

# THE WEST AND THE BIRTH OF BANGLADESH

Foreign Policy in the Face of Mass Atrocity

Richard Pilkington



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# Introduction

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After the partition of the Indian subcontinent, Pakistan comprised two wings: West Pakistan (now referred to as Pakistan) and East Pakistan (now known as Bangladesh). On 25 March 1971, fearing the secession of the eastern wing, the military dictator, President Yahya Khan, unleashed his country's West Pakistani-dominated armed forces in a brutal campaign of massacre and repression in the East. During nine months of operations, the army butchered many thousands of civilians and some ten million refugees fled to India.<sup>1</sup> In December, the crisis was finally resolved, but only after a war between India and Pakistan during which Indian troops led Bengali guerrillas to victory in the East and after which East Pakistan achieved independence as Bangladesh.

This book investigates the formulation of and interplay between the American, Canadian, and British policies generated in response to the crisis in East Pakistan. It focuses primarily on the reactions of these three North Atlantic powers to the atrocities and other human rights abuses rather than on the subsequent issues of war on the subcontinent and the recognition of Bangladesh. It does not attempt to trace the development of each country's South Asian policy or each capital's responses to atrocity crimes over recent decades. Rather, it considers the decision-making processes in Washington, Ottawa, and London during the first few months after the clampdown, identifying the forces at play in determining policy and the nature, development, and resolution of debates over national interests and ethical concerns at a time of developing human rights awareness.

At the start of 1971, Britain, Canada, and the United States worked closely in a number of different areas, and relations between the capitals, while subject to minor irritants, were generally warm and certainly far from strained. All three were liberal, democratic, capitalist Cold War allies aligned against communism under the banner of NATO, a defensive alliance of which they were all founding members. Alongside Australia and New Zealand, they participated in the intimate world of signals intelligence sharing under the “Five Eyes” alliance. The allies, particularly Canada and the United States, had significant commercial and economic ties, and all three shared strong cultural connections through a common language.

The three North Atlantic powers cooperated in pairs on important projects. Canada and the United States combined to operate the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) system, and London and Washington maintained a unique collaboration and exchange in the nuclear field. Although the so-called special relationship between London and Washington had diminished in terms of importance owing to changes in the international order, the tradition of close diplomatic cooperation and consultation continued. Strong bureaucratic ties were similarly maintained between London and Ottawa. Moreover, Richard Nixon, the US president, and Pierre Trudeau, the Canadian prime minister, enjoyed a satisfactory rapport, while Edward Heath, the British prime minister, maintained warm personal relationships with his counterparts in Canada and the United States.

Although close connections may arguably be considered sufficient grounds for focusing on the responses of these three international actors, there are further reasons to study their roles, for between them, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom had considerable potential leverage to exert on Islamabad. As powers on the world stage, they enjoyed significant diplomatic influence and each also supplied military materiel to Pakistan. Ottawa was a vital partner in a nuclear joint venture project in Karachi. Importantly, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom were three of the top four national providers of economic aid to Pakistan, donating some US\$200 million annually around the time the clampdown commenced. This amount accounted for over one-third of the total external assistance received by Islamabad.

During the crisis, the decisions taken in Washington, Ottawa, and London were based on *perceptions* formed from information received in the three Western capitals and not necessarily, therefore, on what was *actually* happening on the ground in East Pakistan. Consequently, this book is based

primarily on the archival records of the three North Atlantic powers and not on the limited amount of material currently available in South Asian repositories.

This study of the Western response seeks to inform our understanding of the embryonic development of Western human rights awareness, which proceeded to blossom further, indeed mushroom, in the years immediately after the crisis. As Samuel Moyn has observed: “Over the course of the 1970s, the moral world of Westerners shifted, opening a space for the sort of utopianism that coalesced in an international human rights movement that had never existed before.”<sup>2</sup> Since the Second World War, and despite the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, concern for such freedoms remained subsidiary to the pursuit of Cold War advantage. Even as late as 1968, which the United Nations declared the International Year for Human Rights, such matters remained only “peripheral.”<sup>3</sup> Yet, in the 1970s, there developed a “genuine social movement around human rights ... transcending official government institutions.”<sup>4</sup> US failure in Vietnam, the end of European empire overseas, and the Western embrace of Soviet bloc dissidents appeared to signal the “collapse of prior universalistic schemes,” and the promotion of human rights provided a “persuasive alternative to them.”<sup>5</sup> Interest and awareness swiftly snowballed across the West as ordinary people came to engage in the movement as never before. Non-governmental organizations, such as Amnesty International in the United Kingdom, promoted large-scale grassroots advocacy, and politicians began to emphasize the importance of human rights concerns in the formulation of foreign policy.<sup>6</sup> In 1977, the new US president, Jimmy Carter, enthusiastically endorsed such values, and Amnesty International won the Nobel Peace Prize; human rights had rapidly acquired considerable “cultural prestige.”<sup>7</sup>

