying assumption of this paper is that the split in Pakistan is irreversible, whether it occurs sooner or later. That it should happen sooner would lessen the damage done to the political fabric of the subcontinent and the opportunities for subversive activities by other powers. The opposite of this situation would also obtain- the longer the struggle, the worse the result—the idea here would be applying enough pressure to get the GOP to the point of recognizing that East Pakistani independence is in the interest of West Pakistan."⁸ Bundy recommended that what was going to happen in the subcontinent would be positive for both India and the US.

⁷ McGeorge Bundy's letter to Kissinger, Nixon's Presidential Materials Staff, Box 8

⁸ McGeorge Bundy's letter to Kissinger, Nixon's Presidential Memorial Staff, Subject; Confidential Files, Box 8.

The virtual collapse of the Pakistani army in East Pakistan was also expressed by the American Consul in Dhaka on Dec 7, 1971. The American Consul in Dhaka on Dec 7, 1971 expressed Indian determination to crush Pak army in East Pakistan. “It is achievable considering weak logistic position of Pak army in East Pakistan, internal activities of Mukti Bahini, and virtually unanimous support for independent East Pakistan on the part of the Bengali population of the province.”⁹

The reality of the situation was also expressed by Kissinger (1979: 851), “As the tension increased, our government reviewed its options. The Senior Review Group met on March 6 to consider the interagency study I had requested on February 16. Our consensus was that Pakistan would not be able to hold the East by force.” Moreover, there was widespread opposition among the members of Congress, academics and the people at large against supporting Pakistani military government, which tried to crush the legitimacy of election victory by the Bengali people.

The reality of the situation was expressed by President Nixon in his meeting with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on November 4, 1971 in which he remarked, “The U. S. has no illusions with respect to the realities of the situation.”¹⁰ President Nixon expressed concerns over the military option that India might be preparing to take. The memo from Kissinger on December 6, 1971 for meeting with General Westmoreland advised, “Our position is to oppose Indian aggression, favor General Assembly action in light of the stalled Security Council action. We have not taken a stand for or against East Pakistani autonomy or independence. We have said that this is an internal Pakistani affair. We will not recognize Bangladesh now. We must, however, consider carefully the implications of the real possibility of Bengali independence over the long run.”¹¹ The memo advised to ask General Westmoreland how he sees as the Indian objectives. “How long the Paks can hold out?”¹² The Soviet strategy was to prevent any Chinese attempt to coerce India by engaging a large number of troops on Sino-Indian border.

Nixon behind the scenes was pressuring the Soviets to prevent India to expand and continue the war in West Pakistan. But at the same time, Nixon followed a pragmatic policy in his stand in the India-Pakistan conflict, making sure that he did not commit excessive military involvement, which might overextend US military engagement far beyond Vietnam. “In the aftermath of the Vietnam experience, Washington’s tendency may be to overlook a great deal before becoming involved and approach new challenges with great caution” (Howe 1971: 340). Howe also

⁹ Telegram from American Consul from Dhaka to Secretary of State, Nixon Papers, NSC Files, Box 54.

¹⁰ Memorandum for the president on the eve of Indira Gandhi’s visit, Nixon papers, White House Staff Files, Box 86.

¹¹ Memo from Henry Kissinger to the President on the subject of meeting of the NSC principals, Nixon Papers, NSC Files.

¹² *Ibid.*

wrote that the Vietnam War further strained the naval strength because of the unfavorable political environment (Howe 1971: 340). Nixon was realistic in his support for Pakistan so that he did not frustrate Pakistan and at the same time, avoided involvement in such a way as to endanger US defense policy.

On December 12, 1971 in an Oval office meeting attended by the President, Kissinger and Alexander Haig, the crucial decision was taken. In a Hot Line message to Moscow, President Nixon declared about the irreversible moves but at the same time, he expressed his willingness to accept the ceasefire and negotiations (Thornton 1989).

Kissinger also mentioned that Ambassador to the United Nations George Bush was instructed to demand a public statement from India that it did not have any territorial ambitions in West Pakistan, and Azad Kashmir, and also threatened that the President's trip might be jeopardized in case of India's efforts in dismemberment of West Pakistan (Thornton 1989: 115).

