

UK-US Relations and the South Asian Crisis, 1971

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2016

A thesis submitted to Cardiff University for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy (Politics & International Relations)

Summary

This thesis investigates UK-US relations with regard to the South Asian Crisis of 1971. Through a focus on an understudied point of disagreement within the relationship between Prime Minister Edward Heath and President Richard Nixon, the thesis sheds further light on Anglo-American relations in the early 1970s. Through analysis of archival documents on both sides of the Atlantic, this thesis contributes to the growing revisionist literature that has moved away from a focus upon Heath's pro-Europeanism as the cause of problems in the Anglo-American relationship at the time. Rather, a more nuanced approach that also investigates the impact of the secretive foreign policymaking style of the Nixon White House is taken into account. The thesis reveals the issues in communication and differences of interests that, in December 1971, led the UK and US delegations at the UN Security Council to tacitly advocate for opposite sides of a hot war in South Asia. The thesis assesses the effect that these heated disagreements had upon the Anglo-American relationship going into 1972 and 1973.

Declarations

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Acknowledgments

In 2016, our family lost my nana, Joan O'Neill, and my grandma Jean Riley. Without their love and support throughout my life, this thesis would not have been written. Nana's faith in me never wavered, her belief in my abilities was absolute. Grandma's sense of humour had always stood as an example for me to not take myself too seriously- an attribute crucial for success in academia. This thesis is dedicated to these two inspirational women.

The support that my family has provided throughout the five and a half years has been immense. Since my move home to Rugby in September 2015, Mum, Dad and Ben have had to put up with nocturnal sleep pattern and general messiness- all whilst keeping me fed and watered. This thesis is a result of their love and generosity.

Grandad Eddie has been a star. Like Joan, his support, pride and faith in my abilities has been unshakable. Allowing me to convert his spare room into an office (of sorts) has allowed me to progress at a steady rate over the past 18 months. Without this facility, I have no doubt that the thesis would not yet have been completed.

The rest of my family, Martin, Matthew, Justyna, Josh and Grandad Hick have provided welcome light relief whenever we get together. The ability to escape the trappings of the thesis is invaluable, and my family have never failed to provide this at Christmas and summer BBQs in particular!

Thanks also goes to my supervisor Steve Marsh. His attention to detail and, challenging criticisms have been invaluable in whipping this thesis into shape. Steve's, at times, blunt critiques of my work have helped me to produce the clear and precise arguments contained in this thesis.

Finally, As well as the people already mentioned, there has been a whole cast of people that I need to thank for their help over the past half-decade. In alphabetical order....

Valerie and Brad Armbruster- Thank you for ferrying me to and from the airport, particularly at some awful hour of the morning before I departed for Texas. I still remember Brad's crash course on Virginia/DC history after picking me up from Dulles International - a great introduction to the USA!

Iwan Benneyworth- For the many chats we had on the balcony in the Haydn Ellis building, and continued friendship.

Kayleigh Chan- For putting up with my many crises of confidence over the years and never losing faith in my abilities.

Martin Fleet- For being my best mate and not getting bored during my spiel about Kissinger etc.

Colum, May and Keelan McCarron- Your warmth and hospitality during my many trips to the archives (as well as the London Olympics!) was humbling. I loved May's cooking, chats about football with Colum and losing on the Wii to Keelan!

Jola Migdalska- For listening to my daily moans and groans about how stressed I was, for putting up with my messiness, and for being part of our mid-ranking quiz team- I miss those Monday evenings!

Duncan O'Neill- Your love and support as my Uncle has always been a source of stability. Your help in organising accommodation in the United States made the whole process a lot less stressful, and a lot more enjoyable!

Jim Reist- Thank you for making my stay in Austin a week I'll never forget. Tex-Mex lunches, happy hour and Longhorns tickets- I couldn't have asked for more!

Katie Richards- Your patience in putting up with me at the crunch times has been crucial. Without you, the later days of the thesis would have been immeasurably more difficult!

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Introduction

US President Richard Nixon was thrilled when Conservative leader Edward Heath won a surprise victory in the UK general election of June 1970. He was so excited that he called his Assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger, four times whilst Kissinger was in Mexico City attending the World Cup.¹ However, scholarship written prior to the availability of archival documents, on both sides of the Atlantic in the early 2000s, tended to interpret the Heath-Nixon period as a low point for the Anglo-American relationship.² The major cause cited was that of Heath's desire to develop a closer relationship with the UK's European allies. The Heath-Nixon years from 1970-1974 received relatively little scholarly attention within the extensive corpus of literature that has assessed the Anglo-American relationship. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the scholarly reappraisal of the early 1970s that has occurred since the late 2000s- a literature that has widened its scope of analysis away from simply Heath's pro-Europeanism.³ This thesis is the first detailed analysis within this growing literature of UK-US relations in the South Asian region in 1971, a time when the subcontinent endured war and the subsequent birth of a new sovereign state, Bangladesh. It will provide an analysis of the knock-on effects that Nixon's alteration of traditional US policy toward Communist China had upon the Anglo-American relationship, with particular regard to South Asia; provide new insights into the manner in which differences in policy toward events in South Asia had an impact upon the Anglo-American relationship; and analyse the reasons behind and the impact on the UK-US relationship of the Heath Government and Nixon's Administration's public disagreements at the UN Security Council, as India and Pakistan went to war in December 1971.

¹ Kissinger, HA (1979) *The White House Years* Weidenfeld and Nicolson; London p932.

² Examples of this include Ovendale, R (1998) *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century*. Macmillan; London p137; Bartlett, CJ (1992) *The Special Relationship: A Political History*. Longman; New York p127; Hathaway, R (1981) *Great Britain and the United States: Special Relations since World War II*. Twayne Publishers; Boston pp95-96. Arnold, G (2014) *America and Britain: Was there ever a Special Relationship?* C.Hurst and Co; London p83.

³ These texts include Scott, A (2011) *Allies Apart: Heath, Nixon and the Special Relationship* Palgrave Macmillan; New York; Hynes, C (2009) *The Year that Never Was: Heath, the Nixon Administration and the Year of Europe* University College Dublin Press: Dublin Introduction; Spelling, A (2009) "Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations 1970-1974: A Reappraisal" *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Vol 20 No 4 pp638-658; Rosbach, NH (2009) *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship: Britain, the US and the EC, 1969-74* Palgrave MacMillan; New York.

1. Scholarship on the UK-US relationship

There have been many attempts at assessing what, if anything, is “special” about the Anglo-American relationship. One approach has been to look at the Anglo-American relationship from a comparative perspective, asking what marks it out as “special” when compared to other bilateral relationships between states. Alex Danchev, in his 1996 essay “On Specialness” cited a leaked State Department document that in 1993 listed the US’ top ten bilateral relationships in terms of importance- the UK was third behind Germany and France. He also pointed out that the US has degrees of “specialness” in relations with other states, claiming that Japan has claimed “specialness”, Israel was born “special” and that the relationship with Russia was “special” in spite of itself.⁴⁵ Danchev concluded that a bilateral relationship can therefore be important, but not special, and that the idea of having a “special relationship” is not the Anglo-Saxon preserve that elites on both sides of the Atlantic believed it to be. Danchev has faced criticism for his lack of clarity in positing ten possible criteria with which to ascertain the “specialness” of any given relationship.⁶ However, his highlighting of “mythicality” as, along with “transparency” as the two most important factors in determining the “specialness” of a bilateral relationship, emphasises the importance of intangible factors such as a shared language, history and cultural cross-fertilisation.

Another way of assessing the “special relationship” has been from a theoretical perspective within the field of International relations. In a 1966 article entitled “Theory and Reality in the Anglo-American Alliance” Raymond Dawson and Richard Rosecrance argued that the Anglo-American relationship could not be explained by Alliance Theory.⁷ Their contention was that although the alliance during the Second World War and the onset of the Cold War can be explained in terms of shared interests, the manner in which the Anglo-American relationship developed post-1949 cannot.⁸ They argued that the maintenance of the Anglo-American alliance became an end in itself, and cite the Suez crisis of 1956 as a point where, according to alliance theory, divergent interests should have brought about a fragmentation of the relationship, when in reality the Anglo-American Alliance strengthened in the late 1950s.⁹ Dawson and Rosecrance concluded that “between friends the balance of power does not mean very much...History, tradition and affinity have been crucial to

⁴ Danchev, A (1996) “On Specialness” *International Affairs* Vol 72 No 4 p743.

⁵ Danchev, “On Specialness” p743.

⁶ Dobson, AP and Marsh, S (2013) “Introduction” in Dobson, AP and Marsh S (eds) *Anglo-American Relations: Contemporary Perspectives* Routledge: Oxon p12.

⁷ Dawson, R and Rosecrance, R (1966) “Theory and Reality in the Anglo-American Alliance” *World Politics* Vol 19 No 1 p21.

⁸ Dawson and Rosecrance, “Theory and Reality” p48.

⁹ Dawson and Rosecrance p51.

the [Anglo-American] alliance rather than peripheral".¹⁰ Although he conceded that intangibles such as tradition, language and history cannot be dismissed, John Baylis, took issue with part of Dawson and Rosecrance's analysis. He argued that Dawson and Rosecrance overstated the extent to which the Anglo-American relationship posed a challenge to IR theory. In terms of the Suez crisis, Baylis argued that it did, for a time, undermine the relationship and that the reaffirmation of the relationship was in both the UK and US' interests amid the Soviet Union's demonstrable ability to launch inter-continental missiles after the launch of Sputnik in 1957.¹¹ For Baylis, interest trumped sentiment when trying to explain the Anglo-American partnership.¹²

Many scholars have turned their attention to the question of, if the Anglo-American relationship is "special", what is it that makes it so? David Reynolds, identified three aspects that have made it a unique bilateral relationship for both parties.¹³ They are cooperation in the field of nuclear weapons; the pooling of intelligence capabilities; and ease of diplomatic consultation.¹⁴ Chapter One of this thesis covers the difficulties caused by the 1946 signing of the McMahon Act that prevented the US government from sharing atomic information with any foreign government. However, after a crisis over the cancellation of the US supply of the nuclear air to surface Skybolt programme to the UK in the late 1950s, in 1962 Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was able to secure from President John F. Kennedy the Polaris submarine-based nuclear missile system, as Britain was assured of its status as a nuclear power through the use of American technology.¹⁵

John Dickie has referred to the UK-US intelligence relationship as "by far the most important aspect of cooperation" between the UK and the US.¹⁶ Along with possession of nuclear weapons, membership of the UN Security Council and a high level of military spending, David Watt also identified intelligence cooperation as one of the factors that ensured that the UK remained a more important ally to the US than its size and wealth may have dictated.¹⁷ The UKUSA treaty signed secretly in 1947 allowed the newly set up Central Intelligence Agency to work closely with the British

¹⁰ Dawson and Rosecrance "Theory and Reality" p51.

¹¹ Baylis, J (1985) "Anglo-American Relations and Alliance Theory" *International Relations* Vol 8 No 4 p377.

¹² Baylis, "Anglo-American Relations" p378.

¹³ Reynolds, D (1986) "'A Special Relationship'? America, Britain, and the International Order Since the Second World War" *International Affairs* Vol 62 No 1 p10.

¹⁴ Reynolds, "'A Special Relationship'" p10.

¹⁵ Reynolds, p13.

¹⁶ Dickie, R (1994) *"Special" No More: Anglo-American Relations: Rhetoric and Reality* Wiedenfeld and Nicholson; London. p259.

¹⁷ Watt, D (1986) "Introduction: The Anglo-American Relationship" in Roger Louis, WM and Bull, H (eds) *The Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations Since 1945* Oxford University Press; Oxford p4.

Secret Intelligence Agency.¹⁸ The agreement allowed the two countries to establish a vast network of Signals intelligence that helped the UK and the US coordinate surveillance operations against the Soviet Union.¹⁹ Even at times of stress within the relationship, such as the Suez crisis, the value of Intelligence cooperation ensured that warmth remained within this aspect of the Anglo-American relationship.²⁰

Diplomatic consultation, the focus for this thesis, is the aspect of the “special relationship” that Reynolds cites as “the most fundamental”.²¹ Chapter One of this thesis assesses the major post-World War Two (WW2) fluctuations in the Anglo-American relationship and demonstrates the notion that close consultation has not always meant that the two allies agreed, and that breakdowns in communication could lead to major crises.²² Chapter One also demonstrates that, with particular regard to relations over China and the Middle East, substantial disagreements between the two allies could be successfully managed.²³ Reynolds argues that the building of networks, both formal and informal, as well as the facility of a common language and the knowledge of what counterparts were doing in London and Washington helped diplomats not only keep abreast of policy, but to also understand the background behind internal debates.²⁴ Historian Michael Howard has commented upon the similarly “remarkable degree of friendly intimacy that developed between officials on both sides of the Atlantic during the Second World War, that lasted well into the post-war period.”²⁵ He asserts that wartime experience had created a generation of officials for whom Anglo-American amity and cooperation was second nature.²⁶

Building upon ideas of an Anglo-American amity that has complemented shared global interests, other scholars have looked to explain the longevity of the “special relationship” and, it’s “Lazarus-like” ability to recover from a number of crises that may have seen its demise since the end of the Second World War.²⁷ Jérôme Élie has argued that although British support for US policies, as well as

¹⁸ Dickie *Special No More* p260.

¹⁹ Dickie p260.

²⁰ Dickie p260.

²¹ Reynolds “A Special Relationship?” p10.

²² Reynolds, p10.

²³ Reynolds, p10.

²⁴ Reynolds, p10.

²⁵ Howard, M (1986) “Afterword: The ‘Special Relationship’” in Roger Louis, WM and Bull, H (eds) (1986) *The Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations Since 1945* Oxford University Press; Oxford. p389.

²⁶ Howard p389.