Despite the growing public concern for human rights in the United States, Canada, and Britain, the majority of foreign service officers in these countries remained firmly focused on the promotion of national interests until at least the mid-1970s. Henry Kissinger was Nixon’s national security advisor during the crisis and, later, secretary of state.<sup>8</sup> “A realist who firmly believed human rights had no place in foreign policy,” he established the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs of the Department of State in 1975 after intense pressure from Congress. Although he then manoeuvred for over two years to undermine its impact, he was, nevertheless, responsible for putting in place the institution and the operational procedures that would be used to encourage the subsequent consideration of human rights in US foreign policy formulation.<sup>9</sup> As Victoria Berry and

Allan McChesney have noted, by the mid-1970s human rights had become a more important political issue in Canada. In the Department of External Affairs, however, “there was no formal training in human rights for recruits prior to late 1986, and most officials ... [were] preoccupied with economic and security matters.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, the crisis in South Asia unfolded at a time of considerable flux, when many in the West were initially starting to embrace the promotion of human rights but the institutional cultures in foreign service departments had yet to adapt to this change. The battles to sway and implement policies in response to the events of 1971, therefore, were fought on strangely unfamiliar terrains.

The parallel growth of interest in Holocaust studies in the 1970s reflected the rise to prominence of human rights concerns and, from that burgeoning academic field, the broader discipline of genocide studies duly emerged one decade later.<sup>11</sup> The most widely accepted definition of the concept at the heart of this new branch of study is that contained in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948, which is often referred to less formally as the United Nations Genocide Convention (UNGC). Under Article II of the agreement, genocide is defined as the intentional destruction, “in whole or in part, [of] a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such.” Political groups are not protected under the convention and, therefore, the large-scale massacre of suspected communists by the Indonesian military and its supporters (1965–66) was not considered genocide under this definition. Consequently, the East Pakistan case was arguably one of the first potential instances of genocide under the UNGC since the agreement entered into force.<sup>12</sup>

By early 1971, the United States had still to adopt the UNGC, and so the administration was under no legal commitment to respond even if it believed that the case of East Pakistan qualified as genocide as defined in that document. The Senate ratified the convention, with reservations, only in February 1986, some thirty-seven years after President Harry Truman had first submitted it to Congress.<sup>13</sup> This delay reflected concerns over the potentially wide scope of the convention and US sovereign rights rather than the fundamental purpose of the agreement. Given its promotion of liberal democratic values during the Cold War in particular, the United States had an apparent moral obligation to prevent a possible genocide. In contrast, both Canada and the United Kingdom had already made both ethical and legal commitments to uphold the UNGC before the crisis in East Pakistan unfolded, the former having adopted the convention on 3 September 1952, the latter on 30 January 1970.

Under Article I of the UNGC, contracting parties commit to preventing genocide, but the convention does not stipulate what actions a signatory ought to pursue beyond calling on the United Nations to take appropriate measures (Article VIII).<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of fellow nations is enshrined in the UN Charter (1945), Chapter I, Article 2.4: “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.” Except in cases of self-defence, only the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), under Chapter VII of the Charter, may authorize the use of military measures to restore order when faced with a threat to international peace.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, public condemnation and the possible imposition of, for example, economic or military supply sanctions remained lawful, so how would Washington, Ottawa, and London choose to respond to this early test case? At the time, did they believe the events in East Pakistan amounted to genocide, and, if so, how did they interpret their obligations under the UNGC? If they did not think the atrocities met the criteria of the UNGC, then what did they consider to be their moral responsibilities more broadly?

As previously noted, this book explores the perceptions held, and the formulation of policies by, the three North Atlantic powers, as recorded primarily in the national archives of those countries. It does not seek to investigate what happened on the ground using the records of Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. No attempt, therefore, is made to determine whether or not the atrocities in East Pakistan amounted to genocide as defined by the UNGC, such an investigation lying beyond the scope of this research and the purpose of this book. Nevertheless, the Western response to the events in East Pakistan must be understood against a backdrop of domestic, regional, and global contexts, which provide lenses through which to better view and comprehend the emergency as it unfolded.

