



Journal of Arts & Humanities

Volume 08, Issue 05, 2019: 19-31

Article Received: 17-04-2019

Accepted: 26-04-2019

Available Online: 19-05-2019

ISSN: 2167-9045 (Print), 2167-9053 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18533/journal.v8i5.1640>

The U.S. Misunderstanding of India during the 1971 South Asia Crisis

Adhitya Mahesh¹

ABSTRACT

During the 1971 South Asia Crisis, the United States (U.S.) ultimately sided with Pakistan due to President Yahya Khan's creation of a backchannel between the U.S. and China. The objective of the research in this article is to explore the Nixon–Kissinger style diplomacy's framework for analyzing intelligence during this crisis, its effects on the formulation of foreign policy and on Indo–American relations. The cognitive psychological paradigms of Fundamental Attribution Error and Self-Fulfilling Prophecy will be used to underscore the Nixon administration's framework for selecting facts and processing information, enforcing a Pygmalion Effect; the beliefs of the U.S. and India influenced their actions towards each other, reinforcing a cycle of preconceived ideas and contributing to an escalation of tensions during the crisis. Thus, the findings of this article are as follows: A humanitarian crisis required India's intervention in the Pakistani Civil War for regional stability. Due to Pakistan's role in aiding the Nixon administration's opening of relations with China, there was a U.S. tilt towards Pakistan that was based not only off self-interest but also an incorrect assessment of India's intentions which ultimately created a discrepancy between desired policy outcome and result. Entrenched in this tilt was the usage of flawed intelligence, despite human rights' violations and outcry from dissenters of the State Department who held regional expertise. This brought the Indo–American relationship to its nadir.

Keywords: South Asia Crisis, Pygmalion Effect, intelligence, nadir.

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1. Introduction

The early 1970s of the Nixon presidency is a heavily researched period by historians and international relations (I.R.) scholars alike because it features a significant turning point during the Cold War: Rapprochement with China. Hence, Sino–American relations is often seen as paramount in current I.R. discourse dealing with the 1970-1972 period, yet this intellectual space is lacking exhaustive research on U.S. foreign policy with an unexpected adversary–India. This article will focus on the often overlooked American role during the 1971 South Asia Crisis, alternatively known in the region as the Indo-Pakistani

¹ Bachelor of Arts graduate in International Relations, Michigan State University, United States,
Email: maheshad@msu.edu

War of 1971, magnifying the cognitive psychology behind the Nixon–Kissinger style diplomacy to better understand the dominant schema behind leading U.S. policymakers, how they assessed the situation, and more importantly, how they misunderstood the crisis. To that end, I have selected about twenty recently declassified White House files which include, but are not limited to, conversations between the President and his advisors, dissenters, and the leaders of West and East Pakistan. In my analysis, I aim to provide an in-depth response to this primary research question: How did the Nixon administration analyze intelligence in its formulation of policy towards South Asia surrounding the crisis and what were the effects?

To guide my analysis, the cognitive psychological approach of I.R. will be consulted to explore the role of a nation's foreign policy being a reflection of not the realities of the external world, but an image in the minds of those who control foreign policy (George, 1969, p. 191). A leading discipline that bridges the gap between academia and policymaking, the approach's efficacy specific to this case-study highlights the core schema of the Nixon administration, presupposing an image of India as a Soviet Scrooge and wanting to destroy Pakistan (Burr, 2005). These mistaken images of India underscore Nixon and Kissinger's methodology in selecting facts and processing information to feed their preconceived notions of the countries in South Asia. Thus, the theories of Fundamental Attribution Error and Self-Fulfilling Prophecy are used to explore the dimensions of these images in Nixon and Kissinger's cognitive psychology, including its effects on intelligence analysis. In other words, images in the schema effectuate a Pygmalion Effect because "the self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true" (Merton, 1948, p. 195). These psychological rigidities lead to a misunderstanding of India's intentions and incorrectly aligning with Pakistan based on flawed intelligence, giving a cold shoulder to human rights' violations and outcry from dissenters of the State Department who held regional expertise.

Rooted in this cognitive psychology is an image that fails to capture the importance of South Asia's historical memory. A misunderstanding of India stems from a pervasive assumption of the applicability of American exceptionalism to the developing world and a miscalculation of its national security aims amidst a security dilemma. Pillar (2016) observes the role of not only U.S. policymakers, but mainstream public opinion's failure to recognize the defensive realist lens used by other countries. This failure is due to a unique geographic experience isolated from a rival power on its border (Pillar, 2016, p.19). If the U.S. is to formulate more credible policy in the developing world, understanding the errors in the approach to this crisis can be extrapolated to broader patterns of I.R. to avoid mistakes in the future.

My primary methodological device is interdisciplinary, employing the intersections of history, cognitive psychology, and I.R. to a comparison of the different historical memories that serve as a backdrop to the crisis and communications between the first and second concentric circles of U.S. foreign policymaking; advisors to the President and middle level bureaucrats of the State Department, respectively. These conversations reveal the intelligence selection and analysis process, mostly through memorandums.