²⁷ Marsh, S and Baylis, J (2006) “The Anglo-American “Special Relationship”: The Lazarus of International Relations” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Vol 17 No 1

nuclear and intelligence cooperation have provided value for the US in maintaining the alliance, the British have gained more from the “special relationship” than the Americans. These benefits have come particularly in terms of having a route to global influence via a close relationship with the US and the benefit of having been supplied with US-made nuclear weapons at a heavily discounted rate.²⁸ Therefore, he argues that the British have developed a “preservation mechanism” to ensure that the “special relationship” remains in place.²⁹ Élie puts forward two broad hypotheses to explain such a phenomena. The first is that the British have made constant efforts to cement the permanence of the relationship through nuclear and intelligence cooperation, through allowing the US to have bases on UK soil and the forming of “quasi-institutional” links between military and diplomatic personnel.³⁰ The second hypothesis is that there exists a commonality of interests between the two peoples that stems from a shared culture and commitment to democratic institutions.³¹ Élie notes that it is here where the notion of the Anglo-American relationship as a British-constructed “‘metaphysical entity’ rejoins the conception of the special relationship as a ‘stratagem of British diplomacy’”.³²

In a similar vein, Steve Marsh and John Baylis have looked to explain what has caused the “Lazarus effect” within the Anglo-American relationship. They make the argument that the longevity of the relationship has been a result of four key continuities, those of; a determination for Britain to remain a global actor; the continuing reality of American power; a calculation that a position close to, but independent of the US would best serve British interest; and an assumption that British wisdom would allow London to steer the “naïve”, yet predominant US.³³ From these factors flow other continuities that ensured the preservation of the relationship such as the continuing memory of joint commands during the Second World War, the willingness of the UK to “pay the price” in blood and treasure to remain close to the US, and the employment of a number of British strategies designed to reinforce the relationship and guard against American desertion.³⁴ Marsh and Baylis conclude that the willingness of the British to “pay the price” has retained American interest in the “special

²⁸ Élie, J (2005) “Many times doomed but still alive: An attempt to understand the continuity of the special relationship” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* Vol 3 No 1 p68.

²⁹ Élie, p73.

³⁰ Élie, p74.

³¹ Élie, p74.

³² Élie, p75.

³³ Marsh and Baylis “Lazarus” p174.

³⁴ Marsh and Baylis, p174

relationship” in a manner that complements Élie’s notion of a British “preservation” mechanism that has helped maintain the longevity of a strong Anglo-American alliance.

In the introduction to their edited volume *Anglo-American Relations: Contemporary Perspectives*, Alan Dobson and Steve Marsh distinguish between schools of “sentiment” and of “interest” in literature on the special relationship. Yet they also tentatively identify a school of “ambiguity” within which Élie and others such as Robert Hathaway can be placed.³⁵ According to Dobson and Marsh “these authors are...concerned with trying to capture the character and content of the relationship, and in so doing highlight its uncertain nature because of differing values and expectations placed on it by each side at different times”.³⁶ This description goes some way to explaining where this thesis fits within literature conceptualising the “special relationship”. It assesses relations over a specific region, South Asia, at a specific point in time, 1971, when the character and content of the relationship had, in the mid to late 1960s seen a period of rapid change. The aim of this study is not to define specialness nor measure how special the relationship was in 1971, but it is appropriate to have placed this thesis within the extant literature on the subject. This thesis is focused upon the different interpretations of British and American interests with regard to South Asia in 1971, yet it does not reject the notion that the history or “tradition” of close consultation within the post-war Anglo-American relationship shaped the nature in which the two allies responded to the differences that emerged between the two governments.

2. Methodology

Broadly speaking, there are two perspectives with which to conduct the historical study of international politics, and by extension, this thesis. The first is a theoretical approach grounded in the field of International relations, this is also known as the “outside” method of accounting for the behaviour of leaders and the states that they represent.³⁷ In this field scholars share many practices with social scientists, production of hypotheses, collecting and analysing empirical data and often applying their theory to their results.³⁸ On the other hand, the “inside” method is one grounded in the tradition of Diplomatic History, one that values the meticulous collection and analysis of archival data. Stephen Haber et al have described the two approaches as “Brothers under the skin” in the

³⁵ Dobson and Marsh, “Introduction” p11.

³⁶ Dobson and Marsh, p11.

³⁷ Dobson and Marsh p6; Hollis, M and Smith, S (1991) *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* Clarendon Press: Oxford p3.

³⁸ Haber, S et al (1997) “Brothers under the skin: Diplomatic History and International Relations” *International Security* Vol 22 No 1 p43.

sense that, although they differ methodologically, they share an epistemological commitment to the evaluation of evidence as a means to reaching a conclusion.³⁹ The two approaches to the study often complement one another, the “inside” work of Diplomatic Historians is often crucial to the formation of wider theories of international relations.⁴⁰ In this vein, Elman and Elman have suggested that whilst International Relations theorists tend to focus upon classes of events and multiple case studies at one time, Diplomatic Historians look to explain specific events.⁴¹ The work of Diplomatic Historians can contribute greatly to the development of IR theory through identifying boundaries and limitations of various hypotheses.⁴²

It is within this context that this thesis takes the “inside” approach to assessing UK-US relations and the South Asian Crisis of 1971. Tension had built up on the subcontinent in the nine months from March 1971, after Pakistan’s President, Yahya Khan, had moved to suppress a nationalist movement in East Pakistan- the region known since December 1971 as Bangladesh. The subsequent civil unrest in Pakistan led to millions of refugees crossing the border into India and a subsequent Indian invasion of East Pakistan in November 1971. Throughout the crisis, the British and American governments had different outlooks. The British prioritised their relationship with India as a result of its relative financial and strategic importance when compared to Pakistan. Conversely the US government, and specifically the White House, favoured Pakistan in order to protect wider geopolitical concerns. At the UN Security Council in December 1971, the two governments found themselves tacitly advocating for opposite sides of a hot war in South Asia.

This thesis tracks the policies and interactions of the UK and US governments and bureaucracies throughout the crisis and explains the misunderstandings that led to public dissent between the two governments. Adopting the “inside approach” characteristic of Diplomatic History, the work is grounded in substantial archival sources drawn from both the UK and the US. In the UK, referenced material is housed at the UK National Archives (UKNA) in Kew, London. The principal series used are the Office of the Prime Minister (PREM), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Cabinet Office (CAB). In the US, documents were accessed at the National Archives and Record Administration’s facility at College Park, Maryland (USNA) and at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, California (NPL). At College Park, the majority of material accessed was that of the State Department’s Record Group 59, Central Files 1970-1973, with a small

³⁹ Haber et al “Brothers under the Skin” p38.

⁴⁰ Haber et al p35.

⁴¹ Elman, C and Elman, MF (1997) “Diplomatic History and International Relations Theory: Respecting Difference and Crossing Boundaries” *International Security* Vol 22 No 1 p10.

⁴² Elman and Elman “Diplomatic History” p15.

amount of material from the State Department's Bureau for Middle Eastern Affairs. At the Nixon Presidential Library, material accessed is from Nixon's National Security Files (NSC) and the Telcons of Henry Kissinger (HAK). Other primary sources of US material include the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) Series 1969-1976 Volumes XI and E-7, which both relate to South Asia and the US National Security Archive's Briefing Book No.79 *The Tilt: US Foreign Policy and the South Asian Crisis* of 1971. It should be noted that the thesis remains true to the archival record in terms of the names of places that have changed since 1971. Most notably, the thesis refers to Dacca (renamed Dhaka in 1983) and Peking (now known as Beijing).

3. The Literature Gap

Until recently, the established view of the Heath-Nixon era has been characterised by the notion that Nixon's early excitement and optimism with regards to the Anglo-American relationship were scuppered by Heath's desire for Britain to become a distinctly European state. A particularly forthright example of such a view is Ritchie Ovendale's portrayal of Heath as a man bent on British accession to the EC at all costs, labelling the Prime Minister "Europe obsessed" and accusing him of shunning Nixon's offers of friendship with an attitude of "sustained aloofness".⁴³ Christopher Bartlett supports this view, suggesting that Heath saw the UK as "just another European" country and that British actions did not live up to American expectations.⁴⁴ John Dickie and Robert Hathaway take a slightly different stance in as much as they both affirm that Heath was not an anti-American per se, but both similarly argue that Heath's desire was for a more distant transatlantic relationship than his predecessors.⁴⁵ Although none of the accounts argue that Anglo-American cooperation completely broke down at this point, Ovendale and Bartlett both emphasise the negative role that British policymakers played in the relationship's apparent weakening.

Since the late 2000s there has emerged a revisionist scholarship of the Heath-Nixon relationship that has reached different conclusions to their predecessors and emphasised a lack of detailed analysis hitherto.⁴⁶ For instance, Andrew Scott has argued that partly as a result of a lack of available information, older accounts of the Heath-Nixon era have relied too heavily on the work of Nixon's

⁴³ Ovendale, *Anglo-American Relations* p137.

⁴⁴ Bartlett, *The Special Relationship* p127.

⁴⁵ Dickie, *Special No More* p144,"; Hathaway, R (1981) *Great Britain and the United States: Special Relations since World War II* Boston p95-96.

⁴⁶ Dickie *Special No More* is the most prominent example of this. Chapter 8, being of comparable size to other chapters covers the years 1963-1979, whereas most other chapters in the book cover 3-5 years, with the next largest being seven years. Dimbleby, D and Reynolds, D (1989) *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship Between Britain and America in the 20th Century* Vintage Books; New York similarly glosses over the period with Chapter 13 covering a period 50% larger than any other chapter on the post-war years.

Assistant for National Security Affairs in 1971, Henry Kissinger. Scott has put forward the case that the dominance of Kissinger's account has skewed the historical narrative toward one that put the emphasis on Heath's desire to see the UK become part of the EEC.⁴⁷ With access to archival material made available from 2002, recent literature has made two major movements away from that written in the twentieth century.⁴⁸ The first is to identify that the Anglo-American relationship in the early 1970s had its own set of ups and downs. Alex Spelling has argued that relations between the UK and US governments were generally cordial but for two periods in late 1971 and late 1973. Spelling goes as far as to speculate that had Heath left office prior to Kissinger's surprise announcement of the White House's "Year of Europe" in early 1973, the Heath-Nixon years may have been remembered as a friendly period for Anglo-American relations.⁴⁹

In terms of the period of poor Anglo-American relations in the latter half of 1971, attention is paid most closely to the two "Nixon shocks". The first was a surprise announcement from the White House of a new US policy toward Communist China, the centrepiece of which was the visit of President Nixon to Peking in February 1972. The second "shock" was that of a new US economic policy that was headlined by the imposition of a 10% import surcharge on a range of goods entering the US. Consideration of these events marks the second movement away from initial conceptions of the UK-US relationship in the early 1970s. Accounts written since the late 2000s make the case that it was the secretive nature of the Nixon Administration, one in which the State Department was kept uninformed of important aspects of US foreign policy, that was a larger cause of strains in the Anglo-American relationship than was Heath's desire for EEC accession.⁵⁰ An investigation into the impact that White House secrecy had upon the Anglo-American relationship, particularly with regard to South Asia is an aim of this thesis.

Anglo-American disagreements regarding the South Asian Crisis of 1971 are not widely discussed within the vast amount of work on the post-war bilateral relationship. In fact, British policy on the matter is not widely discussed in general, especially in comparison to the numerous analyses of the US foreign policy on the subject.⁵¹ Two exceptions to this trend are the works of Simon Smith and

⁴⁷ Scott, A (2011) *Allies Apart: Heath, Nixon and the Special Relationship* Palgrave Macmillan: New York p9.

⁴⁸ These texts include Scott, *Allies Apart*; Hynes, C *The Year that Never Was*; Spelling, A "Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations"; Rossbach, NH (2009) *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship*;

⁴⁹ Spelling, p654.

⁵⁰ For example, Scott *Allies Apart*; Rossbach, NH (2009) *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship*; Spelling "Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations".

⁵¹ These include Anderson, J and Clifford, G (1973) *The Anderson Papers* Millington: London; Bass, G (2013) *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide* Knopf: New York; Brown, WN (1972) *The United States and India, Pakistan, Bangladesh* Harvard University Press: Cambridge Mass; Choudhury, GW (1975)

Andrew Scott. Smith's article in *Contemporary British History* focuses upon British policy toward the crisis and the reasons for the divergence in Anglo-American approaches. Smith locates differences in Anglo-American policy within the context of policy divergences between the two nations in Asia following the Second World War.⁵² Smith contends that after a brief period of neutrality in 1971, the British government privately favoured India whilst maintaining a neutral position in public. Smith highlights a number of factors that resulted in Britain's favouring of India. These include: the British interpretation of the August 1971 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed between India and the Soviet Union; FCO and Cabinet reports that favoured India; and a desire on the part of Heath not to repeat an error made by his predecessor Harold Wilson, when Wilson severely damaged relations with India after he publicly blamed New Delhi for a previous conflict with Pakistan in 1965. This thesis adds depth to the reasoning behind British foreign policy and adds nuance to the argument that UK-US relations in South Asia in 1971 fit the post-war pattern.

Where Smith's article focuses upon British policymaking, Scott dedicates a chapter in his book, *Allies Apart*, to Anglo-American relations on the subcontinent in 1971, and is to date the only author to do so. Scott makes the argument that disagreements over South Asia in December 1971 were more virulent than talks at the subsequent Bermuda summit, held just days after the end of the conflict may suggest.⁵³ Scott discusses major aspects of UK and US policy, notably the US desire to protect its rapprochement with China, the UK's identification of its interests lying with India and the aligning of the UK and US governments with the policies of India and Pakistan respectively at the UN Security Council during the Indo-Pakistan War. This thesis supports Scott's assertions, but provides a new level of detailed analysis and nuance to the study of UK-US relations with regard to the 1971 South Asian crisis, and consequently sheds further light on the general state of Anglo-American relations.

India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Major Powers The Free Press: New York; Garthoff, R (1994) *Detente and Confrontation* the Brookings Institution: Washington DC; Hanhimäki, JM (2004) *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* Oxford University Press: London; Hersh (1983) *The Price of Power: Nixon in the Kissinger White House* Summit Books: New York; Hitchens, C (2002) *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* Verso: London; Jackson, RJ (1975) *South Asian Crisis: India-Pakistan-Bangladesh* Chatto and Windus: London; Kux, D (1993) *Estranged Democracies: India and the United States* Sage: New Delhi; Kux, D (2001) *The United States and Pakistan: Disenchanted Allies* John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore MD; Raghavan, S (2013) *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* Library of Congress: Cambridge, Mass; Sisson, R and Rose, L (1990) *War and Secession: India, Pakistan and the Creation of Bangladesh* University of California Press; Los Angeles; Banerjee, S (1987) "Explaining the American 'Tilt' in the 1971 Crisis: A Late Dependency Approach" *International Studies Quarterly* Vol31; Haendel, D (1977) *The Process of Priority Formulation: US Foreign Policy in the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971* Westview Press: Boulder, CO; Van Hollen, C (1980) "The Tilt Policy Revisited: Nixon-Kissinger Geopolitics and South Asia" *Asian Survey* Vol 20 No 4 pp331-369; Warner, G (2005) "Nixon, Kissinger and the Break-up of Pakistan, 1971" *International Affairs* Vol 81 No 5 pp1097-118; Kissinger, HA (1979) *The White House Years* Weidenfeld and Nicolson; London.