### **Systems of Forces**

The domestic and regional settings in which the crisis unfolded were complex. Much fine material has been published on these subjects, a large part of it characterized by intricate and subtle discussion. In providing brief synopses for contextual purposes, it is recognized that some of the detail and nuance is inevitably sacrificed in the attempt to draw out the essential strands of the literature. Those seeking further illumination may wish to directly consult the sources on which these summaries are based.

### **Domestic Fission in Pakistan**

After the partition of India in 1947, the Muslim-dominated nation of Pakistan comprised two geo-culturally distinct wings, one in the east and the other in the west of the subcontinent, separated by over one thousand miles (sixteen hundred kilometres) of Hindu-dominated Indian territory.<sup>16</sup> Geographic separation presented numerous communications challenges and encouraged orientation toward different markets and crop production. Moreover, at partition West Pakistan comprised 34 million people, speaking mainly Punjabi and Sindi, attached geographically to the Muslim world of the Middle East and the Arabian Sea. In contrast, the 42 million citizens of East Pakistan, sometimes referred to as East Bengal, spoke almost exclusively Bengali and looked outward to India and Southeast Asia. Importantly, many in the West considered the East to be populated by inferior converts not of the pure Muslim stock the former believed themselves to be but descended from Indian races and corrupted by Hindu culture. The majority of the vast peasant population of the East embraced non-mainstream Sufism, unlike their more orthodox Sunni co-religionists of the West. The next twenty-four years witnessed growing alienation between these distinct regions, as the central government, based in Islamabad,<sup>17</sup> failed in its nation-building project. Finally, in 1971, the East seceded to form the new state of Bangladesh.

At the birth of Pakistan, underlying geo-cultural differences between East and West were temporarily transcended as Muslims sought to unify against what many of them perceived to be the threat of Hindu domination. After independence, however, this concern receded, leaving a shared Islamic identity and the Muslim League, which had spearheaded the joint political battle for a separate Muslim nation, as the unifying forces between the two wings.

The bureaucrats and professionals of the Muslim-minority provinces of British India, who had worried most about any threat of Hindu dominance over an independent, but united, subcontinent, had always controlled the League's leadership and power base. At partition, these leaders and administrators of the Muhajir fled westward, where they joined with the elite of the Punjabi-dominated army and united executive, bureaucratic, and military authority in the West wing.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, the Bengalis of the East were grossly underrepresented in all institutions save those of the legislative arena, yet the legislators held little power. In the absence of a shared understanding of the Lahore and Pakistan Resolutions of the 1940s, which had sought to define the level of autonomy of each wing within a united

Pakistan, the western Muhajir-Punjabi axis dominated the power structure of the new nation, causing resentment in the East.

Members of this bureaucratic-military elite were initially unwilling to allow the formation of democratic institutions, as they were unable to establish power bases in the East wing, where the majority of the population resided. They feared that a fully representative democracy would result in their loss of power to Bengalis, whom they generally considered ethnically and religiously inferior. The domestic political history of Pakistan until 1971 is the story of the West's continued attempts to cling to power while maintaining national unity. The East responded by resisting the introduction of Urdu as the sole national language and recording its displeasure with the centre by voting the Muslim League out of office, thus bringing the Bengali vernacular elite to regional legislative power in the 1954 provincial elections. In the absence of an effective nation-building program, the Muslim League and Islam had been the key uniting factors between East and West. Now the former stood utterly defeated.

During 1958, in light of the riots in the East Pakistan Provincial Assembly and mass demonstrations in the West, General Ayub Khan seized power and declared martial law in a military coup. His rule began an extended period of military control and witnessed a further centralization of power in favour of the West. Institutional under-representation and its apparently inevitable economic consequences exacerbated the underlying geo-cultural tensions between the two wings. During the 1960s, as Pakistan's economy grew as a whole, an increase in inter-wing economic disparity, driven by investment policies that continually favoured the West, served only to increase the frustrations of the Bengali vernacular elite. From 1949 to 1950, the gross domestic product per capita in the West was only 8 percent higher than that in the East; by 1968–69, the difference was 62 percent.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the East's hard currency earnings from jute exports were consistently directed out of Bengal to support development of the West wing. The hopelessly inadequate protection afforded East Pakistan during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War merely confirmed the region's vulnerability and its quite junior status compared with that of the West. In response, the Awami League, a major political party of the Bengali vernacular elite, published a six-point party manifesto in 1966. It focused on the need for political and economic regional autonomy in East and West, and demanded that the federal government be responsible only for defence and foreign affairs, yielding tax-gathering powers to the two federating units.