A combination of these conversations and subsequent reflections prove useful for this article's findings. The National Security Advisor to President Nixon later recounts and emphasizes the role balance of power plays in the turning points of the Nixon presidency (Kissinger, 1994, p. 41). In turn, balance of power politics becomes paramount in analyzing the Cold War events surrounding the crisis, as traditional frameworks do not suffice. For example, Nixon's desire to open relations with China is at odds with the paradigm of democratic peace theory because tensions between U.S. and India, the two largest democracies, were at a breaking point. Geopolitics were a major factor because India wanted additional military support from a geographically close ally amidst odds with Pakistan and China, and with lack of American support, the Soviet Union was the only country willing to offer naval support. Ultimately, the influx of Bengali Muslim refugees from East Pakistan as a result of a humanitarian crisis required India's intervention in the Pakistani Civil War for regional stability. Due to Pakistan's role in providing a channel between the U.S. and China, there was an American tilt towards Pakistan that was based not only off selfish motives, but also an incorrect assessment of India's intentions which created a discrepancy between desired policy outcome and result, bringing the Indo-U.S. relationship to its nadir.

The findings of this article's contribution to historical studies are threefold: Offering new analysis to recently declassified White House files, emphasizing the role of balance of power politics compared

to traditional Cold War paradigms, and applying the cognitive psychological approach to a previously unused historical case-study. Moreover, there is currently no literature on the application of this case-study to credible policy with the developing world as whole.

The rest of this article enjoys the following structure: A literature review categorizing the most important normative arguments into their respective schools of thought, antecedents to the crisis, an in-depth analysis of conversations and intelligence reports, and then the policy implications.

2. Literature review

Literature on the topic is not only severely constrained due to only recent declassifications (early 2000s) of the Nixon administration documents, but also a lack of interest. A research gap exists in the current historical discourse regarding the intelligence framework of the Nixon administration and its relation to broader patterns of I.R. in undermining U.S. credibility abroad. However, there are some notable scholars that have offered insights that prove useful to my research. This section will highlight the debates in academia regarding the U.S. policy decisions during this crisis, seen primarily through two schools of thought: The U.S. role being justified and not being justified. This article offers a new paradigm of modifying the second school of thought, arguing that the U.S. role in the crisis was not justified but that certain reservations against India were probably valid due to their desire to strengthen their status as a regional power.

A primary sourcebook published by scholar Robert Jackson intervenes on the side of justifying the U.S. role during the crisis. Secondary source scholarship reveals views that are either supportive of the U.S. role in the crisis or too critical of the U.S.' view towards India, notably by academics Gary R. Hess and John Lewis Gaddis. An interesting discovery from existing literature on the topic is that prior to the declassification of White House files, sources were overall supportive of the U.S. role in the crisis, albeit to different extents. However, as more documents of conversations, telegrams, etc. were declassified to the public, secondary sources became deeply critical of the Nixon–Kissinger style diplomacy in 1971.

2.1 1st school: U.S. role in South Asia crisis of 1971 was justified

Henry Kissinger justified the U.S.' tilt towards Pakistan due to his strong belief in the Realist Tradition of international relations. Emulating Theodore Roosevelt in his arguments, Kissinger identified national interest with balance of power politics, believing that rapprochement with China is the more important policy the U.S. should pursue during the 1970s. His praise of President Nixon and the balance of power paradigm is evident in Chapter 2 of his book *Diplomacy* where he explains that “with [Theodore] Roosevelt holding such European-style views, it was not surprising that he approached the global balance of power with a sophistication matched by no other American president and approached only by Richard Nixon” (Kissinger, 1994, p. 41).

Robert Jackson in his book *South Asian Crisis: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh: A Political and Historical Analysis of the 1971 War*, makes a more moderate argument in that there were some shortcomings of U.S. foreign policy during this crisis, notably the discrepancy between desired result and real outcome. However, he similarly uses a realist lens to analyze the conflict, believing there were necessary consequences for American foreign relations with India as a result of the greater goal of opening relations with China, which deserved higher priority.

2.2 2nd school: U.S. role in South Asia crisis of 1971 was not justified

Existing secondary source literature on the topic that has been published after 2003 offers in-depth analysis of some of the recently declassified Nixon administration documents. Gary R. Hess, a Distinguished Research Professor of History at Bowling Green State University, articulates a strong thesis criticizing Nixon's role in the crisis, where he believes that:

The recorded Oval Office and telephone conversations between President Richard Nixon and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger—which constitute the most revealing documents in this volume—underscore that behind the tilt were deep personal antagonisms toward India and respect for Pakistan based on simplistic impressions of Indians as weak and cunning and of Pakistanis as masculine and trustworthy, indifference to the bloodshed inflicted by the Pakistani army on the Bengalis, and the insistence on interpreting the crisis within the framework of a global geopolitical structure which necessitated supporting Pakistan and restraining India. Grand strategy—Pakistan's role in the U.S. opening to China, the

anticipated thaw in Sino-American relations, and the closer ties between India and the Soviet Union—determined U.S. diplomacy (Hess, 2007, p. 959).

Nixon's Grand Strategy is the cornerstone of his administration, and although it has clear successes with its opening of relations with China, it clouded their judgment in the year prior to rapprochement. Hess offers an insightful counter to using realism in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy, employed by Kissinger and Jackson.

John Lewis Gaddis, a scholar of Nixon–Kissinger style diplomacy, writes in his book *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War* how the global strategy of balance of power politics and attempts at opening relations with China “deadened sensitivity to the distinctive contexts within which [the crisis] had developed” (p. 331). He also goes into a deep analysis of the first concentric circle of U.S. policymaking and how “issues would be seen in terms of personalities as well as interests” (Gaddis, 2005, p.331). It is an overall effective historical analysis from a comparative perspective, pointing out the similarities and differences between Nixon and his predecessors.