⁵² Smith, SC (2010) "Coming Down on the Winning Side: Britain and the South Asian Crisis, 1971" *Contemporary British History* Vol 24 No4 p451-470

⁵³ Scott *Allies Apart* p81.

4. Outline of the thesis

This thesis is developed chronologically. Such a structure allows the thesis to trace the manner in which UK and US interests diverged over time and the points at which breakdowns in communication had their greatest impact. The first chapter considers the context for the post war period in Anglo-American relations up until Edward Heath's election as Prime Minister in June 1970. It provides analysis on a macro-level before focusing on the relationship in two specific regions, the Middle East and China. The Middle East is considered to provide an example for the manner in which regional policy disagreements could be managed without souring the overall tone of the relationship. Consideration then turns to Anglo-American relations with regard to China in order to provide the necessary context for later discussions of the impact that Nixon's "opening to China" had upon relations between the two governments. The chapter ends with a focus on the history of South Asia following the partition of British India in 1947, and the British and American shared desire for stability on the subcontinent. Such considerations are necessary for an understanding of the divergences of Anglo-American policy in South Asia that occurred over the course of 1971.

The first six months of the Heath-Nixon period are the focus for the second chapter. The chapter analyses Anglo-American summits at Chequers in October 1970, and in Washington two months later. Anglo-American focus at the time was upon UK entry into the EC. However, the chapter challenges previously held assertions that this caused ruptures in the UK-US relationship from the outset. At the forefront of extra-European affairs were the Middle East and Persian Gulf regions, and the chapter assesses the competing interests within the Anglo-American alliance and introduces themes for future consideration; those of the White House's secretive foreign policymaking and of Nixon's personal diplomatic style. Though not yet high on the Anglo-American agenda at the time, the chapter also charts the run-up to the Pakistan elections of 1970. These elections produced the political stalemate that sparked the South Asian Crisis of 1971. The chapter serves to contrast Anglo-American relations, both in South Asia and beyond, in late 1970 with subsequent chapters that consider the downturn in mid-1971.

Chapter three assesses the growing dissonance within Anglo-American relations in the first half of 1971 up to July 15th. As tension in South Asia boiled over into the military suppression of the Bengali nationalist movement, the White House was nearing the realisation of its secret efforts to open diplomatic communication with China. As a result of Pakistani President Yahya Khan's vital role in facilitating the "Opening to China", the eruption of conflict in East Pakistan provided a problem for Nixon and Kissinger. Amid reports of violence being perpetrated upon minorities by Yahya's army, the White House's primary concern was the maintenance of their relationship with a mutual ally of the US and China. The notion of proving the US' worth as an ally to China continued as a priority for

Nixon and Kissinger throughout the South Asian crisis. Chapter Three assesses the knock-on effects that this policy had upon the UK-US relationship in the first half of 1971, whilst the White House's China policy remained a closely guarded secret.

On July 15th 1971, President Nixon announced to the world not only that Henry Kissinger had recently visited Peking under a cloak of secrecy, but that he too was to be the first US President to visit the People's Republic of China in the Spring of 1972. The fourth chapter of this thesis assesses the impact that the announcement had upon the Anglo-American relationship and the growing policy differences that were emerging in South Asia. Analysis then moves on to the differing British and American interpretations of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, signed August 9th, 1971. The chapter also continues to consider the knock-on effects that White House secrecy, with particular regard to China, and consequently South Asia, was having on the Anglo-American relationship as events on the ground in East Pakistan continued to deteriorate.

As the situation in South Asia came to a head in November 1971, Chapter Five focuses upon the different policy trajectories of the UK and US governments. These differences are assessed through analysis of the contrasting meetings that Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had with Heath and Nixon in late October and early November. Once India and Pakistan had declared war upon each other on December 3rd, Nixon and Kissinger moved to brand India the aggressor at the UN and called for an immediate cease fire. The Soviet Union vetoed the motion, the UK and France abstained and the newly-seated People's Republic of China voted in favour alongside the Americans. In an attempt to dissuade India from a sustained attack upon Pakistan's western wing, Nixon authorised the movement of a US Naval Task Force to the Bay of Bengal. Chapter Five assesses the breakdown in communication and understanding between the UK and US governments that led to the White House's willingness to risk a global conflict without British knowledge, let alone a British understanding, of such a rationale.

The final chapter assesses the impact that the disagreements of 1971 had upon Anglo-American relations both in South Asia and in broader terms. This thesis' final chapter looks at the impact that issues surrounding the South Asian crisis had upon the UK-US relationship in the 15 months between the UK-US summits at Bermuda on 21st-22nd December 1971, and the Washington summit 1st-2nd February 1973. Through analysis of the Bermuda summit itself and the subsequent period up until the Washington summit in February 1973, the chapter reaches conclusions as to how the Anglo-American relationship improved in 1972, and reflects on the lessons learned after the allies had tacitly supported opposing sides of a war in South Asia.

The thesis concludes with the consideration of three broad questions that arise from the study of Anglo-American relations and the South Asian crisis of 1971. How frosty were relations between Heath and Nixon? Were Anglo-American differences over South Asia in 1971 merely tactical, as both sides claimed in the aftermath? And did the disagreements over South Asia have a lasting effect on the relationship between the Heath government and the Nixon Administration? Finally, consideration will be made of the contribution this thesis has made to the study of Anglo-American relations, and the Heath-Nixon era in particular.

Chapter 1: The UK-US Relationship, 1945-1970

Introduction

The opening chapter provides the requisite context for the in-depth study of Anglo-American relations and the South Asian Crisis of 1971. The chapter has five sections that map out Anglo-American relations from 1945 to 1970. first in general terms before focusing on relations in specific regions of the world. The first section assesses the Anglo-American relationship on the macro-level, using key flashpoints and relationships between Presidents and Prime Ministers in the twenty-five years up to 1970. Initially, the section focuses upon the asymmetry of power within the relationship. It then considers the notion that British prestige on the global stage was inextricably linked with influence on foreign policymaking in Washington. The second section focuses attention upon the period between 1964 and 1969 during the Premiership and Presidency of Harold Wilson and Lyndon B. Johnson respectively. This enables a consideration of the changing dynamics in the six years prior to 1970-71, the main focus of this thesis.

Section three turns attention to the Middle East. The region is singled out in this instance for its increased significance in the global Cold War of 1945-1970 relative to subsequent considerations of China and South Asia which are more pertinent to the study of Anglo-American relations and the South Asian Crisis of 1971. The section illustrates the notion that within the Anglo-American relationship, conflicts of policy arose on a regional level as the British need for US support was tempered by a concern that the Americans could supplant their interests, largely in oil, in the Middle East. The section also demonstrates the decline of British ability to project its power on a global level relative to the US over the twenty-five years to 1970.

The fourth section focuses upon UK-US relations with regard to China in order to provide context for later considerations of the effect that President Richard Nixon's alteration of US policy under his presidency had upon the Anglo-American relationship. The UK government was largely in favour of accepting China into the international community, a position which contrasted with their American allies. The UK and US had different approaches to other key issues with regard to China; over official recognition of the communist government; the seating of China at the UN; and a strategic trade embargo imposed by the US.

The final section focuses its attention on South Asia. Throughout the period, the UK and US were caught between India and Pakistan, as good relations with one necessarily meant poor relations with the other. India's non-aligned policy contrasted with Pakistan's willingness to join Western alliance structures- in large part to arm itself against India. The section tracks British and American disagreements with regard to how far relations with India could be sacrificed in favour of acquiring

an important Cold War ally in Pakistan. These considerations are important in providing context for the decisions made by the UK and US governments throughout 1971.

1. The UK-US relationship 1945-1970

The UK and US entered the post-Second World War in radically different economic conditions. The British had lost 400,000 lives and a quarter of its national wealth, whilst the US benefitted from a booming wartime economy that had rendered it the world's leading economic power.¹ The lend-lease programme, where US food, oil and military hardware were exchanged for the leasing of bases to the US on allied soil was suddenly ended in September 1945. The US also attached what the British saw as harsh conditions to a post war re-development loan. Negotiations over this loan have been described by Dimpleby and Reynolds as having "degenerated to a level more appropriate to bitter enemies than close allies".² Such unreasonableness in the eyes of the British fostered resentment of the US within the new postwar Labour government. Cabinet minister Aneurin Bevan described the passing in the US of the Economic Cooperation Act of 1948, otherwise known as the Marshall Plan, which provided the UK with \$2.7 billion of aid, as "no substitute for justice".³

Following Prime Minister Winston Churchill's defeat at the 1945 general election, UK-US cooperation continued in areas of military research, standardisation of equipment and operational analysis.⁴ An area where cooperation did not continue, however, was the nuclear field. The McMahon Act, passed by the US Congress in 1946, prevented the sharing of information and research on nuclear weapons.⁵ This move was contrary to two prior agreements that had led the British to believe that nuclear cooperation would continue. An informal arrangement had been made at Quebec in November 1945 whereby the UK, US and Canada agreed to share nuclear information for the good of world peace.⁶ More substantively, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Churchill signed an agreement at Hyde Park in 1944 stating that cooperation on "tube alloys" (the code name for

¹ Hathaway, R (1981) *Great Britain and the United States: Special Relations since World War II* Boston. p11.

² Hathaway p23.

³ Bevan, A "Britain and America at Loggerheads" *Foreign Affairs* Vol 36 No 1 p61.

⁴ Danchev A (2006) "The Cold War "Special Relationship" Revisited" *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Vol 17 No 3 p586.

⁵ Dickie, R (1994) *"Special" No More: Anglo-American Relations: Rhetoric and Reality* Wiedenfeld and Nicholson; London. p100

⁶ Baylis, J (1997) *Anglo-American Relations since 1939: The Enduring Alliance* Manchester University Press; Manchester p24.

nuclear research) would continue until terminated by mutual agreement.⁷ The British had contributed a great deal to the Manhattan Project that produced the atomic bomb, both in terms of research and development and access to uranium ore. The British were thus understandably upset when they failed to secure an information exchange to produce their own independent nuclear weapons.

The McMahon Act was a blow to Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin's strategy to cement the UK-US relationship in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Bevin demonstrated his desire for an overt and close UK-US relationship as early as February 1946. In a letter to Prime Minister Attlee, Bevin advocated the integration of the UK and US armament industries in order to restrict undesirable competition between the two.⁸ By December 1947 the Soviet Union's rejection of Marshall Aid allowed the UK and US to publically draw themselves closer to one another.⁹ To American surprise, Bevin agreed to the stationing of US B-29 bombers on UK soil without a formal agreement and accepted \$400m of defence aid from the US. Bevin's aim to publicly bind the US to the security of Western Europe had begun to pay off.

The level of public acknowledgment of the UK-US relationship continued to be an issue in the immediate post-war period. Churchill's famed "Iron Curtain" speech at Fulton, Missouri in 1946, was not welcomed by the press on either side of the Atlantic.¹⁰ In the speech, then leader of the opposition in the UK called for an Anglo-American "fraternal association" to fight the dangers of Soviet expansionism. Between 1945 and 1947, neither the UK nor the US wanted their relationship with each other to jeopardise their standing with the Soviet Union.¹¹ The western contingent within the wartime Grand Alliance held out hope for amiable future relations with the Soviet Union. Attlee held out hope for an accommodation with the Soviets until early in 1947.¹² However, by the late 1940s the likelihood of a continued allegiance with the Soviet Union faded. In 1948, the Soviet Union blocked access to western controlled areas of Berlin in protest at the western allies' introduction of the Deutschmark in West Berlin, thus preventing any supplies, including food from entering the city. In response, western allied air forces, including the Royal Air Force and US Air Force lifted supplies to

⁷ Rosencrance, RN (1968) *Defence of the Realm: British Strategy in the Nuclear Epoch* Columbia University Press: New York p45; p85 The Hyde Park agreement was known only to a small group of advisors, and was not known by Senator McMahon.

⁸ Ovendale, R (1998) *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century*. Macmillan; London p65.

⁹ Baylis *Enduring Alliance* p32.

¹⁰ Bartlett, CJ (1992) *The Special Relationship: A Political History* Longman; New York p22.

¹¹ Baylis, *Enduring Alliance* p31.

¹² Bartlett, *The Special Relationship* p22.

the people of West Berlin, eventually ending the crisis in May 1949. The blockade provided the impetus for the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in April 1949, and the formal commitment of the United States to the security of Western Europe.

Churchill returned to power having fought the 1951 general election on a platform to restore the UK's global prestige; this necessitated a strong and close relationship with the US. Churchill's initial focus was upon renegotiating an agreement made by the Labour government over the American appointment of a Supreme Allied Commander of the Atlantic (SACLANT).¹³ Churchill's main objective was to secure the ability for Britain to command its own forces when faced with the threat of Soviet invasion. The Prime Minister's wish was to return to the joint command of the Atlantic that proved successful during the Second World War, but there was no American appetite for it. At a summit meeting with Truman in January 1952, Churchill drew a small concession whereby the UK retained command of its forces up to a 100 fathom line from the British coast.¹⁴ The deal allowed the Americans to maintain the agreement and for Churchill to save face. The episode demonstrated three characteristics of the UK-US relationship in the early 1950s; Churchill's high standing in the US, the British tying of global prestige to a cooperative and influential relationship with the US; and Britain's junior status relative to its closest ally.

The UK had to quickly adjust to its role as the junior partner in the post-war period. Churchill's successor, Anthony Eden, advocated independence of UK foreign policy within the context of a strong cooperative relationship with the US.¹⁵ After the French rejection of the European Defence Community, Eden had been instrumental in the formation of the Western European Union that eventually paved the way for German rearmament and NATO membership in 1955.¹⁶ Earlier in 1954, Eden had brokered a peace deal in Vietnam against the wishes of his American counterpart John Foster Dulles, a man with whom he shared an infamously fractured relationship.¹⁷ As part of Eden's peace plan, France, the Soviet Union and Communist China agreed to the partition of Vietnam ahead of scheduled elections while the US refused to sign the agreement.¹⁸ Dulles reasoned that the American people could not sit by and subjugate millions of Vietnamese to communist rule. The

¹³ Dobson, AP and Marsh, S (2010) "Churchill at the Summit: SACLANT and the Tone of Anglo-American Relations in January 1952" *The International History Review* Vol 32 No 2 pp211-228

¹⁴ Dobson and Marsh "Churchill at the Summit", p223

¹⁵ Dimbleby, D and Reynolds, D (1989) *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship Between Britain and America in the 20th Century* Vintage Books; New York pp200-201.