Nixon administration did realize that the defense of Eastern Pakistan was fruitless because the overwhelming majority of the people of East Pakistan wanted separation from Pakistan and the east wing is separated from the west wing by one thousand miles of Indian Territory. So, the Nixon administration realized that any attempt to support Pakistan militarily in its war against India in the east wing would be a military and political disaster.

Nixon wrote in his memoirs, "We knew that Yahya Khan eventually would have to yield to East Pakistan's demands for independence, and we urged him to take a more moderate and conciliatory line. We could not have known the extent to which India would seize this opportunity not just to destroy Pakistan's control of East Pakistan but to weaken West Pakistan as well" (Nixon 1978: 525)

Washington realized the inevitability of East Pakistan's autonomy. However, the American leaders did not want to allow "the Soviet Union now strong enough to use force with impunity to achieve geopolitical ends at the expense of the United States. Therefore, Washington's principal objective was to forestall a military conflict whose consequences might very well include the collapse of West as well as East Pakistan and which would most certainly demonstrate Moscow's ability in conjunction with its allies to manipulate the geopolitical balance to the detriment of the United States and allies." (Thornton 1989, 108).

*B. **Pakistani Victory** If the United States had intervened militarily with massive deployment of troops, a Pakistani military victory would have kept Pakistan from disintegrating. It would have been a damaging blow to India and Soviet influence in the sub-continent.*

Based on NSC files, Nixon administration considered providing military support to Pakistan with equipment but not personnel. The officials considered that it would have increased support in Pakistan, diluted Chinese influence in Pakistan, and would have marginally improved relations with China; and would have strengthened relations with the Muslim powers. But the disadvantages would have been damaged relations with India, would have little effect on the outcome, and would dampen US-USSR relations.¹³

Nixon administration understood the futility of intervening in the conflict. The efforts of persuading China to intervene militarily proved to be fruitless because of the Chinese inability to do it. China had supported Pakistan diplomatically and introduced resolution in the Security Council calling for a ceasefire and mutual troop withdrawal. "In November 1971, the Chinese reportedly agreed to provide Pakistan long-range artillery, Mig-21s, naval equipment, small arms and ammunition, and missiles. Deliveries were to begin in early December, but there is no information that this has occurred. Weapons and equipment would be available from existing Chinese inventories as well as current production."¹⁴ Intelligence evaluated that Chinese delivery would be limited to 350 through northern Kashmir border and had to travel more than 1000 miles from border by unimproved road.¹⁵ "In the unlikely event that excess supplies had been stockpiled in Kashgar in far western Sinkiang, China could truck about 800-1000 tons per day to the border into Pakistan at this time of year, however, pose a major logistics problem. The Khunjerab Pass, the only practical entry point will soon be virtually impassable to truck traffic due to heavy snow cover. In West China, there are only two airfields (Hotlen and Wensu) suitable for staging sustained air supply operations to West Pakistan; altitudes and runaway lengths of other air-fields in this area severely limit their use by Chinese transports. Medium transport aircraft available for short-haul operations to Pakistan would total less than 40, and in an all-out effort could airlift some 2,300 tons per day. None of China's transports, including the AN-12/cubs, can carry tanks or armored personnel carriers."¹⁶ The intelligence analysis also contemplated Chinese harassing attacks in the high mountain areas to tie down significant numbers of Indian troops in the east. However intelligence report predicted that the Chinese action against India "would probably be small scale in order to avoid provoking Soviet retaliatory moves."¹⁷

In his conversation with General Haig, on December 12, 1971, the Chinese Ambassador Mr. Huang mentioned about the proposal for ceasefire and suggested

¹³ Contingency Papers Nixon's Presidential Materials, Box 576

¹⁴ Defense Intelligence Agency Intelligence Appraisal, *Communist China's Capability to Support Pakistan*, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, NSC Files, Indo-Pak War, Box 572.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

that they should not show any weakness to India or the Soviet Union and not to recognize Bangladesh.¹⁸ Mr. Haig also suggested for the Security Council Resolution for ceasefire and withdrawal. General Haig also informed that “the King of Jordan has sent six fighter aircraft to Pakistan and intends to send others up to a total of fourteen very soon. The Government of Iran is sending aircraft to Jordan to replace those aircraft Jordan sent to Pakistan. We are informed that Saudi Arabia and the Iranians are sending small arms and ammunition. And there is some indication that the government of Turkey is sending up to twenty two aircraft. We, of course are doing all we can to facilitate this.”¹⁹ Mr. Haig suggested that the Soviet Union was then trying to make a settlement and get out of the situation. Mr Haig suggested having the ceasefire immediately in East and West Pakistan.²⁰