3. Antecedents to the crisis

3.1 Influence of different historical experiences on foreign policymaking

The U.S. and India offer vastly contrasting historical experiences that affect their rationales during the crisis. Although the 1971 Crisis was amidst the Cold War, ideologies of this period played a minimal role in shaping the U.S. view towards India. With India being the world's largest democracy, and the U.S. desire to open relations with China, paradigms of containing communism and democratic peace theory fall short. Although the Indo–Soviet security alliance, which was signed in August of 1971, did add fuel to the fire, ultimately a misguided analysis of the largest democracy partially removed from Cold War events is what makes this crisis so unique. A necessary starting point to analyze the different national interests of the U.S. and India is understanding their different historical memories.

India and the U.S. are very different with regards to the exploitation they have faced and their respective ages. India's history of independence has been volatile, being conquered during various points in history, with British colonialism being the most recent in India's historical memory. India only achieved true independence on August 15, 1947. The U.S., turning 243 this year, is much younger than India whose history dates back to 5,000 B.C.E., the earliest recorded society being the Indus Valley civilization. Prior to the establishment of the British Raj in 1858, the Mughal Empire existed on the Indian subcontinent which has contributed to religious tensions that exist not only between Indian Hindus and Muslims, but also India's northwestern neighbor, Pakistan. The partition of India and Pakistan is important to understand their animosity towards each other during the South Asia Crisis.

The U.S. has not faced foreign invasion and rule as India has, which leads to a fundamental miscomprehension of the scope of tensions unique to South Asia. Two nation theory was utilized by South Asian policymakers in 1947 to partition the Indian sub-continent into a Muslim majority who would live in Pakistan and a secular India, albeit containing a Hindu majority. Two nation theory is based upon the belief that Hindus and Muslims are fundamentally different in every aspect, which necessitates the creation of a safe haven for Muslims so that they can exist peacefully in their own country. Mahatma Gandhi, alongside his Muslim allies, agreed that partition was the best solution to prevent future conflict. With an optimistic hope of achieving stability in South Asia, the result was far from it. Far from establishing peace, India and Pakistan have fought four wars up until today, the third being the topic of this analysis. West and East Pakistan was created after independence from Britain in 1947, with 1,000 miles of the sub-continent of India separating the two. With political power concentrated in West Pakistan, East Pakistan longed for independence, with its breaking point during this crisis, the third Indo-Pakistani War. The Bengali desire for an independent Bangladesh from West Pakistan was inevitable “by [Pakistani and Bengali] differences of culture and languages [which] were deepened first by a feeling of political grievance on the part of the Bengalis, and then by the development among them of a sense of social and economic deprivation relative to the West Wing” (Jackson, 1975, p. 147). President Nixon and Henry Kissinger lacked a comprehensive understanding of the historical time and space of South Asia, ignoring the fact that India and Pakistan had not planned on conquering each other during this crisis. This led to fatal flaws in their unwarranted presumptions that India intended to invade West Pakistan in 1971.

American exceptionalism, with its many facets, including unique historical and geographic experiences, has often clouded their judgment in assessing regional crises around the world. U.S. history has been marked by its geographic isolation in which “they had no ‘conquest to dread’. For most of the nation’s history, this physical separation has been a prime determinant of its security and one of the biggest differences from other countries’ security situations” (Pillar, 2016, p. 19). The U.S. has never held fear of being conquered by an enemy on their border and has mostly been on the offensive. This is evident in their offensive war against Mexico in 1846 and the fact that they have never faced a threat from their other neighbor, Canada, other than from Canada’s colonial ruler at the time, Britain. The U.S. cannot fathom a powerful rival power on its border and is mostly immune to the forces of a security dilemma which historically has often resulted from rival powers whom share a border. This contributes to an American sense of “insensitivity to the fears of others” (Pillar, 2016, p. 34). Not only U.S. foreign policymakers, but also the American public do not fundamentally comprehend the fear other nations hold when there is a relatively equal rival power-sharing its border. This leads to miscalculations of other countries, thinking that they are on the offensive when in reality they are most often on the defensive. This insensitivity stems directly from geographic experience where “the greatest perception-shaping consequence of the geographically separate and thus relatively secure U.S. situation is Americans’ difficulty in appreciating the circumstances of other countries not similarly blessed” (Pillar, 2016, p. 34). U.S. time and space are fundamental pillars of American exceptionalism that clouds its judgment of other countries, and the South Asian Crisis of 1971 is an excellent case-study that highlights how U.S. history and geography clouds its judgment on other countries.

India and Pakistan are prime examples of a security dilemma existing since its inception where the military confrontations were border disputes not intended to dismember the other country. U.S. geography clouded American foreign policymakers’ thinking regarding the South Asia Crisis, and “American failure in understanding takes the form... of being insensitive to the concerns that underlie the other country’s policies” (Pillar, 2016, p. 35). Ultimately, the U.S. misjudged India’s action in East Pakistan as wanting to invade and conquer West Pakistan, when in reality India was trying to achieve regional stability after the flooding of 10 million Bengali refugees on its northeastern border. Understanding American and India’s unique geographic and historical experiences provides insights as to how easy it is for U.S. foreign policymakers to mischaracterize another country’s underlying motives when the U.S. has never faced a conflict like the 1971 Crisis.

It is important to note that New Delhi aimed at making capital out of the dramatic humanitarian crisis (Cordera, 2014, p. 45). So, India may have wished to regain a regional power status after a devastating loss to China in the 1962 Sino-Indian War. However, the U.S. ignored the gravity of the security dilemma that has existed for decades on the South Asian subcontinent and presupposed an image of India as attacking a Chinese ally without careful attention to the complexities of the situation. This image was then used to incorrectly perceive India as attempting to conquer Pakistan.