Meanwhile, throughout the 1960s, the political awareness of the Bengali population grew as the vernacular elite expanded, both university and college enrolment in the East increasing by over 100 percent between 1959–60 and 1965–66.<sup>20</sup> This growth in enrolment had two effects. First, it supplied a large base of politically active students. Second, students and former-student professionals provided a mechanism and a network for spreading Awami League support throughout the countryside. As discontent grew in the East, so did the ability to resist.

Violent anti-government protests in East and West forced Ayub to step down, in March 1969, to be replaced by General Yahya Khan, head of the Pakistani army. Although Yahya immediately declared martial law, dissolved the legislative assemblies, and abrogated the constitution, he kept a commitment made by Ayub and announced that fully democratic elections would be held in December 1970. Seats in the proposed new National Assembly, which was charged with the important task of drawing up a replacement constitution within 120 days, were to be apportioned to reflect to some extent the relative sizes of regional populations. Although the East, with its greater populace, could potentially gain a majority or otherwise control the new National Assembly, most observers believed that a varied mix of political parties would come to power, leaving neither wing, nor one particular grouping, in a position to dominate.<sup>21</sup> As Yahya explained when he visited Washington, DC, in October 1970, he anticipated a “multiplicity” of parties in both East and West, fighting against one another and leaving the president as the real power in the country.<sup>22</sup>

Yahya did not, however, foresee the consequences of one particular contingent event. On the night of 12 November 1970, a cyclone-induced tidal wave flooded East Bengal, claiming over 300,000 lives and wreaking devastation and havoc in coastal areas. Islamabad’s relief effort was extremely poor and much criticized. As the election campaign entered its crucial final stages, Mujibur Rahman, leader of the Awami League, seized on and exploited the inadequacies in the response, portraying it as a timely and extreme illustration of West Pakistan’s indifference to the East. On 26 November, he accused Islamabad of “almost cold-blooded murder.”<sup>23</sup>

Resentment helped fuel an unexpected landslide victory for the autonomist Awami League, still promoting its Six-Point Program, in the December elections, in which it secured 167 of the 169 National Assembly seats assigned to the East. It neither won nor contested any seats in the West, yet it gained a clear overall majority in the 313-seat National Assembly as a

whole. Pakistanis were about to see real power shift from West to East for the first time.

As the Awami League achieved political success, the ambitions of the Bengali vernacular elite increased still further. The Pakistan Peoples Party, which had secured a majority in the West, but with roughly only one-half of the number of seats gained by the Awami League, refused to cooperate in forming the new National Assembly, however. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, its leader, feared the surrender of power to the East, which favoured better relations with India and a reduction in military expenditure, in direct contrast to his own policies and his talk of a “thousand-year war” against the Hindus. Consequently, two days before it was due to convene on 3 March 1971, Yahya postponed the first meeting of the National Assembly, severely disappointing Bengali aspirations at a time when the autonomist Awami League was able to supply the political vehicle, and the vernacular elite provide the mobilizing mechanism, for mass action in East Bengal and direct confrontation with Islamabad. Awami League leader Mujibur Rahman called a general strike in East Pakistan, bringing it to a grinding halt, and insisted on both a loosely federated Pakistan, under the Six-Point Program, and the immediate resumption of the democratic process. After weeks of apparently fruitless negotiations between East and West, Yahya sought to maintain the unity of Pakistan through the application of military might. On the evening of 25 March 1971, he unleashed his country’s West Pakistani-dominated armed forces in a brutal campaign of massacre and oppression in the East.

The struggle against greater autonomy lasted until December 1971, when India successfully invaded East Pakistan, where it defeated the Pakistani army and supported the establishment of an Awami League government at the helm of a newly independent Bangladesh. During the intervening nine-month period, many thousands of civilian East Bengalis were killed, perhaps a quarter of a million girls and women systematically raped, and some ten million refugees fled to safety across the international frontier to India. The main motivation behind the atrocities appears to have been to terrorize the population of East Pakistan into submission, bringing the East once again firmly under the heel of Islamabad. In order to achieve this, the Pakistani army intentionally targeted specific groups with a view to eliminating organized resistance. Thus, politicians, intellectual leaders, student activists, and Bengali police and troops fell victim to numerous massacres. Importantly, West Pakistani authorities similarly targeted the Hindu population of East Bengal, which they perceived as subversive. As the atrocities continued, Bengali nationalists, trained in East Pakistan and India, resisted

the clampdown by pursuing a campaign of guerrilla action against the West Pakistani authorities in the East.<sup>24</sup>