Once the war started, Breznev on December 14, 1971 warned against any interference by the outside powers in the conflict. He promised that USSR would take action in Sinkiang in case of a Chinese attack across Himalayas. So, the Soviets moved a large number of troops on its border with China to tie up Chinese troops with the idea of preventing any Chinese involvement in the subcontinent. US-China wanted to bring ceasefire to deny India a decisive victory in East Pakistan and tried to have a political settlement in the crisis involving Bangladesh. The Soviets exercised the veto power to stall any effort at ceasefire until Bangladesh was liberated. The Soviets also encouraged India to score decisive victory soon.

Moreover, the Soviet Union had threatened to take action in case of any Chinese attack across Himalayas. The Soviet-Indian Treaty of Friendship signed on August 9, 1971 obligated the Soviet Union to intervene in case of any attack. “The treaty relieved India of one important source of perceived strategic vulnerability” (Ganguli, 1994: 105). Despite Bhutto’s high level delegation to China in November, Pakistan failed to receive any commitment from the Chinese government to support her in case of any attack. (Ganguli, 1994: 107). Moreover, Nixon administration realized the danger of intervening militarily to save Pakistan when U. S. military had been overextended considering its involvement in Southeast Asia. “By the late 1960s, the cost and futility of massive U. S. military involvement in Vietnam and vividly demonstrated the limitations of the American use of force to counter what Washington had previously viewed as the strategic threat of international communism” (Sutter, 1993: 24-25).

The United States was quite aware of the fact that the Pakistani military in East Pakistan was totally outnumbered by the Indian forces. “When the open war between

¹⁸ Memcon, Huang Ha, T’ang Wen-sheng, Shih Yen-hua, Alexander Haig, Winston Lord, Top Secret/Sensitive, Exclusively Eyes Only, December, 1971, RG 59, PPC S/P, Directors Files, Box 330.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

India and Pakistan at last began on the night of 3 December 1971 the two were unequally matched” (Jackson 1975: 106). The military balance between 1965-1971 had shifted in favor of India (Jackson 1975: 106). Table 1 presents the comparison between Indian and Pakistani opposing forces in East Pakistan. Moreover, public support for the Pakistani forces was almost non-existent among the Bengali population. Moreover, The Mukti Bahini (Freedom Fighters) were very active and carried out attacks inside East Pakistan. It had demoralizing effect on the

Table 1. Opposing Indian and Pakistani Forces in East Pakistan

General Army Combat		
Personnel	India	Pakistan
General Army	92,000	60,000
Combat Personnel		
Para-military	20,000	12,000
Divisions	6	3
Brigades	12 (Infantry, mountain)	1
	1 (paratrooper)	1 (special)
	1 (armed)	1 (armed)
Navy		
	1 carrier	4 gunboats
	1 destroyer	
	4 submarines	
	5 escort	
	4 patrol boats	
	2 submarine chasers	
Fighter Aircraft	157	18

Source: Defense Intelligence Files, Nixon Presidential Papers, NSC Files, Box 576

Pakistani army. It would take some time to buildup American troops to have a credible support for the Pakistani army. Even if the United States wanted to intervene, the policy makers in the United States were not sure how long the Pakistani forces could hold on to allow for the U. S. troops to come and support them. Bangladesh was surrounded by India on three sides and Indian troops were encircling Pakistani forces on all sides bordering India. The speed in which the Indian troops were proceeding, it was even difficult for the Pakistani forces to find an escape route. In this situation, Nixon administration realized that intervening militarily in East Pakistan was almost impossible.

The unwillingness of the United States to intervene militarily was also perceived by the Soviet Union. As Soviet Ambassador to India Pegev, stated, “Pakistan is trying to draw both the United States and China into the present conflict. The Soviet Union, however does not believe that either country will intervene.”²¹ Despite the

²¹ *Daily Telegraph*, (London) January 10, 1972.

belief that the United States would not intervene, later events would explain the decision of the Soviet Union based on the assumptions of zero sum game.