3.2 Pakistani channel to China

Pakistan assisting the U.S. in finding a connection to China developed a sense of friendliness and personal affection between Nixon and Pakistan’s President Yahya Khan. Nixon had been interested in communicating with China since the beginning of his presidency, but during the initial years, it was not completely successful. In the fall of 1970, Nixon ordered Kissinger to renew the effort and find back channels to Peking. In October of 1970, Kissinger saw a potential opportunity in Pakistan because Yahya Khan had helped the U.S. communicate with China in 1969 amidst the Sino-Soviet split, so Yahya Khan was invited to visit the U.S. A declassified memorandum into the conversation reveals that Yahya was in the Oval Office on the 25th anniversary of the U.N., underscoring high amicability and personal affection between the two leaders. Yahya Khan reflects on his country’s relationship with the U.S. over the years, how it began with being “surrounded by enemies [and then] we became friends. We are no longer surrounded by enemies and we still remain friends. We are a sentimental people and we will never do anything to embarrass you and I will try to be helpful to you on our visit to Moscow” (“Meeting between the President and Pakistan President Yahya,” 1970, p. 1). President Yahya took notice that despite advice against military assistance to Pakistan, and since Nixon continued to do so anyways, he assured Nixon that his country will establish a back channel to Peking. This memorandum reveals that the back channel

through Pakistan was more successful than Kissinger's attempts of going through Romania and French politician Jean Sainteny, who had connections with the Chinese embassy in Paris ("Meeting between the President and Pakistan President Yahya," 1970, p. 2). Yahya communicated with Nixon that "the Chinese had replied whether this meant that the United States was thinking of a hotline to Peking similar to the one that existed in Moscow. [Nixon] said, no, that wasn't what he meant; he was willing to send ambassadors" ("Meeting between the President and Pakistan President Yahya," 1970, p. 2). A secret channel through Pakistan proved to yield fruitful results and responses from Peking, and when Nixon realized this, not only did the U.S. tilt towards Pakistan grow even further, but a deep personal connection was reaffirmed that put the two countries on personal terms, proving that Nixon's view towards the South Asian region sprouted long before the crisis actually sparked.

The success of the Pakistani channel quickly came to fruition in December of 1970, several months before the South Asian Crisis of 1971. A memorandum written by Kissinger and addressed to President Nixon, titled "Chinese Communist Initiative" includes a text of exchange between President Yahya and Prime Minister Chou En-Lai. Chou En-Lai addresses the fact that his response to President Yahya, and subsequently to the U.S., represents an official response from Chairman Mao and Vice Chairman Lin Biao ("Kissinger to Nixon," 1970, p. 1). The memorandum explains how the U.S. is willing to discuss the issue of Taiwan and U.S. military presence on the island. Attempting to assure China that the U.S. is committed to the issue in Taiwan, Kissinger writes that in talks through Yahya, "with respect to the U.S. military presence in Taiwan, however, [China] should know that the policy of the United States government is to reduce progressively its military presence in the region of East Asia and the Pacific as tensions in this region diminished" ("Kissinger to Nixon," 1970, p. 2). Prime Minister Chou En-Lai's response was delivered in a timelier fashion than before, with a response within three days, signaling that China was becoming much more receptive to U.S. dialogue. Important in the detailed response from En-Lai to the U.S. was their symmetric admiration of Pakistan, calling them a great friend and saying that they "thank the President of Pakistan... China has always been willing and has always tried to negotiate by peaceful means" ("Kissinger to Nixon," 1970, p. 4). Chou En-Lai extended a friendly repertoire through Pakistan, emphasizing that the Pakistani channel was a huge success for the U.S. because he noted that "the United States knows that Pakistan is a great friend of China and therefore we attach importance to the message" ("Kissinger to Nixon," 1970, p. 4). These documents reveal that not only was the Pakistani Channel a significant step in the right direction for a major goal in the Nixon administration's foreign policy, but that China was similarly praiseworthy of President Yahya's role.

This emphasized the importance of keeping positive relations with a close China ally. Seen as a huge diplomatic success in the inner circle of the Nixon administration, the significant role Yahya played in the initial stages of opening relations with China would remain in the thought processes of Nixon and Kissinger for the months leading up to the crisis and during it. Ultimately, this Pakistani Channel paved the way for a strong U.S. tilt towards Pakistan during the South Asian Crisis of 1971.

4. Flawed rationale of U.S. foreign policymaking during the crisis

The Nixon administration believed that reaching rapprochement with Peking through Islamabad was the global strategy that takes utmost precedence over any other issue, which ultimately clouded their judgment during the South Asian Crisis of 1971. Balance of power was a predominant paradigm in Kissinger's mind in advising policy options for President Nixon, and this was emulated through their policy of a Grand Strategy. Although rapprochement with China has yielded many benefits for both the U.S. and China, its central guiding philosophy caused cynicisms in the psychology of Nixon and Kissinger which ultimately contributed to a flawed rationale in U.S. foreign policymaking during the crisis. Recently declassified documents on George Washington University National Security Archives reveal recorded conversations between Kissinger and Nixon, the U.S. and Pakistan, India, and more importantly, the policy options presented by Kissinger and Secretary of State William Rogers. President Nixon's failure to acknowledge Rogers' devil's advocate views offer lessons for the future of U.S. foreign policymaking.