¹⁶ Dimbleby and Reynolds p202.

¹⁷ Dickie *Special No More* p89.

¹⁸ Dimbleby and Reynolds *An Ocean Apart* p200.

American government had also refused to negotiate with the Chinese communists at any point during the process.¹⁹ The deal demonstrated both the continually divergent Anglo-American attitudes toward global communism and that British prestige could still be used to forge deals on the global stage without the need for US agreement. Dimpleby and Reynolds argue that these diplomatic successes gave Eden confidence in Britain's ability to act independently in the mid-1950s.²⁰

In 1955, the British and the Americans had agreed to loan \$14 million and \$56 million respectively for the building of the Aswan Dam, a major irrigation project for the Nile Valley. The loans were provided on the basis that the Egyptian president, Gamal Abdul Nasser play a leading and constructive role in settling the ongoing dispute between Israel and the Arab world. It was also hoped that the loans would help sway his allegiance toward the West.²¹ However, angry with Nasser's strategy to play the United States and the Soviet Union off against one another with regard to funding for the project, US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles decided to cancel the Aswan loan on July 19th 1956.²² Nasser responded seven days later when he brought the Suez Canal into public ownership. Already slighted by what the British saw as a duplicitous US policy over the Baghdad Pact, a defence treaty the US refused to sign in part out of deference to Egypt, Eden made it clear to Eisenhower that the UK would go to great lengths to reclaim the canal.²³

In the autumn of 1956, without notifying the Americans, the British along with the French engineered an Israeli attack on the newly nationalised Suez Canal. The manufactured conflict between Israel and Egypt was used as a pretext for an Anglo-French reclaiming of the canal once an ultimatum for Egyptian withdrawal, issued on October 30th, was ignored. Incensed and having interpreted the British policy to be a return to the colonial policies of old, Eisenhower blocked the UK's rights to draw funds from the IMF, a mechanism crucial for the UK's defence spending.²⁴ The US government was also able to restrict British and French oil supplies until their forces were withdrawn from the Canal Zone.²⁵ The crisis accelerated the UK's withdrawal from the Middle East and ended UK pretensions about the ability to act independently. The crisis proved a watershed for post-war UK-US relations and affirmed the UK's growing weakness vis-à-vis the United States. Fundamentally,

¹⁹ Dickie *Special No More* p90

²⁰ Dimpleby and Reynolds *An Ocean Apart* p201.

²¹ Dickie, p91.

²² Dickie, p91.

²³ Dickie, p92.

²⁴ Ruane, K and Ellison, J (2004) "Managing the Americans: Anthony Eden, Harold Macmillan and the Pursuit of 'power-by-proxy' in the 1950s" *Contemporary British History* vol 18 No 3 p154.

²⁵ Dickie, p95.

the US government was upset at the lack of consultation afforded them by the British government. Lucile Eznack has argued that violation by the UK of a norm within the relationship was the exacerbating factor in Eisenhower's anger toward the British government.²⁶ She contends that the manner in which the dissatisfaction was communicated in both private cables and in public statements suggested that the courtesy of consultation was a key element of the UK-US relationship.²⁷

By the end of 1956, the UK and US relationship was at its post-war nadir; communication between the two allies had broken down.²⁸ Such a weak relationship was in the interest of neither ally and both governments looked to rekindle the partnership. For the Eisenhower administration, the launch of Sputnik and consequent demonstration of the Soviet capability to launch inter-continental ballistic missiles, reminded of the need to nurture close allegiances.²⁹ The British realised that they could no longer act alone on the world stage and global prestige was once more associated with the ability to influence American foreign policy.

Eden's successor as Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, was seen as the Atlanticist to mend the relationship even though he acted as Foreign Secretary in the midst of the Suez crisis. Macmillan had a strong personal relationship with Eisenhower that dated back to their days commanding allied forces in North Africa during the Second World War. At the 1957 UK-US summit in Bermuda, Eisenhower reinforced the strategic importance of the British Isles. The President arranged for the stationing of 60 Thor missiles on British soil and agreed to repeal the McMahon Act in 1958, thereby paving the way for a renewal of UK-US nuclear cooperation.³⁰ Macmillan was able to secure a rhetorical commitment to the UK-US relationship that prevented any further slide in British prestige as well as a US agreement to sign the Baghdad Pact, a defence pact for the Middle East to be discussed further below.³¹ Following the 1957 summit, a State Department spokesman declared "[T]he United States-United Kingdom relationship is at the core of the NATO alliance and is an important element in SEATO and the Baghdad Pact".³² The Prime Minister also secured the ability to

²⁶ Eznack (2011) "Crises as Signals of Strength: The Significance of Affect in Close Allies' Relationships" *Security Studies* Vol 20 No 2 pp251.

²⁷ Eznack "Crises as Signals of Strength" p252.

²⁸ Ovendale *Anglo-American Relations* p117.

²⁹ Bartlett, *The Special Relationship* p101

³⁰ Dickie, *Special No More* pp99-100.

³¹ Ashton, NJ (2005) "Harold Macmillan and the "Golden Days" of Anglo-American Relations Revisited, 1957-63" *Diplomatic History* Vol29 No4 p698.

³² Bartlett p88.

purchase the air-based Skybolt nuclear weapon system in return for American use of the naval base at Holy Loch in Scotland for their fleet of nuclear submarines.

Nigel Ashton notes that although Macmillan was able to heal wounds at Bermuda, he did not achieve his aim to influence US policy.³³ Although the notion of “interdependence” was overtly declared by both parties, it had different meanings on either side of the Atlantic.³⁴ Ashton argues that while the UK saw interdependence in terms of cooperation, the Eisenhower and subsequently the Kennedy administration interpreted it in terms of US control over British policy. Macmillan held out hope that Eisenhower would look to relax tensions with the Soviet Union, but it proved not to be the case.³⁵ Macmillan’s disillusionment with the Eisenhower administration was complete when the President refused to apologise at the Paris summit following the shooting down of Gary Powers’ U2 spy plane over Russia in 1960.³⁶ For Macmillan, the U2 incident signalled an inherent inflexibility and lack of pragmatism on the part of the US when conducting policy towards the Soviet Union.

Macmillan’s relationship with Kennedy was not as continually positive as it has often been touted.³⁷ Differences in opinion over civil wars in the Congo and Yemen, policy toward Cuba and the cancellation of Skybolt led the British Prime Minister to conclude, early in Kennedy’s presidency, that “we are in a rather bad period with (the) US”.³⁸ However, at the Nassau Conference in 1962, the British government secured a favourable deal in acquiring Polaris nuclear weapons. The sea-based Polaris system was secured with the British only having to pay a tokenistic 5% surcharge for Research and Development, in return for continued US use of the Holy Loch submarine base. The deal has been described by Christopher Bartlett as “[T]he most remarkable instance of British exploitation of the Special Relationship”.³⁹ Although the pains of asymmetry were being felt in London, it was a time when the British could exact major concessions from a partnership that was strategically vital for the United States: Britain was a junior, yet crucial partner.⁴⁰ In securing nuclear weapons, the UK had assured its status at the top table within the international community. The UK-US relationship again demonstrated its ability to recover from crises in quick order.

³³ Ashton, NJ (2005) “Harold Macmillan and the “Golden Days” of Anglo-American Relations Revisited, 1957–63” *Diplomatic History* Vol29 No4p698.

³⁴ Ashton *Golden Days* p702

³⁵ Ashton, p702.

³⁶ Ashton, p704.

³⁷ Dickie *Special No More*. John Dickie entitles his chapter on the period as the “Golden Era of Mac and Jack”.

³⁸ Ashton *Golden Days* p705.

³⁹ Bartlett *The Special Relationship* p98.

⁴⁰ Bartlett, p98.

2. Wilson and Johnson, 1964-1969

As the 1960s wore on, levels of asymmetry in global power and influence continued to increase, and at a faster pace than had previously been witnessed. Prime Minister Harold Wilson and President Lyndon B. Johnson's relationship was dominated by three major issues: that of a possible British force in Vietnam, the British withdrawal from military positions East of Suez, and the devaluation of sterling. Wilson had to balance three interrelated issues at once. He needed to maintain friendly relations with the Americans in order to have them provide support for sterling. To do this he needed to support US foreign policy, particularly in Vietnam. He then also had to keep enough distance from the war in Indo-China to prevent the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) from rebelling; this was to prove an extremely difficult task.

Prior to meeting President Lyndon Johnson in the autumn of 1964, Wilson had promised not to devalue sterling. He was also aware that Johnson wanted a British military commitment in Vietnam alongside the maintenance of British forces east of Suez.⁴¹ Johnson was known to be distrustful of British prime ministers, especially since Prime Minister Alec Douglas-Home defied American wishes and authorised the sale of Leyland busses to Cuba in 1963-64.⁴² At the meeting, Johnson highlighted the importance of the continued presence of British troops in Germany and reinforced the American opinion that maintenance of a British presence East of Suez was crucial to the security of the West.⁴³ Nonetheless, Wilson declared himself to have "won the day" as he secured the cancellation of the Multi-Lateral Nuclear Force; a project which would have seen the UK share control of its nuclear weapons with other European nations.⁴⁴ Wilson was keen to show the world that he had a strong and influential relationship with the President, even if no such thing existed. For a British prime minister, prestige continued to be attached to a close consultative relationship with the US president.

The level of overt acknowledgement of the UK-US relationship was again an important issue on both sides of the Atlantic. Over Vietnam, it was now the Americans that were clamouring for overt British support for the military campaign. Johnson required only a tokenistic British force in Vietnam to add

⁴¹ Colman, J (2004) *A "Special Relationship" Harold Wilson, Lyndon B. Johnson and Anglo-American Relations 'At the Summit' 1964-68* Manchester University Press: Manchester p172.

⁴² Hull, C (2010) "'Going to War in Buses': The Anglo-American Clash over Leyland Sales to Cuba, 1963-1964" *Diplomatic History* Vol 34 No 5 pp793-822.

⁴³ Dobson, A (1990) "The Years of Transition: Anglo-American Relations 1961-7" *Review of International Studies* Vol 16 No 2 p251.

⁴⁴ Wilson, H (1971) *The Labour Government 1964-1970: A Personal Record* Weidenfeld: London p50.

international legitimacy to US operations and ease domestic opposition.⁴⁵ The president, known not to be a fan of Wilson, once complained that “a platoon of bagpipers would be sufficient” just to represent a united UK-US front in Vietnam.⁴⁶ Johnson resented Wilson’s attempt to act as an “honest broker” in the conflict. As he saw it, Wilson was offering advice from the sidelines.⁴⁷ Wilson stuck to his 1964 position that there was no chance of a British force in Vietnam under his government.⁴⁸ The commitment was made to appease the left of the PLP, but angered a US administration whose good graces were required to support the British economy.⁴⁹ The link between a British involvement in Vietnam and US support for sterling was never explicitly made, but often inferred.⁵⁰ In 1965, Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart reported that requests for help in supporting sterling were met with reminders about British unhelpfulness over Cuba and requests as to when British troops could be expected in Vietnam.⁵¹ At times, the provision and facilitation of loans by the US to the UK made it seem as if support for sterling was assured; at others Chancellor of the Exchequer Jim Callaghan was told that US support would not be forthcoming in future.⁵²

Underpinning all of Wilson’s problems was the chronically weak British economy.⁵³ The Prime Minister wanted to maintain a British presence East of Suez as much as the Americans did, but the British could not afford it.⁵⁴ John Dumbrell has explained how telephone conversations between US Undersecretary of State George Ball and National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy in 1966 demonstrated that the two valued a British presence East of Suez and in Europe much higher than a token presence in Vietnam.⁵⁵ By late 1967, acceptance of this reality in Washington became

⁴⁵ Dimpleby and Reynolds *An Ocean Apart* p252.

⁴⁶ Dickie, *Special No More* p136.

⁴⁷ Dimpleby and Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart* p249.

⁴⁸ Wilson *The Labour Government* p48.

⁴⁹ Boyle, K (2003) “The Price of Peace: Vietnam, the Pound and the crisis of the American Empire” *Diplomatic History* Vol 27 No 1 pp37-72.p43 notes the Wilson’s government rather succinctly in as much as it “operated within an economic context that made dissent (with the Americans) very costly”.

⁵⁰ Renwick Renwick, R (1996) *Fighting With Allies: America and Britain in Peace and War* Crown: New York p280.

⁵¹ Renwick *Fighting With Allies* p280.

⁵² Dobson “Years of Transition” p252.

⁵³ Colman *The “Special Relationship?”* p170; Ziegler, P (1993) *Wilson: The Authorised Life* Harper: London p329.

⁵⁴ Dobson “The Years of Transition: Anglo-American Relations” p250.

⁵⁵ Dumbrell, J (1996) “The Johnson Administration and the British Labour Government: Vietnam, the Pound and East of Suez” *Journal of American Studies* Vol 30 No 2 p224.

apparent as the Johnson administration began to further downgrade its expectations of the UK.⁵⁶ Robert Hathaway comments, with the benefit of hindsight, on the unreasonableness of American expectations for Britain to “simultaneously maintain a healthy economy, a substantial presence in the Far East and a major role in Europe”⁵⁷.

In January 1968, the British government announced an accelerated rate of withdrawal from military outposts east of Suez. This declaration closely followed the devaluation of sterling from \$2.80 to \$2.40 in November 1967. Although Britain still had a lot to offer the US in terms of being the world’s third nuclear power, having highly trained armed forces and 55,000 troops stationed in Germany, neither the British nor the Americans could shy away from Britain’s decline in global significance and power.⁵⁸ The devaluation of sterling and the withdrawal from commitments east of Suez marked a sea change in Britain’s relationship not only with the US, but the rest of the world. Furthermore, future British prime ministers would no longer have powerful bargaining chips such as control of the sterling area or a strong friendly military presence in the Middle and Far East to use with the Americans. 1967-1968 was a time when the level of asymmetry within the Anglo-American relationship increased more obviously than at any point in the post-war years. Upon Nixon’s inauguration in January 1969, the British contribution to the global strength of the Anglo-American relationship in both economic and military terms had dwindled. Britain was now a medium sized, albeit nuclear armed, European power.