- C. Soviet-India Victory If India had continued the war in West Pakistan and won a decisive victory, and the United States did not do anything to stop the war, it would lead to dismemberment of Pakistan and the Soviets would have established hegemony in South Asia. But Ganguli (1994: 113) claimed that “Indian objectives in the west were essentially limited and thus were not affected by Kissinger’s signals.”*

Nixon believed that the crisis in the sub-continent arose as a result of India’s determination to use the crisis to establish its preeminence in the subcontinent (Kissinger, 1979: 885). Nixon and Kissinger strongly believed that if India backed by the Soviet Union was allowed to get away with military adventure against a U. S. ally, it would have far reaching consequences all over the world about U. S. credibility in defending its allies. Kissinger remarked, “What we may be witnessing is a situation wherein a country equipped and supported by the Soviets may be turning half of Pakistan into an impotent state and the other half into a vassal. We must consider what other countries may be thinking of our action.”²² Nixon and Kissinger felt the necessity of helping Pakistan to prevent India backed by the Soviet Union from achieving its goal of weakening Pakistan permanently. As Kissinger put it, “We don’t really have any choice. We can’t allow a friend of ours and China’s to get screwed in a conflict with a friend of Russia’s” (Nixon, 1978, 527). So, Kissinger told Soviet Charge Vorontsov about U. S. concern and cautioned him about the future summit between the United States and the Soviet Union. Nixon-Kissinger believed that the Soviet Union had a stake in improving relationship with the United States. It had become more important considering improved US-China relationships.

- D. Confrontation If India backed by the Soviets had continued the war and the United States intervened in the war to save Pakistan, it would lead to a dangerous confrontation between the superpowers with devastating results.*

Concern over the Enterprise was expressed by Indian Ambassador Jha, “USG had some plan to facilitate transfer of Pakistani personnel or to facilitate transfer of Pakistani personnel to West Pakistan. Any such attempt would be a very serious matter and would endanger long-term Indo-US relations. It might also have other implications and in any event would not have effect of bringing conflict to speedy

²² Memo on December 8, 1971, Meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Nixon Papers.

end.”²³ US Embassy in India sent the Telegram mentioned, “A number of diplomatic colleagues view deployment of carrier task force as military escalation by the U.S.”²⁴

The possibility of confrontation raised much concern among the Soviet leaders. The Soviet Union criticized US policy as resorting to “gunboat diplomacy” because the 7th fleet is continuing on course in the Bay of Bengal despite the surrender of the Pakistani army.²⁵

The memo from the Soviet leaders to President Nixon sent by American Consul in Dhaka expressed Soviet anger and at the same time frustration of the Soviet Union.²⁶ It made U. S. threat of using force credible. It brought the possibility of a broader conflict involving the United States, China and Pakistan on one side, and India and the Soviet Union on the other side. Even though the Soviet Union believed that neither China nor the United States would intervene, it would not take a risk if the contrary is true. Howe (1971: 21) remarked, “The Soviet Union has expanded territorially when it could be accomplished easily and with little danger. Moscow has been most cautious when faced with the possibility of determined resistance by another major power.” About the Soviets He wrote, “Their propaganda stresses deed rather than words, and it interprets the movements of naval forces as the true indication of American intentions. A strictly neutral presence of U. S. forces becomes a credible threat in Soviet eyes because the USSR is more impressed by available means than by diplomatic assurances” (Howe 1971: 22). The Soviets calculated the consequences of involvement of the United States.

Moreover, according to Thornton (1989: 112) the likelihood of Chinese intervention was unlikely, considering the turmoil in the military ranks after Lin Biao crisis in which the minister of defense and China’s second in command was ousted and killed in a confrontation with Mao.

Following Zagare (1983), I came up with the distribution of the values for the different choices for the super-power once Nixon decided to send the Enterprise (Table 2). “By convention, the first entry in each cell represents the ranking of the associated outcome by the row player (here the United States), and the second entry the ranking of the column player (here the Soviet Union)” (Zagare, 1983: 77). Based on American perception of the Soviet preferences would be (C, A, B, D). The Soviet perception of American preferences would be (B, A, D, C). Under the circumstances,

²³ Department of State Cable, Carrier Deployment in Indian Ocean, December 14, 1971, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, NSC Files, Indo-Pak War, Box 578

²⁴ United States Embassy (New Delhi) Cable, Deployment Carrier Task Force in Indian Ocean., Secret, December 15, 1971, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, NSC Files, Indo-Pak War, Box 573.

²⁵ Confidential Report, Department State Operations Center, Nixon Papers, NSC Files, Box 571.