The U.S. view towards the South Asian Crisis of 1971 can be characterized as identifying national interest parallel to that of China's. Nixon's utmost priority in Asia, as seen through his actions, was not bringing the U.S. into conflict with vital Chinese interests. The Nixon administration's adherence towards balance of power stems from his desire "of integrating Communist China into the international system... [where] there is also a less explicit American concern for the achievement of a balanced relationship with

China, such that the United States can improve its own balance-of-power position in relation to the Soviet Union” (Jackson, 1975, p. 156). When Nixon viewed the South Asia Crisis, “considerations of world order [merged] into considerations of strategic balance: and in neither respect would it be appropriate for the United States to be much influenced by... the rights and wrongs of their local disputes” (Jackson, 1975, p. 156). As a result, Nixon’s view was to place a higher value on the maintenance of Pakistan’s sovereignty than upon self-determination in East Bengal, even when it seemed inevitable as the crisis developed further. This global strategy of balance of power ultimately caused Nixon to draw a parallel of U.S. national interests with that of China’s and Pakistan’s, and despite the lack of Chinese intervention in the crisis, the U.S. fundamentally went perpendicular to India’s national interests, contributing to their foreign relations reaching its nadir.

The Realist Tradition offers an effective unit of analysis to peek into the thought processes of President Nixon and Kissinger. Kissinger emulated Theodore Roosevelt’s adherence to realism where Roosevelt “identified national interest so comprehensively with the balance of power” (Kissinger, 1994, p. 39). Risking their policy of détente with the Soviet Union as a means of improving their own balance of power position with respect to the Soviet Union, Kissinger justified “intervention to ‘prevent the West Pakistani army from being destroyed. And secondly to retain our Chinese arm. And thirdly, to prevent a complete collapse of the world’s psychological balance of power” (Burr, 2005, p. 1). Kissinger believed that the balance of power in Asia would be left unchecked if Pakistan fell, “which will be produced if a combination of the Soviet Union and the Soviet armed client state can tackle [Pakistan] without anybody doing anything” (Burr, 2005, p. 1). As a result, Kissinger defined American national interest completely in terms of this global strategy of defending a check against India and the Soviet Union. While this U.S. policy could have jeopardized the developing détente with Moscow, Kissinger suggested to Nixon that “your card [is] your willingness to jeopardize it” (Burr, 2005, p. 1). Rapprochement with China and subsequently supporting a Chinese ally took precedence over détente with the Soviet Union, at least during the crisis.

This idea of protecting a Chinese ally was a clear motivating factor in the minds of key U.S. foreign policy decision-makers, and this was evident even in Kissinger’s policy prescriptions offered to President Nixon during the initial months of the crisis. In a declassified memorandum titled to the President, Kissinger offered three policy options to Kissinger: the first being an unqualified backing for West Pakistan, the second being neutrality which in effect leans towards East Pakistan, and the third being an effort to help Yahya achieve a negotiated settlement (“Policy Options Towards Pakistan,” 1971, p. 6). Kissinger argued personally for the third option, believing that it “would have the advantage of making the most of the relationship with Yahya while engaging in a serious effort to move the situation towards conditions less damaging to U.S. and Pakistani interests” (“Policy Options Towards Pakistan,” 1971, p. 5). Although, the real policy decision Nixon pursues is a nexus between the first and third policy option, these early thoughts in Kissinger’s mind reveal that he still exercised caution before throwing the U.S. support fully behind Yahya, but still wanted to have a tilt towards West Pakistan and preserve the U.S. friendly relationship with Pakistan.

Due to the deep personal connection between Nixon and Yahya, in order to maintain their global strategy of balance of power, the U.S. downplayed human rights violations existing in East Pakistan. Another recently declassified memorandum of a conversation between President Nixon and M. M. Ahmad, the economic advisor to Yahya Khan, detailed that despite reports of a genocide at the hands of Yahya’s military in East Pakistan, President Nixon said that “he could understand the anguish of the decisions which he had to make” (“Memcon The President,” 1971, p. 1). Stability and a unified Pakistan was of utmost priority in Nixon’s mind, and he wanted to ensure that his Pakistani channel would stay secure. Above all, since he saw Yahya as a friend, he did not want to turn his back on someone who was helping him open relations with China. This ultimately caused the President to turn a blind eye towards human suffering despite India’s calls for international support and discussions in the United Nations.

Allowing their global strategy of balance of power to be the predominant paradigm in determining a tilt towards Pakistan during the crisis, it developed schema in lead U.S. foreign policy decision-makers about the fundamental nature of India which was different from previous administrations. Nixon’s policy towards South Asia is different from the previous Johnson administration’s decision to be neutral during the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War, primarily because Nixon had a completely different strategic interest with respect to Asia. This created a fundamental image of India

as “bastards anyways [because] they are starting a war there” (Burr, 2005, p. 1). This emphasized a schema of key U.S. foreign policy decision-makers that would impact their process of intelligence selection and analysis.

Theory of Fundamental Attribution Error is a crucial paradigm to underscore how the Nixon administration went awry in their process of intelligence selection. Nixon was presented with information, notably the “Blood Telegram” and other reports from Consul General Archer Blood in the US Embassy in Dacca and the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.). The telegram outlined a dissent of the U.S. tilt towards Pakistan and provided intelligence as to the extent of the humanitarian crisis in East Pakistan and how those who hold expertise in South Asia viewed the tilt towards Pakistan. It criticized how the U.S. failed to condemn Yahya’s atrocities in East Pakistan, the suppression of democracy, and how the tilt serves “neither our moral interests broadly defined nor our national interests narrowly defined” (“Blood Telegram,” 1971). Moreover, there was another significant intelligence report from Archer Blood which detailed in even more excruciating detail than the “Blood Telegram” how human rights violations were being committed at colleges, where “a major atrocity recounted to him took place at Kokeya girls’ hall, where [the] building was set ablaze and girls machine gunned as they fled the building” (“U.S. Consulate (Dacca) Cable,” 1971, p. 2). A calculated attack by the West Pakistani military, it was “aimed at eliminating female student leadership... estimated 1,000 persons, mostly students, but including faculty members resident in dorms, killed” (“U.S. Consulate (Dacca) Cable,” 1971, p. 2). However, Nixon and Kissinger’s fundamental image of India as a warmonger impacted their selection and analysis of intelligence presented to them, causing them to ignore these humanitarian reports of casualty counts from Americans in East Pakistan. The gravest mistake made by Nixon and Kissinger was their reliance on a controversial C.I.A. report which allegedly outlined Prime Minister Gandhi’s war aims:

A. Bangladesh is liberated; B. The southern area of Azad Kashmir is liberated; ([less than 1 line of source text not declassified] comment: This encompasses the area west of the 1965 cease-fire line between Chhamb and Punch.); C. Pakistani armored and air force strength are destroyed so that Pakistan will never again be in a position to plan another invasion of India (“Central Intelligence Agency Intelligence Information Cable,” n.d.).

Relying on this faulty C.I.A. report and ignoring other pieces of key intelligence exemplified attribution biases and contributed to a lack of a nuanced discussion on policy prescriptions. Kissinger and Nixon interpreted this controversial report as fear of dismemberment of Pakistan, despite no verification of this intelligence. In a meeting on December 8, 1971, between Kissinger, Nixon, and Attorney General Mitchell, who met in the Old Executive Office Building in the afternoon, Kissinger immediately made his concerns clear to the President. He referred to the C.I.A. report as proof that “the Indian plan is now clear. They are going to move their forces from East Pakistan to the west. They will then smash the Pakistan land forces and air forces” (“Editorial Note,” n.d.). Although the C.I.A. report was never corroborated or open to significant debate, point A of the C.I.A. report is probably true because it is later evident during the course of the crisis that India does help Bangladesh achieve independence. Also, due to previous wars fought between Pakistan and India over Kashmir, point B of the C.I.A. report, India’s claim to the southern area of Azad Kashmir, might have some truth to it. However, point C of the C.I.A. report is what is unlikely to be true because Pakistan made the first military attack against India, forcing India to retaliate as a defensive measure (Bass, 2015, p. 246). This indicates minimalist offensive desires, especially since Gandhi explicitly declared a desire for “freedom and basic human rights in Bangla Dosh” (Bass, 2015, p. 246). It is clear that during the course of Kissinger’s analysis of this report, he failed to consider the lack of verification of the truth of the material.

Kissinger went on during the meeting to paint India as a “Soviet Scrooge” where this dismemberment of Pakistan “would have been achieved by Soviet support, Soviet arms, and Indian military force. Kissinger warned that ‘the impact of this on many countries threatened by the Soviet Union’ would be serious” (“Editorial Note,” n.d.). Continuing to speculate off of faulty intelligence, Kissinger argued that “if the crisis resulted in the complete dismemberment of Pakistan, [he] worried that China might conclude that the United States was ‘just too weak’ to have prevented the humiliation of an ally. [He] felt that the Chinese would then look to other options ‘to break their encirclement’” (“Editorial Note,” n.d.). Circling back to the Grand Strategy, Kissinger’s incorrect attribution of India, coupled with the fear he held of faltering relations with China, both contributed to Kissinger and Nixon’s reliance on the controversial C.I.A. report.

Even despite an important ally disagreeing with American assessments' of India's war aims, the U.S. unilaterally believed that Gandhi intended on invading West Pakistan. Britain disagreed with Nixon's assessment of India's intentions, seen "with the British disputing American suggestions that India had planned to invade West Pakistan" (Gavshon, 1971, p. 20). Britain tried to rectify the misconceived notions the U.S. held, to little avail. U.S. authorities told their British counterparts that "what they regarded as hard information came to them indicating the Indians intended to go beyond the immediate objective of resolving the East Bengal that had thrust nearly 10 million refugees on their soil" (Gavshon, 1971, p. 20). The fact that a U.S.' ally disagreed with the intelligence and assessment of India's foreign policy aims should have indicated a red flag to Nixon and Kissinger, but this did not signal them to readjust their tilt.

Theory of Self-Fulfilling Prophecy explains a cognitive psychological phenomenon, the Pygmalion Effect that is prevalent in humans. Foreign policymakers are not immune to these psychological forces, and it is clearly in play during the Nixon administration's decision to threaten the world's largest democracy with a nuclear submarine. The U.S. imagined India as an enemy trying to destroy Pakistan's armed forces. As seen by Nixon and Kissinger's intelligence selection and analysis process in shaping their foreign policy, they feared India's role in ruining their chances at opening relations with China. When it was clear that the Indian military was defeating Pakistan, Nixon feared that Pakistan would be crushed, which motivated him to threaten India. So, the U.S. dispatched the nuclear carrier U.S.S. Enterprise to the Bay of Bengal despite domestic criticism. In a memorandum on the National Security Council for General Haig, preparing for a potential conflict with India, "Kissinger was advised that General Ryan, the acting Chairman, might bring up a CINCPAC proposal to ready a WESTPAC attack carrier task group for Indian Ocean operations to dissuade third party involvement" ("Memorandum for General Haig," 1971, p. 1). This attack carrier is known as U.S.S. Enterprise which possessed nuclear capabilities, but was sent under the guise of potentially offering evacuation to refugees. This created a controversy in South Asia over the use of the deployment of the nuclear carrier because it appeared to be a direct threat to India ("Department of State, Situation Report #44", 1971, p. 3). The dispatch of the U.S.S. Enterprise enforced a Pygmalion Effect, where U.S. action in deploying the nuclear carrier impacted India's beliefs of the U.S. directly threatening them, which caused India to become closer to the Soviet Union, reinforcing the U.S. belief that India is a Soviet Scrooge, and ultimately justifying the schemata of Nixon and Kissinger that the decision to employ the nuclear carrier was a correct foreign policy decision.