3. Strains in the Middle East

In the early 1950s, the British were caught in a dilemma in the Middle East between the need for US support for their policies and what they saw as the Americans “supplanting their interests”.⁵⁹ Aneurin Bevan alleged that the Conservative Party was particularly bitter toward what they saw as the Americans pushing anti-colonialism as a means of undermining and replacing British influence in the region.⁶⁰ The UK generally welcomed US support, but in the early 1950s many UK Middle East officials had fractious relationships with their American counterparts.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Dumbrell “The Johnson Administration” p224. Dumbrell states that George Ball in particular was of the view in 1967 that “a strong British commitment to Europe was more important than a commitment East of Suez”.

⁵⁷ Hathaway *Great Britain and the United States* p83.

⁵⁸ Colman The “Special Relationship?” p170.

⁵⁹ Marsh, S (1998) “The Special Relationship and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Crisis, 1950-4” *Review of International Studies* Vol 24 No 4 p535.

⁶⁰ Bevan “Britain and America at Loggerheads” p65.

⁶¹ Ovendale p88; Marsh *Crisis in Iran* p26.

The Iranian oil crisis of the early 1950s epitomised UK-US tensions in the Middle East. The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) had long been a beacon of the British colonial legacy, and the UK government's majority shareholding left it open to criticism as an instrument of foreign policy.⁶² Thus when Iranian prime minister, Mohammed Mossadeq nationalised the assets of AIOC, the UK faced losing its largest overseas possession.⁶³ Though the UK and US had common interests in both fighting communism and the western stake in Iranian oil, their primary focuses differed.⁶⁴ Steve Marsh points out that Middle Eastern oil was vital to Britain "financially, strategically, politically and militarily".⁶⁵ Middle Eastern oil was crucial to the development of the British economy and would be needed to fuel any future military expedition.⁶⁶ Such concentration on the protection of the AIOC oil concession and focus on economic aspects of the crisis led to disagreements with an American government focused on maintaining the stability of the Iranian regime as a bulwark against communist infiltration of the Middle East.

The US became disillusioned with British refusals to accept even the smallest of concessions that would lead to a settlement and refused to support military action to reclaim AIOC's assets.⁶⁷ In particular US Secretary of State Dean Acheson became irritated by the British refusal to concede the oil concession in return for adequate compensation.⁶⁸ The stalemate between the UK and Iran continued when the British imposed export bans on steel, sugar and iron to Iran and dismissed 20,000 Iranian workers from the Abadan refinery. In response, Mossadeq expelled British staff and forced the British to backtrack on a commitment not to evacuate British nationals from the world's largest refinery.⁶⁹ The Truman administration was concerned that a standoff between the Iranians and the British could push Mossadeq's Iran into the arms of the Soviet Union.

The crisis continued into 1953 and Eisenhower's presidency. The new administration was more prepared than its predecessor to take decisive action to prevent Soviet gains in the Middle East.⁷⁰ The approach resulted in the joint CIA-MI6 "Operation Ajax" designed to overthrow Mossadeq's

⁶² Marsh, S (2012) "Anglo-American Relations 1950-51: Three Strikes for British Prestige" *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Vol 23 No 2 p308; Dickie, *Special No More* p196 Dickie comments upon how AIOC "had become a symbol of imperialist exploitation for the Iranians".

⁶³ Marsh "Anglo-Iranian oil crisis" p530.

⁶⁴ Marsh "Anglo-Iranian oil crisis" p531.

⁶⁵ Marsh "Anglo-Iranian oil crisis" p532.

⁶⁶ Marsh "Anglo-Iranian oil crisis" p532.

⁶⁷ Dimpleby and Reynolds *An Ocean Apart* p196; Dickie *Special No More* p71.

⁶⁸ Dimpleby and Reynolds p196

⁶⁹ Dickie p71.

⁷⁰ Dimpleby and Reynolds p197.

government and reinstall the Shah of Iran to power. Once the Shah was returned from exile the oil dispute was resolved, but resulted in British net losses. The UK's monopoly on oil in Iran was broken; and AIOC's share of the Iranian oil concession dropped to forty percent, American companies gained 40% and Dutch and French companies the remainder.⁷¹ Such an arrangement naturally fed Conservative Party fears that the Americans were looking to supplant British interests in the region, something the US administration strenuously denied.⁷²

Conflicting British and American approaches to the region continued to play out over the creation of a defence organisation for the Middle East. Initially seen as a region of British responsibility, the Truman administration was cool on the idea of committing American troops to a Middle Eastern Defence Organisation (MEDO) that could become a NATO for the Middle East. The British strategy to create MEDO had been born out of a realisation that the UK could no longer defend the Middle East alone from Soviet advances in the early 1950s.⁷³ The British needed American support for the defence of the region, but were sensitive to any perceived American attempt to supplant their primacy.⁷⁴ The Eisenhower administration quickly disassociated itself from the MEDO proposal in favour of a "northern tier" of allied countries. Under the strategy, Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan would form a barrier around the Middle East to ward off Soviet infiltration. The initiative allowed the Americans to protect the region without an association with the former colonial ruler. The plan was to improve their standing in the region, and with Egypt in particular.⁷⁵ Therefore, when the northern tier was secured in 1955, largely through a British initiative in the form of the Baghdad Pact, the refusal of the US government to join the pact angered London. Dulles argued that the US did not promise to be part of such an organisation and that the US should not be associated with pacts that appear to be foreign impositions. He then issued a moratorium on further members joining.⁷⁶ Eden later accused the US of paying undue deference to Egyptian opinion, whose lack of favour for the pact coincided with that of the US.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Dimpleby and Reynolds *An Ocean Apart* p197.

⁷² Dimpleby and Reynolds p197.

⁷³ Ruane, K (2006) "Anglo-American Relations, The Cold War and Defence of the Middle East 1953-55" *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* Vol 4 No1 p8

⁷⁴ Ruane "Cold War and Defence" p6.

⁷⁵ Ruane p6; Jasse, RL (1991) "The Baghdad Pact: Cold War or Colonialism?" *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol 27 No 1 p144.

⁷⁶ Ruane "Cold War and Defence" p12.

⁷⁷ Ruane p2.

Although devastating to British pretensions toward the ability to launch independent military action in the Middle East, the Suez incident in 1956 did not end the UK's role in the region. Neither did it end the British dilemma of being stuck between the need for US financial and military support and the supplanting of British influence. Likewise, the Americans still wanted the British to maintain as much of their responsibility as possible. Defence of Jordan was still seen as a British responsibility by the US government and, under the Kennedy administration, the president felt that it should be the UK that moved should Egypt, Iraq or Syria threaten the western ally.⁷⁸ In fact the American government was actively encouraging a continued British involvement in the Middle East in the early 1960s. Simon Smith quotes Denis Healey's comment that "the United States, after trying for thirty years to get Britain out of Asia, the Middle East and Africa was now trying desperately to keep us in".⁷⁹ Within the context of American overstretch in Vietnam, the value to the US of a continued British presence in the Middle East increased.

Conflicts of policy continued into the 1960s, Macmillan felt that US support for the Yemeni rebels undermined British support for the ruling monarchy. Macmillan was also incensed over Kennedy's decision to sell to Israel Hawk surface-to-air missiles, a decision that ended stated British hopes to sell to the Israelis its own Bloodhound system. The prime minister described the move as a "disgraceful piece of trickery", but was most upset by the lack of consultation on the part of the Americans.⁸⁰ Macmillan told Kennedy that "to be informed on Saturday afternoon that your Government are going to make an offer to supply on Sunday is really not consultation".⁸¹ Macmillan went further, claiming that "It certainly makes it necessary to reconsider our whole position on this and other allied matters".⁸²

Consultation again became an issue during Wilson and Johnson's rocky partnership. Nigel Ashton has argued that Johnson's anger over the British withdrawal from positions East of Suez stemmed from a lack of consultation ahead of time. Secretary of State Dean Rusk described the move as having "the acrid aroma of fait accompli".⁸³ Further escalation of the conflict in Vietnam under Johnson rendered the US government keen for the British to maintain their presence East of Suez, but protestations

⁷⁸ Smith, SC (2012) "America in Britain's Place? Anglo-American relations and the Middle East in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis" *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* Vol 10 No 3 p260.

⁷⁹ Smith "America in Britain's place" p260.

⁸⁰ Smith, SC (2012b) *Ending Empire in the Middle East: Britain, the United States and Post-War Decolonisation, 1945-1973* Routledge: Oxon. p104

⁸¹ Smith *Ending Empire* p104.

⁸² Smith *Ending Empire* p104.

⁸³ Smith *Ending Empire* p120.

against the withdrawal came to naught. British influence in the Middle East was not over, as the former colonial rulers looked to secure the region through the federation of the former Trucial states in the late 1960s and into the early 1970s. However, UK power in the region, as elsewhere, was on a steep decline.

4. The China Question

US opinion toward communism hardened in the post-war era. By March 1947 it was clear that the British could no longer afford to sustain their wartime commitments to the security of Greece and Turkey.⁸⁴ In response, the Truman Doctrine ensured that the US would assume British responsibilities in order to curb the expansionist tendencies of the Soviet Union, and prevent communist from taking over in European countries. Although united in the Cold War struggle, the UK and US understood the threat of communism differently. In a 1954 *Foreign Affairs* article, shadow chancellor Hugh Gaitskell noted that anti-communist feelings in the UK “have never been as strong or as widespread” as they have been in the US.⁸⁵ In 1951, Minister for Labour Aneurin Bevan resigned from the cabinet in protest at high levels of defence spending to counter what he saw as an exaggerated Soviet threat.⁸⁶ Bevan attracted little support in parliament, but his stand tapped into a growing sense of anti-Americanism.⁸⁷ This aside, British governments conducted policy toward communist nations within the context of a far less hostile public opinion than their American counterparts. In the US there was a latent sympathy for the Nationalists on Taiwan not evident in the UK. This meant that hostile Chinese actions during the Korean War, its aggressiveness toward Taiwan itself, and general anti-American rhetoric endured that American opposition to Peking lasted well into the 1960s.⁸⁸

Differing attitudes toward communism in the world punctuated the UK and US responses to the seizure of power by Mao’s communist forces in China in October 1949. The British quickly recognised the communist government in January 1950.⁸⁹ Prime Minister Attlee later explained that British recognition was not only to protect British interests in Hong Kong and acknowledge that the

⁸⁴ Rosencrance *Defence of the Realm* p62.

⁸⁵ Gaitskell, H (1954) “The Search for Anglo-American Policy” *Foreign Affairs* Vol 32 p573.

⁸⁶ Bartlett, *The Special Relationship* p50.

⁸⁷ Dimbleby and Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart* p191.

⁸⁸ Kaufman (2001) *Confronting Communism: US and British Policies Toward China* University of Missouri Press: USA p237.

⁸⁹ Kaufman, *Confronting Communism* p237

communists were in control of mainland China, but also to help loosen the Sino-Soviet partnership.⁹⁰ US Secretary of State Dean Acheson looked to follow the British lead in recognising the communists but was confronted by a wave of anti-communist congressional and public opinion.⁹¹ Before Mao's ultimate success, but whilst a communist victory seemed inevitable, the Truman administration presented a White Paper that laid the blame for problems in China firmly with the Nationalist leader of the Koumintang (KMT) Chaing Kai-shek. The White Paper was dismissed by powerful members of the congressional China Bloc who, supported by *The Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, and *The Chicago Tribune* pressed the administration to withdraw diplomatic missions from mainland China prior to the communist victory. The move made recognition after such an event very difficult.⁹² The Democratic administration was under immense pressure to appear tough on communism; Truman stood accused of "losing" China to the communists.⁹³

The Americans told the British that recognition of the communists and withdrawal of recognition from the nationalists did not necessarily signal a fissure in the UK-US goal of a China "free of domination".⁹⁴ Such a proclamation proved premature. In a domestic climate unconducive to a pragmatic policy toward the communists, the American administration was unable to reduce its level of support for Chiang's nationalists. Although the KMT were now confined to the island of Taiwan, the US maintained support for the nationalist government's membership of the UN and seat on the Security Council. The US voted against the seating of the communists in 1950, but promised not to use its veto power should there come a time when the majority of UN members voted in favour of the communists' representation.⁹⁵ Attlee believed that UN membership would further encourage Chinese independence of the Soviet Union, but was not willing to unsettle the UK-US relationship. Consequently, the UK government abstained on the Soviet motion to seat China.⁹⁶

UK-US disagreements over China became a larger issue within the relationship sooner than the allies hoped. Following the end of the Japanese occupation and the Second World War, Korea had been split in two. The North, briefly occupied by the Soviet Union had a communist government, while the

⁹⁰ Ovendale p91; Attlee (1954) "Britain and America: Common Aims, Different Opinions" *Foreign Affairs* Vol 32 No 2 p192.

⁹¹ Kaufman, *Confronting Communism* pp24-25.

⁹² Kaufman pp24-25.

⁹³ Kaufman p27.

⁹⁴ Kaufman p27.

⁹⁵ Kaufman p28.

⁹⁶ Kaufman, V (2000) "Chirep: The Anglo-American Dispute over Chinese Representation in the United Nations 1950-71" *English Historical Review* vol115 No461 p355; Dockrill, ML (1986) "Anglo-American Relations and the Korean War, June 1950-June 1951" *International Affairs* Vol 62 No 3 p460.

briefly American-occupied South had a capitalist regime. Neither the North nor the South recognised the other government as legitimate, and both laid claim to the whole of Korea, though there was a de facto border in place at the 38th Parallel. In June 1950 Kim Il-sung ordered his North Korean army to attack their southern neighbours and reclaim the whole of Korea for the communists.

The Truman administration, keen to prevent the spread of communism in any form, assumed the North Korean movement had been authorised by Stalin and acted quickly. With the Soviets boycotting the UN Security Council over the non-seating of Peking, the Americans easily passed a resolution calling for an American-led international force to push the North Koreans back.⁹⁷ For their part, the British had little strategic interest in Korea, and although sharing the belief that Stalin likely sanctioned the attack, did not heavily endorse the American “domino” theory whereby successive nations could fall prey to the spread of communism.⁹⁸ UK support for the American action, in the first instance, was provided largely on the basis that it would strengthen the UK-US relationship.⁹⁹ The British were looking to firm up the American commitment to Europe and were soliciting further financial assistance for post-war rearmament.¹⁰⁰ Korea is an often cited example of the British willingness to “pay the price” of blood and treasure to ensure a strong relationship with the US.