²⁶ Memo from Soviet leaders to Nixon sent by American Consulate in Dhaka, Nixon Papers, Haig Chronicles, December 12-31, 1971, Box 990.

the United States would prefer to accept outcome A compared to Outcome C which would mean virtual crippling of Pakistan and the dominance by the Soviet Union. Outcome B would have been the best strategy for the United States but considering the situation, it would not be feasible. Still, the US considered the outcome D compared to C. On the other hand, the Soviet Union preferred outcome A and C compared to outcome D. The American resolve was made credible by the use of the Hotline to Moscow to keep up the pressure. "This was the first use of the Hot Line by the Nixon Administration" (Kissinger, 1979: 909). On December 14, 1971 Vorontsov assured that India did not have any plan to seize West Pakistani territory (Kissinger, 1979: 912).

Table 2. Distribution of Values for Different Outcomes

	Soviet Union	
	Acceptance of Ceasefire	Continue the War
US accept fall of East Pakistan	A. Compromise (3,3)	C. Soviet victory (1,4)
US Intervenes for Pakistan	B. Pakistani Victory (4,1)	D. Confrontation (2,2)

Key: (X, Y) = (Rank of the United States, Rank of the Soviet Union) 4 = best; 3 = next best; 2 = next worst; 1 = Worst

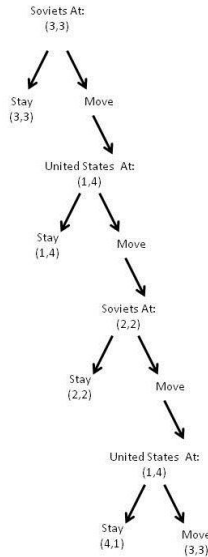
Figure 2 depicts the rational choice for the actors starting at the Soviet move at (3, 3). This is the next to best strategy for the Soviet, so if she moves to the best strategy (1, 4), it is the worst choice for the United States. If the United States chooses the next to worst strategy (2, 2), it is also next to worst strategy for the Soviets. The last choice for the United States before going back to the original situation is (4, 1). The Soviets are faced with either (4, 1) the worst choice, the second to worst (2, 2) or next to the best (3, 3). The Soviets would prefer outcome (3, 3) than the other choices. For the United States, the choice (3, 3) will be better than (1, 4) or (2, 2). Because both players prefer choice (3, 3) over other choices, it is a nonmyopic equilibrium outcome. It is a point when neither player sees a long term advantage from departing from an initial outcome; the starting outcome is called non-myopic equilibrium (Brams and Whitman 1982).

According to Zagare (1983: 78-79), the calculation of the new equilibrium is based on the following assumptions:

1. Both players choose strategies defining an initial outcome of the game, or alternatively an initial outcome or status quo is imposed on the players by empirical circumstances.
2. Once at an initial outcome, either player can unilaterally switch its strategy and change that outcome to a subsequent outcome.

3. *The other player can respond unilaterally by switching its strategy, thereby changing outcome to a new subsequent outcome.*
4. *These moves continue until the player with the next move decides not to switch its strategy. When this happens the game terminates and the final outcome is reached (Brams and Hessel, 1982).*

Figure 2. Game Tree of Moves Starting with the Soviet Initial Moves



Based on the above Figure, the acceptance of ceasefire by India backed by the Soviets after the liberation of Bangladesh was the next best strategy for the Soviets. If India had continued the war, it might have led to the dismemberment of Pakistan. It would have been the best strategy for the Soviets and India, but it would be the worst choice for the United States. If the United States had intervened and it had led to Pakistani victory, it would be the best choice for the United States. In that case, Bangladesh would not have been created and Pakistan would be kept intact. This would have been the best choice for the United States and it would have been the worst for the Soviet Union. The other choice for both the United States and the Soviet Union was to go on confrontation, which would be the worst choice for both the superpowers because of the risk of nuclear war.