### **Regional Tension in South Asia**

As the British left the subcontinent in 1947, Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan were born in blood. Before partition, the Indian National Congress spearheaded the push for independence from imperial rule for many years, but came to be perceived by many Muslims, particularly members of the Muslim League, as an organization run by Hindus for the benefit of Hindus.<sup>25</sup> Fearing the possibility of future oppression in a single independent country dominated by a Hindu majority, the League successfully pushed for the creation of Pakistan, a separate homeland for Muslims.<sup>26</sup> Thus, British India was divided into the two independent states of India and Pakistan at midnight on 15 August 1947. At this time, some twelve million people sought security in the lands of their own faiths and, as they fled, hundreds of thousands were massacred in intercommunal violence.<sup>27</sup> Yasmin Khan describes events as follows:

Even by the standards of the violent twentieth century, the Partition of India is remembered for its carnage, both for its scale – which may have involved the deaths of half a million to one million men, women and children – and for its seemingly indiscriminate callousness. Individual killings, especially in the most ferociously contested province of Punjab, were frequently accompanied by disfigurement, dismemberment and the rape of women from one community by men from another. Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus suffered equally as victims and can equally be blamed for carrying out the murders and assaults.<sup>28</sup>

The consequent psychological scarring of the populations and mutual mistrust between the two governments was compounded in the eyes of many Pakistanis by calls from various Indian leaders for reunification of what the latter considered to be only a temporarily divided subcontinent. Pakistani suspicions of Indian intentions failed to dissipate over the following decades.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, both “Indian and Pakistani ideas of nationhood were carved out diametrically, in definition against each other, at this time,”<sup>30</sup> and the experiences of refugees and their families were “woven into the fabric of [each] national history.”<sup>31</sup>

Even before the intercommunal violence had fully subsided, the contest for sovereignty over the territory of Jammu and Kashmir began. This

former princely state of British India lay in a mountainous area on the border between the two new nations, and the Kashmir conflict, as it became known, fuelled ongoing Indo-Pakistani disharmony for decades to come.<sup>32</sup> At partition, Hari Singh, the Hindu ruler of the Muslim-majority state opted to join India. Pakistan, however, held his decision to be invalid, as he had already fled Kashmir and was no longer in control. The new Muslim nation argued that the residents of the territory should determine their own fate. India and Pakistan soon went to war, each seeking to control the disputed area. Hostilities formally ended only in 1949, and a ceasefire line was established that divided the contested land. Pakistan governed Azad Kashmir, in the west, and the Northern Areas, while India controlled the remainder of the territory.<sup>33</sup>

The dispute was never satisfactorily resolved and, in August 1965, inspired in part by India's poor performance in a 1962 war against China, Pakistan again tried to wrest greater control over Kashmir by striking a blow that would better position it in any future negotiated settlement governing the territory.<sup>34</sup> Pakistan infiltrated guerrilla units into the India-controlled part of Kashmir in an attempt to destabilize the region and stir Kashmiris into rebellion against New Delhi. The operation failed to spark a revolt, but responses and counter-responses by India and Pakistan soon escalated into a war of far greater intensity than that fought some two decades earlier.<sup>35</sup> The two sides engaged in a large-scale tank battle, and each suffered thousands of casualties. Over three weeks, India and Pakistan fought each other into a stalemate before agreeing to a UN-brokered ceasefire and returning to their original positions.<sup>36</sup> The Kashmir dispute persisted as a struggle not only over territory but also for national pride, and in 1971 the ceasefire line, originally intended as a temporary measure, still divided the two antagonists.<sup>37</sup>

Both India and Pakistan may be characterized as exhibiting considerable internal diversity, each home to a heterogeneous mix of peoples, languages, and political views. Yet the mass atrocities at partition, two recent wars over Kashmir, and regular clashes along the border generated profound mistrust between the political leadership of each country. As the East Pakistan crisis began, therefore, and in general contextual terms, Islamabad perceived India as the principal threat to its national existence. New Delhi viewed Pakistan as not only a military enemy but also a psychological menace, for a strong and successful Pakistan might attract the loyalties of the still-sizable population of Muslims to the south, thereby destabilizing India. Hence, in 1971, Hindu-dominated India had a vested interest in maintaining a weakened

Muslim-dominated neighbour.<sup>38</sup> The Indian reaction to the East Pakistan crisis, and especially the massive influx of refugees, may be fully understood only when considered in this context.