By September 1950, UN forces led by General Douglas MacArthur had pushed the North Korean Army back beyond the border represented by the 38th parallel. Ignoring warnings from Peking regarding a de facto American occupation of North Korea, the US administration continued to authorise the routing of the North Korean forces. Truman declared the American aim to reunify Korea under a democratic government as MacArthur pushed the North Koreans back to the Yalu River and the border with China.¹⁰¹ In response, China launched a massive counter attack in November 1950 that quickly drove the American-led UN forces back from the border.¹⁰²

Already concerned with MacArthur’s lack of restraint in provoking the Chinese, the British had pushed for a ceasefire and UN talks with representatives from Peking.¹⁰³ Attlee was understandably aghast when Truman appeared to tell reporters in Washington that the US would consider using an

⁹⁷ Dimpleby and Reynolds *An Ocean Apart* p185.

⁹⁸ Baylis *Enduring Alliance* p41.

⁹⁹ MacDonald, C (1991) “The Diplomacy of Restraint: The Attlee government and the Korean War” in Gorst et al (eds) *Contemporary British History 1931-61: Politics and the Limits of Policy* Pinter: London p220

¹⁰⁰ Macdonald “The diplomacy of Restraint” p220; this is a view supported by Dockrill, “Anglo-American Relations and the Korean War” p460 and Bartlett *The Special Relationship* p41

¹⁰¹ Dimpleby and Reynolds, p185.

¹⁰² Dockrill, “Korean War” p473.

¹⁰³ Dockrill p463.

atomic bomb against the Chinese.¹⁰⁴ Although Truman had misspoken and it became quickly apparent that MacArthur would not be authorised to use nuclear weapons, Attlee still required assurances at a snap Washington summit in December 1950. The Prime Minister met with the President in an attempt to persuade the Americans to consult further with the British over Korea. Attlee needed to ensure that the war was not extended beyond its current parameters and to encourage negotiations for a peaceful settlement with China.¹⁰⁵ The British were relieved when the hawkish General MacArthur was fired in April 1951, but the Korean crisis had hardened the American attitude toward communist China.

Following the armistice in Korea in 1953, prime minister Winston Churchill came under parliamentary pressure to support the admission of Communist China to the UN.¹⁰⁶ However, unwilling to unsettle the UK-US relationship over a relatively minor issue, Churchill supported a US moratorium on UN talks regarding Chinese representation. His successor, Anthony Eden had a different attitude. Fresh from successful talks with the Chinese over Vietnam in 1954, Eden instructed the UK Ambassador in Washington to tell the Americans that continued British support for the moratorium in 1955 was given out of “a sense of comradeship, not real agreement”.¹⁰⁷ Eden had been an advocate for the communists’ inclusion as foreign secretary under Churchill, citing the fact that British public opinion favoured Peking’s acceptance. Nonetheless, he reluctantly supported the moratorium until his demise in the wake of Suez.

Like Churchill, Macmillan did not want disagreements over China to obstruct strengthening the UK-US relationship. The matter remained in the background until the early 1960s when the admission to the UN of a number of newly independent African nations made the passing of the moratorium on China difficult to maintain.¹⁰⁸ The Kennedy administration privately favoured a “two Chinas” solution whereby Peking and Taipei could both be seated at the UN, but the new Democratic president needed to avoid accusations of being “soft” on communism: the administration had to come up with a different solution. The mechanism used to keep Peking out of the UN was to call the representation of China an “important question”, then once a majority voted in favour of such a resolution, a two-third majority vote would be required to change the status of China’s representation.¹⁰⁹ Again wary of harming the UK-US relationship, this time in the wake of

¹⁰⁵ Dockrill “Korean War” p456; Kaufman *Confronting Communism* p46.

¹⁰⁶ Kaufman “Chirep” p357.

¹⁰⁷ Kaufman “Chirep” p361.

¹⁰⁸ Kaufman “Chirep” p365.

¹⁰⁹ Kaufman “Chirep” p368.

Khrushchev's demands for the withdrawal of Western forces from Berlin, the British government deferred to the American policy despite disagreement on its substance.¹¹⁰

Despite heavily criticising the Conservative government for its public opposition to the seating of Peking, upon coming to power Wilson's Labour government continued to support the Important Question resolution.¹¹¹ Again keen not to upset an American administration whose support for sterling was crucial to the British economy, the UK government extended its support for the US position on Chinese representation throughout the mid and late 1960s. As had the Eisenhower administration, the Kennedy and Johnson administrations continued to ponder a "two Chinas" solution whereby the Communists and Nationalists could both sit at the UN. However, public and congressional opinion would not allow for movement on the issue until Nixon's presidency in 1969. British public and parliamentary opinion had continued to support a more conciliatory approach to Chinese representation, but these attitudes continued to be trumped by deference to the UK-US relationship.

in terms of UK-US relations, the issue of trade with Peking followed a similar course to that of UN representation. From the point that a communist victory against the nationalists appeared likely in 1949, the Truman Administration placed restrictions upon the sale of goods to China that could be used for military purposes.¹¹² Strategic goods fell under the embargo in two categories; List 1A were goods of major military significance whilst those on List 1B extended to transportation and industrial equipment.¹¹³ The Attlee government demonstrated strong opposition to the controls which required the assistance of the US' allies if they were to have any effect.¹¹⁴ British colony Hong Kong's reliance upon trade with the mainland as well as the fact that British investments in China amounted to \$840 million compared to the US' \$200 million triggered strong opposition from Attlee's government.¹¹⁵ Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin was of the opinion that although the British shared an objective with the US in containing communist China, it believed the best way to do this was to encourage contact with Peking in order to pull it away from Soviet influence.¹¹⁶ He also made the point that the British government would be hesitant to take any measures that could harm the

¹¹⁰ Kaufman *Confronting Communism* p369.

¹¹¹ Kaufman p372.

¹¹² Kaufman p13.

¹¹³ Kaufman p17.

¹¹⁴ Kaufman p17.

¹¹⁵ Kaufman p17.

¹¹⁶ Kaufman p17.

British economy.¹¹⁷ It took the UK government eight months to agree to place an embargo on List 1A goods only, and resisted subsequent US pressure to extend restrictions any further.¹¹⁸ It remained the case however, that overall the British would rather anger the Chinese than the Americans.¹¹⁹

The trade issue came up again amid British economic difficulties in the late 1950s. Both the British and the Chinese governments were keen to expand bilateral trade but were held back by the trade restrictions imposed at the behest of the US.¹²⁰ However, like on the issue of Chirep, Macmillan was unwilling to press the Americans and the Eisenhower administration had no intention of reversing US policy.¹²¹ The early 1960s similarly saw little movement in the positions of the British and American governments, one FCO report in 1964 concluded that the issue of trade with communist China must be one that the UK and US must “agree to differ” on.¹²² This continued into the mid-1960s as Johnson felt unable to relax trade restrictions on Peking after he had vastly increased the number of US troops in Vietnam that had been sent to fight against the communist threat.¹²³ However, small alterations in US policy began to occur at the end of Johnson’s Presidency. After years of internal debate on softening the US stance toward China, Johnson authorised licences for the sale of pharmaceutical goods to mainland China for use in combatting various epidemics that had arisen in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution.¹²⁴ The British approved of the turn in US policy, but the issue of trade with China, much like that of Chirep, remained a manageable disagreement within the Anglo-American relationship.

By 1969-70 UK policy toward China had served as a long-held British concession, necessary to ensure the prosperity of the UK-US relationship. It represented a token of appreciation for the post-war alliance.¹²⁵ Although Churchill and Macmillan had been unwilling to question the US policy, the British broad stance on the benefit of Peking’s admittance to the UN at the expense of the nationalists had not altered since 1949. The Korean War demonstrated the lengths to which the British were willing to extend in order to protect the UK-US relationship and exposed the differences in the allies’ positions on China. However, from the point of Attlee’s emergency meeting with

¹¹⁷ Kaufman p17.

¹¹⁸ Kaufman *Confronting Communism* p18.

¹¹⁹ Kaufman p23.

¹²⁰ Kaufman p145.

¹²¹ Kaufman p145.

¹²² Kaufman p173.

¹²³ Kaufman p183.

¹²⁴ Kaufman p206.

¹²⁵ Kaufman p182.

Truman in December 1950 consultation on the matter was consistent for the next twenty years. Both governments were aware of the pervading public consensus in each country and the constraints this placed upon policy toward communist China. Only in the early 1970s did the situation shift significantly.

5. The UK-US Relationship in South Asia

During the Second World War both parties were aware that the manner in which power was transferred to the people of the subcontinent could have a huge effect on relations between the UK and US.¹²⁶ In 1942 both allies sent missions to India. Their stated objectives were to solicit Indian help for the war effort, but both had more than an eye on the role India would play in the post-war world. The UK Mission, headed by Sir Stafford Cripps took with it the War Cabinet's Offer to India. The offer proposed that an Indian Union would be created and given dominion status once the war was over. Each princely Indian state would be given the opportunity to accede to the Union, and those that decided not to accede would be given separate dominion status. Constitutions within the states would ensure the safety and equality of minorities. The British government would retain control of defence, but all other matters would be handed over to an Indian constituent assembly.¹²⁷ The offer was quickly refused by the Indian Congress, who found British control of Indian defence unacceptable and saw the offer as a mandate for the splitting of India into a number of constituent parts.¹²⁸ Mohandas Gandhi referred to the offer as a "post-dated check".¹²⁹

At the same time as the Cripps mission, President Roosevelt sent a personal representative to India in the form of Colonel Louis Johnson, with the diplomatic rank of Ambassador.¹³⁰ In discussions with Indian leaders, Johnson intimated that the United States would support Indian independence in the post-war world. Johnson's talks suggested that the Americans disagreed with Churchill's pronouncement that the Atlantic Charter's provisions for sovereign rights and self-government only applied to those nations occupied by Axis powers.¹³¹ Johnson's communications seemed to signal a

¹²⁶ Inder Singh, A (1993) *The Limits of British Influence: South Asia and the Anglo-American Relationship, 1947-56* Pinter: London p10.

¹²⁷ WN Brown (1972) *The United States and India, Pakistan, Bangladesh* Harvard University Press: Cambridge Mass p122.

¹²⁸ Brown, *India, Pakistan, Bangladesh* p123.

¹²⁹ Brown, p123.

¹³⁰ Brown, p397.

¹³¹ Brown, p121.

fissure in UK-US opinion that would allow for the US to forge a closer allegiance with an independent India once the war was over.

Following the failure of the Cripps Mission, the Indian National Congress (INC) turned on the British administration and called for outright independence, rather than the dominion status they were being offered. The Tory government responded by arresting nationalist leaders and suppressing the resultant “Quit India” movement.¹³² Despite seeming to stay true to their anti-colonialist tradition, the US government was critical of the Indian Congress and sympathised with the British response in India. Wartime considerations, it seemed, were prioritised over principals of self-determination and independence for nations.

Following the Second World War, the “granting” of independence to India has often been seen as a headline achievement for the Attlee government.¹³³ However, Anita Inder-Singh has made the point that such a move did not fit within the context of British foreign policy at the time.¹³⁴ The Attlee government neither wanted to grant independence, nor did it achieve its aims once it was resigned to it.¹³⁵ As with elsewhere in the world, the British were primarily concerned with the maintenance of the UK’s economic interests, which required the retention of the empire wherever possible.¹³⁶ Despite Indian independence being seen by some in the US as being the UK’s ‘finest hour’, the hand of the British was forced by violent outbreaks and civil service mutinies in early 1946.¹³⁷ After these incidents, a cabinet mission was sent and an agreement was eventually made whereby India would be split along religious lines with mainland India flanked to the north east and north west by a two winged Pakistan.¹³⁸

In the lead up to partition, a defence agreement with India, in whatever form independence was to take, was of paramount concern for the British. This was, in no small part, a result of the immense contribution India could make to the British Army; 2.5 million Indian soldiers had fought for the allies in Second World War. India was Britain’s source of power East of Suez and ensured that the UK

¹³² Gupta, RL (1971) *Conflict and Harmony: Indo-British Relations: A New Perspective* Trimurti Publications: New Delhi p21.

¹³³ Gupta, RL *Conflict and Harmony* p12

¹³⁴ Inder-Singh *The Limits of British Influence* p17.

¹³⁵ Gupta pp12-15.

¹³⁶ Gupta, p12

¹³⁷ Inder Singh, p17

¹³⁸ Gupta p21 The British preference was for a united India on the subcontinent, but insurmountable differences between the Muslim League and the secular Indian National Congress eventually led to an amended proposal for partition by Earl Mountbatten being accepted by all.

remained a power in the Far East.¹³⁹ The British policy however, took no account of the new Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru's repeatedly stated position between 1945 and 1947 that India would remain neutral and would not allow foreign troops on its soil.¹⁴⁰ The British felt that India's membership of the commonwealth would help ensure the continuation of military links, but India's commitment to non-alignment held firm into the post-war era.

Since official Indian foreign affairs were conducted by the British Foreign Office until 1947, diplomatic contact between India and the United States was minimal.¹⁴¹ Despite his sympathy with the British position amid the "Quit India" movement, Roosevelt took all possible steps to ensure that Indian independence would occur once the war was over. W. Norman Brown has argued that Indian goodwill for the United States in the post-war period was a result of the aid the President provided to all United Nations members, including India and his "strong democratic world leadership".¹⁴² The President already had a high standing in India prior to the war as a defender of democracy and oppressed peoples, and his legacy ensured that the United States maintained a favourable image in India after his death.¹⁴³ However, as was the case with the Middle East, the Americans saw the region as a British responsibility and were willing for their closest ally to take the lead.

Almost as soon as India and Pakistan gained their independence, the two countries were at war. Under the terms of partition, each princely state within British India had the choice to accede either to India, to Pakistan, or remain independent. Kashmir was one of the few states that wished to maintain its independence. Its Hindu monarch, Maharajah Hari Singh resisted pressure from both sides for accession.¹⁴⁴ India wanted Kashmir to join its secular federation and Pakistan wanted the state's majority Muslim population to join the world's largest Islamic nation. On October 24th 1947, a tribal rebellion broke out in Kashmir's south-western province of Poonch; these tribesmen were

¹³⁹ Gupta, *Conflict and Harmony* p16.