The Soviet Union though increased its presence in the Indian Ocean; it did realize the consequences of continuing the conflict. “Toward India, Moscow displayed firm public support, while at the same time attempting to manipulate the

Indian leadership into decisions that would achieve maximum gain short of provoking American and/or Chinese intervention” (Thornton, 1989: 112). Both India-Soviets realized the resolve of the US and understood the consequences of max-max strategy, which would make Pakistan totally defenseless. It would be totally unacceptable to the United States. India-Soviets realized that any maximum gain strategy of dismembering Pakistan would face combined US-China military action. The Soviet Union understood the line drawn by the United States in the Hotline message on December 12, 1971. It was made credible by the movement of the Enterprise from Vietnam to the Bay of Bengal. As a result, on December 16, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi reaffirmed that India had no territorial ambitions and declared the independence of Bangladesh, and she mentioned that it was pointless to continue the conflict. The Ceasefire went into effect at 8 P.M. local time December 17, 1971 leading to an end to the crisis. Thornton (1989:115) believed that the threat to abandon the summit, movement of the carrier force into the combat zone and the parallel development of Chinese troop movements persuaded the Soviet leadership that it was time to settle. Though publicly the Soviets were telling the Indians that it would not allow the Seventh Fleet to bully India, it discouraged her to strike against West Pakistan and to end its operations quickly.

However, Sisson and Rose (1990: 264) remarked, “Whether the Enterprise task force served any useful purpose is doubtful. But one can be safely assumed that it was basic American policy that, in any crisis in the Indian Ocean area in which the Soviet Union had a fleet immediately available (as happened again in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war), an American naval detachment would be sent in as well, even if there were no obvious tasks for it to perform.” As a matter of fact, President Nixon commented that “Soviet restraint had helped to bring about the cease-fire that stopped what would inevitably have been the conquest of West Pakistan as well” (Jackson 1975: 140). According to Jack Anderson the Enterprise was used to divert the Indian attention and to remind the Soviet Union to restrain India (Anderson and Clifford 1973: 263). Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, Jr. former Chief of Naval Operations in his book (1976: 368) remarked that he was not sure what to think about the Enterprise episode because the task force was not formed until the event in East Bengal was clear. He believed that Nixon and Kissinger who were frustrated about the events in the subcontinent wanted to demonstrate that U. S. should be taken seriously. “More likely, they wanted to show China that the

U. S. was a relevant military actor in that part of the world and had the will to deploy military power in a situation in which a Soviet client was defeating a Chinese ally. --- Mrs. Gandhi may have had designs on West Pakistan as well as East Pakistan, and the arrival of TG 74 may have caused her to think twice. In other words, the gesture may have been extremely timely and useful (Zumwalt 1976: 369).

“One school of thought argues that the Enterprise episode fits well within the Nixon-Kissinger frame-set that advocates the utility of force and a show of force.

Moreover, the U. S. also wanted to project an image of a global power. Accordingly, the purpose of the show of the force was not to convey a threat to India against proceeding to attempt to dismember West Pakistan but, more importantly, to convey to the Chinese leaders the seriousness and vital concern with which the Nixon administration viewed the South Asia events” (Haendel 1977: 259).

The use of the Enterprise enjoyed the advantage of the use of the naval forces, which is “the ability of naval forces to establish a visible U. S. presence in the international waters near the scene of a crisis without intruding into disputed territory or immediate need of politically sensitive shore bases is an advantage not shared by land-based forces” (Bouchard 1991: XXV). Bouchard (1991) mentioned four missions of the navy. They are: strategic deterrence, sea control, projection of power, and naval presence. Sea control and projection of power are wartime missions. Naval presence is the use of naval forces, short of war, to achieve political objectives” (Bouchard 1991: XXX) the two objectives are to deter actions opposed to US interest or its allies and to encourage actions, which are in the interest of the United States and its allies (Bouchard: 1991: XXX). The Enterprise was sent to achieve Nixon’s political objectives, i.e., to prevent the dismemberment of Pakistan, which was a close ally.

Conclusion

This article analyzed the decision of President Nixon to send the Enterprise during India-Pakistan conflict over Bangladesh using zero-sum game theory. It finds the justification of Nixon administration to take the crucial steps and at the same time the decision of India and the Soviets to accept the ceasefire once Bangladesh was liberated. This essay demonstrates how the assumptions of game theory can be used to analyze different policy options. The different strategies followed by the United States and the Soviet Union were based on the calculations of the consequences that were perceived to be associated with each policy option. The analysis of the game theory reveals that despite the different interpretations of the purpose served by the Enterprise, it played an important factor in the resolution of the conflict. Any counter move would have escalated the conflict leading to further escalation. The article finds the justification for the decision to send the Enterprise based on President Nixon’s perception of the game and the perception of the long term Soviet strategy.

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