The U.S. shaped a foreign policy decision based on faulty intelligence and a flawed rationale that ultimately brought their relations with India to its nadir when Nixon decided to assist the Pakistan military indirectly. This was done through a supply of military aircraft to Pakistan through Jordan and Iran illegally, despite Congress declaring it illegal for them to do so and public rhetoric claiming the U.S. had suspended all military assistance to Pakistan after reports of genocide. Congress had passed legislation explicitly prohibiting the U.S. "from authorizing any third country, including Jordan, from transferring U.S.-origin military equipment to either India or Pakistan" ("National Security Council Memorandum," 1971). However, Kissinger ignored this and privately made deals with Iran and Jordan to supply aircraft to Pakistan. This was made evident from a cable transmission from the U.S. embassy in Tehran, where they confirmed to the White House that the embassy "has been informed by reliable American businessman with connections at Tehran airport that three F-5A fighter aircraft with Pakistani markings and piloted by Pak pilots [were] transported to Pakistan on December 26" ("United States Embassy (Tehran)," 1971). The cable telegram continued to prove that Pakistan themselves were able to collaborate that they received military assistance from the U.S., in that "aircrafts were noted by several employees including Pakistani who spoke with one Pak pilot and reported pilot indicated aircraft had come from [the] United States" (United States Embassy (Tehran)," 1971). The Nixon administration clearly violated U.S. law when supplying Pakistan with aircraft through other countries, and these confirmations from the Tehran embassy prove that the U.S. were fully aware of their actions.

In a recorded telephone conversation between Kissinger and Nixon, Kissinger informed the President that Pakistan had made an urgent appeal, claiming his military supplies had been cut off ("White House, Telephone Conversations," 1972). He then suggests that the U.S. should help through Iran, and Nixon appears very receptive to this idea. These telephone conversations are illuminating because they highlight the fundamental attribution error of India made by Kissinger. He believes that it is necessary to give aid via Iran and Jordan in order to prevent Pakistan from being paralyzed, thinking that "India will occupy all of Pakistan... India will push the Moslems into a much narrow area than they

already have” (“White House, Telephone Conversations,” 1972). However, there was no evidence that India was going the push West Pakistan further, and Nixon was completely ignoring the actions of Pakistan, presuming without justification that India would inevitably take worse actions. Even in trying to sell to the American public the rationale for U.S. policy, Nixon wanted it to appear as if the Indians were against American national interests, ordering Kissinger to work on White House public relations, because “upon [Nixon] studying these reports on Pakistan- the main thing that needs to be done is the public relations side of it. As far as the White House, we are weaker than we should be. [He wants] it to be a necessity to get Scali turned loose... and blame India” (“White House, Telephone Conversations,” 1972). These telephone conversations show exactly how Nixon analyzed and discussed intelligence firsthand, instead of only Kissinger advising the President.

When Kissinger met with Ahmad he assured him that the “President has a high regard for President Yahya and a feeling of personal affection. The last thing one does in this situation is to take advantage of a friend in need. [Kissinger] said that we in this building have resisted efforts to do just that” (“Memorandum of Conversation (Memcon),” 1971, p. 3). This feeling of personal affection is nothing new in the Nixon-Yahya relationship, but the fact that Kissinger explicitly states that him and Nixon are resisting efforts opposite to the policy options him and Nixon are considering underscores their blatant desire to ignore devil’s advocate viewpoints, accentuated by the fact that when “the President then came back to the question of the critics who wanted the U.S. to have some policy other than supporting the present government of Pakistan... He implied that he did not see any alternative to working with the present government” (“Memcon The President, M. M. Ahmad,” 1971, p.3).

There were four notable devils’ advocates who offered advice to President Nixon but were ignored: Secretary of State William Rogers, New Delhi Ambassador Kenneth Keating, Dacca Ambassador Archer Blood, and U.N. Ambassador George H.W. Bush. The first concentric circle of U.S. foreign policymaking played the dominant role in formulating policy during the crisis, evident through a distinct Nixon-Kissinger style diplomacy. Due to Rogers’ viewpoint and his employees in Dacca and New Delhi holding cynical views of Pakistan, a “concentrated decision making marginalized Secretary of State William Rogers, and he never seriously challenged [the] Nixon-Kissinger strategy” (Hess, 2007, p. 961). Rogers disagreed with Kissinger’s cynical views towards India and him ignoring the suppression of democracy by West Pakistan and genocide. Despite never truly challenging the President due to fear of being replaced, his loyalty towards State Department experts in the region was evident when “Kissinger observed that the Department of the Treasury under Secretary Connally had moved quickly to put economic pressure on India, but he felt that the Department of State, reflecting Secretary Rogers’ instincts, had been slow to implement instructions to do so” (“Editorial Note,” n.d.). Throughout the crisis Rogers was apprehensive of faltering relations with India because when “Kissinger was also discussing suspending economic assistance to India... Rogers was concerned. The Secretary felt that such a move could lead to a lasting rupture in relations between the U.S. and India” (“Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in India,” 1971). It was clear that Rogers dissented from the Nixon-Kissinger style diplomacy, but it was unfortunate that he was not provided an effective platform to raise his concern, and could only resort to slowing down the Nixon orders in the State Department.