### **Global Stress in Brief**

As the United States pursued a policy of Cold War containment, India remained officially non-aligned but in receipt of substantial Soviet military aid. By contrast, Pakistan became a key US ally in Asia and benefited from heavy US economic and military investment. When Pakistan used US weapons in the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965, however, Washington stopped military supply. In addition, it reduced its economic aid to Islamabad, although this remained significant. The curtailment of US military supplies caused Pakistan to seek support elsewhere, and it needed to look no further than neighbouring China, which shared a mutual dislike of India, with which it had itself warred in 1962. Islamabad and Peking became allied in Asia.<sup>39</sup> This global context of the crisis is inextricably entwined with the development of the US Cold War relationship with the subcontinent. As such, it is discussed in much greater depth in the following chapter, which considers the background to the US response ([Chapter 1](#)).

### **Framework of the Discussion**

After this introduction, the book is divided into three main parts, spread across six chapters. These are followed by a further chapter, on the interplay between the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom in determining their reactions, and the overall judgments in the Conclusion. [Part 1](#) includes [Chapters 1](#) to [3](#), which consider the formulation of US policy. [Part 2](#), consisting of [Chapter 4](#), investigates the Canadian response, and [Part 3](#), comprising [Chapters 5](#) and [6](#), discusses reaction in the United Kingdom. Each main part adopts the same general analytical framework, the varying lengths of the case studies being a reflection of the complexity of influences on the determination of the relevant power's response rather than any fundamental change in investigative approach. The US discussion is necessarily somewhat longer owing to the need to consider the response by Washington in the light of Nixon and Kissinger's contemporaneous secret initiative to pursue more harmonious relations with Peking. The basic structure for each part is built around discussion of the following: the specific context in which each power determined its response with regard to domestic, bilateral, and international influences; the available knowledge of atrocities and the motivations behind initial government reactions; the nature and extent

of domestic bureaucratic and public dissent; the evolution of policy during the first few months after the clampdown; the availability of alternative options; and a brief consideration of the relevant aftermath.

The individual conclusions with regard to the US, Canadian, and British case studies may be found at the end of [Chapters 3, 4, and 6](#), respectively. The US conclusion pays special attention to the personal influence on policy formulation exerted by Nixon and Kissinger. It goes on to discuss the wide-ranging and sometimes vociferous nature of dissent, even within the bureaucracy itself, and, importantly, the influence or otherwise on the determination of policy of the secret move to secure rapprochement with China. The Canadian conclusion considers particularly the motivations behind the development of Ottawa's four-strand response policy, paying close attention to the impact of Canada's own separatist issue in Quebec. The British conclusion considers the extent to which notably strong public sympathy for the victims of the clampdown influenced policy formulation and the development of London's response, which, though similar to that of Ottawa, bore crucial distinguishing characteristics.

[Chapter 7](#) contemplates the levels of intimacy in the bilateral relations between each pair of the three North Atlantic powers, before tracing the onset of disharmonies later in 1971. It discusses the timing of discord with regard to its impact on South Asian policies and the nature of interplay between the powers in terms of collaborative opportunities both accepted and spurned.

The Conclusion to this study considers the potential options available to the administrations in Washington, Ottawa, and London through combination and coordination of their responses to the crisis in East Pakistan. It analyzes the techniques of obfuscation, diversion, and excuse employed by the three governments to manage adverse political reactions at home, and discusses the impact of government institutional culture based in part on the predilection to protect national interests narrowly defined. Finally, it contrasts the varied policies adopted in the three capitals before explaining the motives and influences that ultimately precipitated divergence and disagreement on South Asia between the United States and its North Atlantic allies.

In responding to the crisis, cooperation between the North Atlantic powers proved limited. In Washington, Nixon and Kissinger exerted great personal sway over the determination of policy and favoured a strategy of appeasement. Importantly, their secret initiative to secure rapprochement with China, which sprang into life only at the end of April, did not drive

their thinking during the vital first month after the clampdown began as Kissinger has previously claimed. In Ottawa, the Canadian government developed a tentative response, unwilling to hazard bilateral ties with Islamabad or draw attention to its own separatist issue in Quebec. In the United Kingdom, considerable public sympathy for the plight of the East Pakistani victims influenced policy only to a limited extent. Nevertheless, London's response, though similar in form to that of Ottawa, in substance demonstrated a greater willingness to coerce Islamabad into ending its oppressive action.

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