¹⁴⁰ Inder-Singh, *The limits of British Influence* p20.

¹⁴¹ Brown, *India, Pakistan, Bangladesh* p390.

¹⁴² Brown p398.

¹⁴³ Brown p398.

¹⁴⁴ Ganguly, S (2001) *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions Since 1947* Columbia University Press: New York p16.

quickly reinforced by the Pakistani army and rapidly overwhelmed Kashmiri forces.¹⁴⁵ As the enemy marched on the capital, Srinagar, Hari Singh acceded to India in exchange for military assistance.¹⁴⁶

Under the independence agreement, the British military command had the ultimate say over Indian military matters.¹⁴⁷ Chairman of the Indian Defence Council Earl Mountbatten, against the wishes of Nehru, vetoed a decision to launch a full military campaign in Kashmir, and urged that the matter be taken to the UN.¹⁴⁸ Once the matter was referred to the UN General Assembly, it called for a plebiscite and a commission visited the region in the summer of 1948, but was unsuccessful in finding a resolution.¹⁴⁹ A second UN resolution called for India to withdraw its troops once Pakistan had done so. A solution was never found as India focused upon Pakistani withdrawals and Pakistan focused upon the provisions for the plebiscite.¹⁵⁰ Neither side was happy with the agreement that led to a ceasefire without a settlement. The UK and US were thankful for an end to hostilities, but continued to see the solving of the Kashmir dispute as crucial to long-term stability- only in 1971 did the focus briefly move from Kashmir to East Pakistan.

India's continued unwillingness to formally join a defence pact caused a dilemma for the West. Since Pakistan's need to ensure its security vis-à-vis India made it a far more willing partner in the fight against communism. For US administrations, the question was posed as to how far Indian protests would be taken into consideration: The Truman administration was initially unwilling to provide support for Pakistan at the expense of India, but this changed under Eisenhower.¹⁵¹ Intent on turning neutral countries into allies, Dulles instigated a Mutual Security Agreement with Pakistan that included military aid.¹⁵² Pakistan supported the US's Northern Tier defence strategy for the Middle East and joined the Baghdad Pact in 1954, a move that confirmed its place within the western alliance system. The US administration demonstrated a willingness to endure damage to Indo-US

¹⁴⁵ Ganguly, *Conflict Unending* p16; Dixit, JN (2002) *India and Pakistan in War and Peace* Routledge: London p113. The role that Pakistan played in the instigation of the uprisings is uncertain, but it is certain that they quickly reinforced the tribal forces. Pakistani forces in Kashmir were at fully operational levels by the 27th October 1947.

¹⁴⁶ Dixit, *India and Pakistan* p114.

¹⁴⁷ Dixit, pp115-116.

¹⁴⁸ Dixit p116.

¹⁴⁹ Ganguly, p21.

¹⁵⁰ Ganguly, p22.

¹⁵¹ Choudhury, GW (1975) *India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Major Powers* The Free Press: New York p78.

¹⁵² McMahon, RJ (1988) "United States Cold War Strategy in South Asia: Making a Military Commitment to Pakistan 1947-54" *Journal of American History* Vol 75 No 3 p830.

relations, and greater instability on the subcontinent, in order to bolster their policy of containment of the USSR.

Although broadly in agreement with the American strategy, the British had a higher sensitivity to the effect that arming Pakistan would have upon relations with India.¹⁵³ The British went so far as to counsel the Americans against the supply of weapons to Pakistan in the early 1950s for fear of Indian chagrin.¹⁵⁴ The British were more sympathetic to Indian protests that the arms supplied to Pakistan for the fight against communism were in fact acquired by Pakistan for any future conflict with India. Although the Americans were keen to soften the impact on India as much as possible, the early 1950s were a time when UK-US discord in South Asia revolved around the weight that should be given to Indian sensitivities and opinion.¹⁵⁵ Underlying these considerations lay the continued difference in UK and US attitudes toward the communist threat, within the US policy of containment, Pakistan's cooperation as an ally trumped Indian strategic concerns.

US policy in the region altered under Kennedy. The administration saw more value in productive US-Indian relations than its predecessors; a democratic alliance with India had more potential benefit than a military alliance with Pakistan.¹⁵⁶ Closer relations with a strong India could also act as a check against Chinese power in the region.¹⁵⁷ Favour in US relations on the subcontinent tipped toward India in the early 1960s. Missions to South Asia in 1961 and 1962 headed by Vice President Lyndon Johnson and special envoy Henry Kissinger both served to assure India of continued economic aid, whilst making it clear that no new pledges would be made to Pakistan.¹⁵⁸ Despite disagreements elsewhere in the world, UK and US opinion began to converge in South Asia as Indian sensitivities over the arming of Pakistan were taken into account.

The UK and US acted in unison over the Sino-Indian border dispute in 1962. The western allies moved quickly to supply India with weapons to ward off Chinese aggression, much to the chagrin of the Pakistani government.¹⁵⁹ As with supply of arms to Pakistan in the 1950s, the West justified the military aid in terms of the communist threat, maintaining that any arms supplied to South Asia were

¹⁵³ McMahon "United States Cold War Strategy" p824.

¹⁵⁴ McMahon p834.

¹⁵⁵ Rajan, MS (1960) "Stresses and Strains in Indo-British Relations 1954-6" *International Studies* vol 153 No 2 p155.

¹⁵⁶ Devereux, DR (2009) "The Sino-Indian War of 1962 in Anglo-American Relations" *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol 44 No 1 pp 75.

¹⁵⁷ Choudhury, *India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Major Powers* p101.

¹⁵⁸ Choudhury, p107.

¹⁵⁹ Brown *The United States and India* p400.

restricted to use against communist aggression.¹⁶⁰ The border conflict ended abruptly with a unilateral Chinese ceasefire, apparently designed to avoid a full-scale war with the West and take the moral high ground in future negotiations.¹⁶¹ The conflict created a paradox within post-war British and American relations on the subcontinent. The need to defend South Asia from Soviet and subsequently Chinese aggression had led to the provision of arms to India and Pakistan. However, such arms helped to decrease levels of stability in the region that were seen as crucial to the fight against communism.

Support for India in 1962 had a further unintended consequence. During the conflict on the Chinese border, UK and US officials had successfully persuaded Pakistan president Ayub Khan, against the advice of foreign minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, not to launch an opportunistic incursion into Indian territory. However, in the wake of the conflict, disillusionment within the Pakistani government over what they saw as a pro-Indian swing in US foreign policy, persuaded Ayub to allow Bhutto to open up contacts with the Chinese.¹⁶² In ceding the Aksai Chin region, an area within Kashmir claimed by India but occupied by Pakistan, Bhutto actively involved Peking in the dispute over Kashmir and gained Chinese support for Pakistan's territorial claims.¹⁶³ Bhutto allowed for the Chinese to develop communication links from Tibet through to the Chinese mainland, thereby demonstrating Pakistan's long-term commitment to a close relationship with Peking.¹⁶⁴ In trying to placate and support India in 1962, the UK and US had inadvertently helped push Pakistan closer to China. It was the resultant close Pakistan-China relationship that Nixon and Kissinger later exploited to improve US relations with Peking.

Part of the UK-US strategy during the Sino-Indian border war had been to capitalise upon Indian goodwill to help solve the Kashmir dispute, but Bhutto's dealings with the Chinese had put paid to the plan.¹⁶⁵ However, the region was still regarded as the major source of instability- as demonstrated by the conflicts of 1965. The first, albeit brief confrontation between India and Pakistan occurred over the Rann of Kutch, an uninhabited salt marsh in Gujarat close to the western border between the two countries. A dispute over the border through the Rann had long been a cause for disagreement, but tensions rose in April 1965 when both countries ramped up their patrols

¹⁶⁰ Brown p401.

¹⁶¹ Devereux, "The Sino-Indian War of 1962" p83.

¹⁶² Dixit, *India and Pakistan* p145.

¹⁶³ Dixit, p140.

¹⁶⁴ Dixit, p140.

¹⁶⁵ Devereux, "Sino-Indian War" p72

in the region and ended up clashing with one another.¹⁶⁶ On April 24th, a serious engagement occurred, rendering the two sides in open conflict for the first time since the first Kashmir war ended in 1948.¹⁶⁷ The conflict over the Rann was successfully mediated by the Wilson government. Admonishments from the US and very wet weather in the region played a part, but the British ability to bring Pakistan President Ayub Khan and Indian prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri together in London to agree a ceasefire in early May won international acclaim.¹⁶⁸ Lyndon Johnson personally applauded Wilson in a letter of congratulations.¹⁶⁹

The dispute over the Rann confirmed Pakistani beliefs that the Indian army was demoralised in the wake of 1962 and boosted confidence that a military victory over Kashmir was possible.¹⁷⁰ The result was the infiltration of 5,000 Pakistani soldiers disguised as civilians into the disputed region to actively encourage the population to call for independence. India quickly responded with a military thrust into Lahore to begin the second post-partition war over the disputed region.¹⁷¹ British efforts to mediate the second, and much more serious, conflict of 1965 were far less effective. Following the Indian movement of troops across the border, Wilson made a public statement condemning Indian aggression, much to Indian chagrin.¹⁷² India's protests centred upon a longstanding disdain for being equated on the international stage with what they saw as a clearly provocative adversary. Wilson later claimed that a pro-Pakistan faction within the Commonwealth Office had manipulated him into making a statement that destroyed Indian faith in the British.¹⁷³ Believing that Pakistan's infiltration of Kashmir had clearly sparked the conflict, Indian leaders effectively disqualified the British from playing any further role in mediation. Eventually, it was left to the Soviet Union to forge a deal between India and Pakistan at Tashkent in 1965, where the belligerents agreed to solve the issue by peaceful means. For the Soviets, their role afforded them goodwill from both countries of the subcontinent and was begrudgingly welcomed by the UK and the US, as Soviet influence in the region was preferable to Chinese.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁶ Colman, J (2009) "Britain and the Indo-Pakistan Conflict: The Rann of Kutch and Kashmir, 1965" *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* Vol 37 No 1 p467.

¹⁶⁷ Colman "Britain and the Indo-Pakistan conflict" p467.

¹⁶⁸ Colman, p469.

¹⁶⁹ Colman, p469.

¹⁷⁰ Colman, p470.

¹⁷¹ Colman, p471.

¹⁷² Colman, p469.

¹⁷³ Colman, p472; Wilson *The Labour Government* p66.

¹⁷⁴ Colman, p475; Mohite (1995) "Indo-US Relations: Issues in Conflict and Cooperation" South Asian Publishers; New Delhi p35.

The British position in South Asia after 1965 was one of severely diminished influence. The dispute over the Rann of Kutch was the last time the British played a leading role in a dispute in the region. It was also the last time the US deferred responsibility to the UK over issues in South Asia. The decrease in British influence in the region followed from the general decline in the British world role after the withdrawal from positions East of Suez. For the Johnson administration, the conflicts of 1965 served to justify growing American indifference toward the subcontinent.¹⁷⁵ By the mid-1960s, Pakistan's closer relationship with China had helped pull it away from its commitments to CENTO and its South Asian equivalent, SEATO.¹⁷⁶ India was performing poorly in the economic field despite US aid that had been provided since the 1950s. The response of the US government to the Kashmir conflict was one of anger directed toward both sides of the dispute. With the support of the British, Johnson cut off all military supplies to India and Pakistan. In doing so, the administration took the attitude that if nothing could be done to stop the two neighbours from fighting, the US would no longer fuel a subcontinental arms race.¹⁷⁷

Neither India nor Pakistan was happy in their relationships with the US in the later years of Johnson's presidency. Despite a relatively amicable relationship between Gandhi and the President, Indian protests continued over an arms embargo they thought had been imposed on the basis of a false premise. The Indian government maintained that to impose an arms embargo upon them ignored the fact that Pakistan had instigated the conflict.¹⁷⁸ It was Pakistan however, that was disproportionately harmed by the ban on military aid. GW Choudhury recalls that the Pakistani army was almost completely equipped by the US, whereas US supplies accounted for only 10% of India's military hardware.¹⁷⁹ By the time Johnson left office, relations with all parties on the subcontinent were at a low ebb.

Nixon's 1968 election victory altered the dynamic in US relations with the subcontinent. A key negotiator in the country's accession to western defence pacts during his vice presidency, Nixon was a popular man in Pakistan.¹⁸⁰ On visits to Pakistan during his "wilderness years" out of political office in the 1960s, Nixon had received grand receptions and developed friendly relations with the country's ruling elite, something he did not receive during visits to India. Upon Yahya Khan's visit to

¹⁷⁵ Kux, D (2001) *The United States and Pakistan: Disenchanted Allies* John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore MD p155.

¹⁷⁶ Choudhury, *India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* p137.

¹⁷⁷ Kux, D (1993) *Estranged Democracies: India and the United States* Sage: New Delhi p239.

¹⁷⁸ Kux *Estranged Democracies* pp251-261.

¹⁷⁹ Choudhury, p122.

¹⁸⁰ Choudhury, p140.

the US to celebrate 25 years of the UN in 1970, Nixon told his new friend that “nobody has occupied the White House who is friendlier to Pakistan than me”.¹⁸¹ Pakistan was a key part of the new administration’s strategy to develop relations with China, which meant that once more relations with Pakistan would be prioritised over those with India. New British Prime Minister Edward Heath looked to repair relations with both nations upon his election in June 1970. However, greater emphasis would be placed upon cultivating the more economically lucrative relationship with India; meaning that once again British sympathies on the subcontinent generally lay in the opposite direction to the Americans.

Conclusion

A running theme within UK-US relations up to 1970 and beyond is the importance of consultation. Whilst being a key feature in UK-US successes such as the Berlin airlift and the development of the nuclear relationship in the late 1950s, a breakdown in consultation had been the exacerbating factor during a number of difficult periods. A lack of consultation has been a major source of anger on both sides of the Atlantic on many occasions- the cancellation of lend-lease and passing of the McMahon Act; the public reaction to Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” speech; US revulsion at the British plot to reclaim the Suez Canal; and the British decision to withdraw from military positions East of Suez to name but a few. The importance of consultation permeated the entire UK-US relationship.