Kenneth Keating, ambassador to New Delhi and more knowledgeable of the Indian national character, resigned due to his dissenting opinion being ignored by the Nixon administration. Keating had been a critic of Nixon’s tilt towards Pakistan, believing that Nixon did not understand India’s foreign policy intentions, and Keating ultimately “wanted America to take a neutral position in respect, to the war, while the Nixon Administration supported the Pakistanis. It was shortly after this disagreement on Aug. 18 that Mr. Keating resigned his post as ambassador to New Delhi and returned home” (Andelman, 1972). Although there is no evidence that indicates he was forced to resign, this resignation proves that another devil’s advocate was lost in the Nixon administration, further consolidating the viewpoints.

Archer Blood, known for his infamous “Blood Telegram” which was mistakenly classified as low priority after its initial release, was quickly spread around government bureaucracies that underscored the blind eye U.S. held towards atrocities committed by West Pakistan. Perhaps the worst treatment towards a devil’s advocate, the Nixon administration relocated him outside of his post in Dacca due to “Blood’s role in the transmission of this cable” (Gandhi, 2002). With a strong devil’s advocate known for his infamous dissenting telegrams, being guaranteed job security may have ensured more receptiveness to devil’s advocate views.

George H.W. Bush and his disagreements with Kissinger are evident in his ambivalence towards Kissinger's December 10, 1971 meeting with the Chinese delegation. Bush was skeptical about drawing a parallel between American national interest and Chinese national interest, and was concerned about Kissinger saying "we will support you in any resolution you propose" himself thinking "that is going far indeed, it's going too far. In my view we would be well to keep a fairly low profile... it appears to me we might be moving in close cahoots with China or even on our own into more of a public position than I would like to see or is necessary for us" ("Event Summary by George H.W. Bush," 1971, p. 6). Bush disagreed with identifying American national interest with that of the Chinese and their ally, Pakistan, but due to his minimal role in the Nixon administration, he could not offer a strong devil's advocate voice.

The South Asian Crisis is another habitual mistake in the history of U.S. foreign policymaking seen in the discrepancy between American policy desire and the real outcome. The U.S. desired a policy outcome where "support for Pakistan's position conferred influence in Islamabad that it was hoped could be used to encourage progress towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis in East Bengal and to restrain Pakistan from provocative actions against India" (Jackson, 1975, p. 157). The U.S. went in with the hope that this tilt towards Pakistan would help progress towards a peaceful resolution to the crisis and to restrain Pakistan from attacking India, while maintaining peace and credibility in the region as a superpower, especially amidst a lack of U.N. coordinated action during the crisis. Also, from the paradigm of balance of power, the U.S. hoped that both wings of Pakistan would remain united, and prove to China that the U.S. would be willing to support its allies, hoping to expedite the process of rapprochement. There was a discrepancy between the desired outcome and real outcome, evident by the fact that in the name of upholding global balance of power, U.S. lost credibility in both India and Pakistan. India began to resent the U.S. for intimidating a democracy, especially after the U.S. chose to dispatch the nuclear carrier U.S.S. Enterprise in the Bay of Bengal. Similarly, the U.S. lost credibility in Pakistan, believing the U.S. did not do enough to help Pakistan, causing them to lose the war. The South Asian Crisis of 1971 is one of many patterns in the history of U.S. foreign policy where they lost credibility for its role.

5. Conclusion: Potential policy prescriptions

The South Asian Crisis of 1971 is part of a greater pattern in U.S. foreign relations: losing credibility in the region and failing to fulfill its aims. This is especially true for countries of the developing world. For example, during the Cold War, the U.S. misjudged Iran's nationalist Mohammed Mossadegh when he was elected Prime Minister in 1951, believing that he would act in concert with the Soviet Union due to his socialist inclinations, similar to this mindset of India as a Soviet Scrooge. Similarly, in the Republic of Congo, Patrice Lumumba held similar socialist inclinations and the U.S. policymakers framed an image of the country as part of the Communist bloc. Mossadegh and Lumumba's socialist policies stemmed from a nationalist effort to prevent the exploitation of their country's resources. Both these case-studies, while not explored in this article, are analogous to the crisis because of a fundamental misjudgment of the developing world's intentions.

This case-study ultimately brought Indo-American relations to its nadir due to fundamental flaws in its foreign policymaking processes. In order to ensure these mistakes are not repeated in the future of U.S. foreign policymaking, the decision-making process must ensure more nuanced debates and ensure that one or two leaders are not the primary actors in determining the direction of the United States, unless it is a time of emergency. Intelligence must be made available to different departments of the Executive Branch in order to ensure healthy discussion and make it less likely to repeat a fundamental attribution error and a Pygmalion Effect. By allowing and encouraging a devil's advocate opinion to be heard without fear of being ostracized or relocated, U.S. foreign policy decisions will be a result of a more nuanced foreign policymaking process. The U.S. also must acknowledge the stark differences in time and space between two countries because the U.S. failure to understand India and Pakistan's security dilemma contributed to their flawed rationale in formulating policy. Understanding an individual country's unique history and position to the world is especially useful for creating credible U.S. policy when self-interests' clash. Then, it lessens the possibility of imagining an enemy where none exists. Even when a significant global strategy, such as the desire for rapprochement with China, is the main foreign policy goal of one's Presidential administration, understanding the domestic conditions of a region could help both regional and global aims by striking a balance between the two. If future U.S. foreign policy decision-makers heed this advice, the future of foreign policymaking in South Asia and the developing

world will yield a higher likelihood of the U.S. holding more credibility, as well as inching closer towards narrowing the gap between the desired policy result and real outcome.

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