For the British, consultation had been a pathway to the ultimate goal of influence over US policy. Throughout the post-war period, British leaders linked global prestige to an ability to cultivate an overt relationship with the United States. British governments had success in committing the US to the defence of Western Europe through the North Atlantic treaty; urging restraint over Korea; and the development of a nuclear relationship in the late 1950s and early 1960s. For the Americans, an overt relationship with the British government often caused a headache. This problem manifested itself in the immediate post-war years when there was hope for a moderate turn in Soviet foreign policy and in the Middle East where an association with the British colonial legacy was undesirable. However, the dynamic within the relationship regarding levels of overtness altered in the 1960s as levels of asymmetry within the relationship increased markedly.

Although always the junior partner in the post-war world, British subservience to the US in the 1950s can be overstated. In the decade following the Second World War, the UK remained the world’s third greatest power and was the only ally of the US to have a truly global presence. In 1954, led by

¹⁸¹ Nixon, RN (1990) *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* Touchstone: New York p278; Choudhury, p142.

Anthony Eden, the UK successfully negotiated a settlement in Vietnam without the participation of the US. It was such global prominence and resultant prestige that helped convince Eden that the UK could act independently of the US and reclaim the Suez Canal. However, during Harold Wilson's first premiership, levels of asymmetry began to increase as the British government firstly considered and then decided to both withdraw from military positions East of Suez and devalue Sterling. As the UK's global power and significance began to diminish, its value as an overt partner of the US began to alter. Whereas once an association with a powerful Britain could complicate matters, an association with a weaker Britain could be advantageous. Although no longer able to effectively project global power, the UK's experience in global affairs and seat on the UN Security council ensured that British opinion remained well-respected. For Johnson this meant that British support for his policy in Vietnam would add legitimacy to his decisions at home and abroad. Meanwhile Wilson's domestic considerations meant that he was unwilling to provide the token force in Vietnam requested by Johnson. Levels of overt cooperation within the relationship continued to be an issue into 1970.

Consultation was also crucial on a regional level. Although the British lost a great deal of their oil concession, for better or worse, the removal of Mohammad Mossadeq was a triumph for UK-US consultation and cooperation. Conversely, the US refusal to sign the Baghdad pact caused ruptures and bred distrust within the relationship. Key to UK-US disagreements in the Middle East were the evident differences in priorities. Concerned primarily with the threat of communist gains, the US focused on creating bulwarks against Soviet gains whilst the British concentrated upon their economic interests. Such tension played out over Iran in the 1950s and Yemen in the 1960s. As Britain's power began to wane, its continued military presence in the Middle East became coveted by the Americans. Eventually, a lack of consultation over the decision to withdraw British forces and subsequent American pleas to reverse the decision came to naught. Yet despite all of this, in 1970, the two looked to resume close consultation over the fallout from British withdrawal from positions East of Suez.

The issue of Communist China within UK-US relations from 1950 to 1970 is testament to the positive role thorough consultation could play in mitigating differences of opinion. Through full and frank discussions, the UK and US managed a substantial disagreement over the status of China. Firstly, through a moratorium and subsequently through the "Important Question" resolution, the UK and US negotiated a solution that allowed the British to demonstrate their allegiance to the US and allowed the US government to maintain its tough stance. However, by the early 1970s a growing consensus within the UN toward the acceptance of China was about to alter British thinking toward outright support for Peking's representation. Meanwhile, a new White House foreign policy making team was about to set aside the tradition UK-US consultation on China in pursuit of wider

geopolitical aims. Such a breach of consultation would have a dramatically negative effect on top-level UK-US relations.

Before 1971, South Asia was not a crucial theatre within the global Cold War. Stability in the region was seen by both allies as the greatest defence against communist infiltration and a settlement over Kashmir could ensure such an outcome. However, within the confines of a desired stability, there were different focuses of policy among British and American governments. The British focused their efforts upon maintaining strong diplomatic ties with India. India received greater quantities of British investment than Pakistan and played an important role in maintaining British prestige in Asia. Although British and American policies converged under Kennedy's presidency as the allies supplied India in an attempt to ward off Chinese territorial ambitions, US policy in the region leaned toward Pakistan. Pakistan's need to compete in an arms race with India had rendered it much more amenable to offers of US aid and subsequently joined western defence pacts CENTO and SEATO. However, by the mid-1960s US-Pakistan relations had deteriorated markedly amid a lack of Pakistani commitment to defence pacts and a 1965 US arms embargo that disproportionately harmed Pakistan. Once Richard Nixon became President, he would return to the US policy of setting aside Indian sensibilities for the sake of global aims.

Chapter 2: The First Six Months of the Heath-Nixon Relationship

This chapter assesses the nature of the UK-US relationship in the first six months of Edward Heath's premiership. Section one assesses the commonly held notion that the relationship between the Prime Minister and President Richard Nixon began poorly as a result of Heath's focus on entry into the European communities (EC). The first two meetings between the two leaders at Chequers in October and Washington in December 1970 provide an insight into the Heath-Nixon relationship. Conclusions can then be drawn as to the effect that the UK's impending EC entry had upon the UK-US relationship. Kissinger's contention that Heath signalled from the beginning his willingness to complicate the UK-US relationship in favour of a smooth relations with Europe is challenged.¹

The second concentration of the chapter is upon the wider UK-US relationship. With interests both economic and geopolitical, the Persian Gulf and Arab-Israel dispute continued to be an important aspect of the UK-US relationship. Dependent upon Arabian oil, the UK continued its post-war tendency to have more sympathy with the Gulf States over the Israel-Palestine situation than did the US. The section provides a snapshot of the UK-US relationship at a regional level, assesses the utility of the relationship for both parties and highlights differences of interests and outlook. The British desire to federate the Trucial States (later to become the United Arab Emirates) in preparation for withdrawal is analysed within the context of an extended Nixon Doctrine and American support for Iran. The British also had to consider the hypothetical use of their base in Cyprus for US air strikes against Jordan. Such considerations highlight the dilemma faced between what the British perceived to be the interests of the West as a whole and the interests of the Americans. There was a pervading sense within the British government that the US was reluctant to consult with the UK on policy in the Middle East. The chapter will assess the validity of such claims.

Finally, the chapter will focus upon events in South Asia. Under the radar of top level UK-US discussion, in 1970 campaigns were being fought in Pakistan's first general election. Not an area of immediate geopolitical concern, the Atlantic allies desired stability on the subcontinent as a buffer against communist advances. Since India and Pakistan were not on the brink of war, UK-US global concerns were focused elsewhere. Central policymakers were unprepared for the regional and global implications of the election result, although policy positions were being formed by diplomats on the ground in South Asia. The stage was being set for a regional and global flashpoint, as well as for issues within the UK-US relationship.

¹ Kissinger, HA (1979) *The White House Years* Weidenfield and Nicolson; London p934.

1. Heath and Nixon: The First Six Months

Elected in November 1968 with only 43% of the popular vote, not much was expected from President Richard Nixon's foreign policy.² Nixon's worldview, shared by Kissinger, stemmed from a belief that global US hegemony was coming to an end. *Sunday Times* Washington correspondent and good friend of Kissinger, Henry Brandon, wrote in 1973 that the task of the Nixon administration was to move the US from a hegemon to a leader.³ A major aspect of the process was to have Western European powers heavily engage with global geopolitics, and have them share the Western defence burden. Although the White House wanted the Europeans to assume more global responsibility, Nixon was not willing to risk Western cohesion. For the 37th American president, the interests of the US and the Atlantic Alliance were one and the same.⁴ It was within this context that the President extended support to the UK's proposed accession into the EC.

Heath's election victory was welcomed throughout the US government. Nixon had privately been a supporter of Heath, and was extremely pleased upon hearing news of his victory.⁵ Kissinger claims that there was no world leader that Nixon held in a higher regard, especially in tandem with Alec Douglas-Home as Foreign Secretary.⁶ In fact, Nixon was so pleased that he had Heath's phone calls sent directly through to his office; a privilege enjoyed by only a select few. Kissinger himself shared Nixon's optimism, as did Secretary of State Bill Rogers. All three felt the Conservative Party victory would result in a more active role for the UK in foreign affairs and that the US government could look forward to a "highly constructive and congenial relationship with Heath's Government at every level".⁷ Heath was a politician that shared a worldview with the administration. He was broadly a supporter of the Nixon Doctrine through his advocacy of the maintenance of commitments to friendly nations without absolving them of their security responsibilities.⁸ They both foresaw the emergence of a multi-polar world order, shared the opinion that UK accession into the EC should be

² Brandon, H (1973) *The Retreat of American Power* Doubleday and Company: Garden City. P23.

³ Brandon *Retreat* p3.

⁴ Rossbach, NH (2009) *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship: Britain, the US and the EC, 1969-1974* Palgrave Macmillan: New York p32.

⁵ Kissinger, *White House Years* p932.

⁶ Kissinger, p932.

⁷ Richard Nixon Presidential Library (hereafter NPL) National Security Council (hereafter NSC) CO Box 727 Europe UK Vol III May-Sept 1970 Memo from Kissinger to Nixon 2/7/70.

⁸ Heath, E (1970) *Old World, New Horizons: Britain, The Common Market, and the Atlantic Alliance* Oxford University Press: London pp8-9.

swiftly achieved and detected a reduced appetite for war on the part of the Soviet Union.⁹ Like his predecessor Harold Wilson, Heath was reluctant to relinquish Britain's global influence.¹⁰ The Conservatives had opposed Labour's decision to withdraw almost all of the British military presence from East of Suez and to devalue sterling from \$2.80 to \$2.40. The new prime minister therefore had a different set of foreign policy issues to deal with. Heath was de-shackled to a certain extent by no longer suffering the degree of dependency that Wilson had had upon President Lyndon Johnson. This meant Heath could concentrate upon reshaping Britain's global role and look to solidify US support for EC expansion.

Despite accusations to the contrary the Prime Minister was conscious not to appear pro-European at the expense of being anti-American. Heath believed that both sides were prone to overreaction when it came to what he referred to as the "so-called special relationship".¹¹ Heath's vision in June 1970 was of a wider Atlantic partnership. One where the notion of greater burden sharing on the part of the Europeans was compatible with a continued US commitment to the security of Western Europe. He thought it ridiculous that support for a greater European effort to provide for its own protection could be interpreted as an anti-American point of view.¹² He found it equally implausible to think any US troop withdrawal from West Germany was a sign that the US could renege on their commitment to Western Europe.¹³ Opinion in Whitehall in mid-1970 was similar. FCO officials believed that although UK influence in Washington had waned during the Wilson-Johnson years, the only way the UK could remain relevant in Washington was through heavy involvement in European affairs.¹⁴ The Conservative Government wanted to be at the heart of Europe and have a strong relationship with America. The eventual aim of a strong US-Europe relationship required the UK to broker its entry into the EC whilst encouraging the US to improve the manner in which it dealt with Europe.¹⁵ Naturally, these aims required the UK-US relationship to remain strong.

Heath's overarching foreign policy objectives were understood both in the White House and at the State Department. Nixon's personal opinion was that EC enlargement, although potentially

⁹ Rossbach, NH (2009) *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship: Britain, the US and the EC, 1969-74* Palgrave MacMillan; New York. p3; FCO 7/1815 Record of meeting between Heath and Nixon at Chequers 3/10/70.

¹⁰ Rossbach, *Rebirth* p11.

¹¹ Heath, *Old World* p66; p74.

¹² Heath, p74

¹³ Heath p74.

¹⁴ Rossbach p31.

¹⁵ Heath *Old World* p67. In his Godkin lectures Heath openly criticised the manner in which the US had previously taken decisions regarding Europe at the last minute.

damaging to the US economy in the short term, was in the long term common interest of the West.¹⁶ In 1970, Nixon was willing to ward off Congressional dissent that promoted European fears of American protectionism.¹⁷ The US Embassy in London assured the State Department in December 1970 that although the UK may look to rhetorically downplay the “special relationship” and concentrate its foreign policy upon Europe and EC accession, the US-UK relationship would not be fundamentally altered: the UK would still ultimately depend upon the US to provide its security.¹⁸ The British knew that they had a sympathetic ear in Washington for the time being, and felt confident that as long as policy remained overtly pro-European rather than anti-American, the UK-US relationship could remain strong.¹⁹

Different thinking in the UK and US lay in the direction in which relations were eventually heading. Both Atlantic partners were aware that the relationship had changed in recent years. Heath was of the opinion that a strong US-European relationship would mean that the UK-US relationship would, one day, become less “special.” He openly speculated that in future, instead of instinctively looking to the opinions of their opposite numbers in Washington, FCO officials might look to their colleagues in Bonn or Paris when formulating policy.²⁰ Similarly, the FCO at the time felt that following the UK’s entry into Europe, the UK-US relationship would go through a natural and inevitable process of becoming less and less “exclusive”.²¹ The Americans accepted that the UK was a dramatically weakened power compared to its status as recently as the mid-1960s and US opinion was that its future lay in a re-orientation of policy toward Europe. However, there seems not to have been any desire to weaken links or contemplation that this could be an inevitability in the future.

Some scholars have pointed to Heath’s deferment of a visit to Washington immediately following the British General Election as an early indicator of the troubles that would mar the Heath-Nixon relationship.²² Kissinger argues that the cancellation of an early meeting and the holding of only a brief meeting at Chequers was a ploy on Heath’s part to allow him to consult with European leaders

¹⁶ UK National Archives (hereafter UKNA) Foreign and Commonwealth Office Files (hereafter FCO) 7/1809 Washington to FCO 6/7/70.

¹⁷ UKNA FCO 7/1809 Washington to FCO 6/7/70.

¹⁸ United States National Archives (hereafter USNA) State Department Central Files 1970-1973 Record Group 59 (hereafter RG 59) Box 2652 Pol UK report from Embassy in London titled “Foreign Policy of the Conservative Government: A New Realpolitik” 8/12/70.

¹⁹ UKNA FCO 7/1839 FCO brief for Heath ahead of Nixon’s visit to Chequers 23/9/70

²⁰ Heath *Old World* p67.

²¹ UKNA FCO 7/1839 FCO brief for the Heath ahead of Nixon’s visit to Chequers 23/9/70

²² Hynes, C (2009) *The Year that Never Was: Heath, the Nixon Administration and the Year of Europe* University College Dublin Press: Dublin P33.

before major talks with the Americans. However, there is no evidence that the British deliberately employed this tactic or that the Americans, other than Kissinger, believed this to be the case.²³ In fact, amid widespread industrial action and the death of Ian McLeod, the influential Chancellor of the Exchequer, there was actually a large degree of understanding of Heath's predicament in Washington. Hal Sonnenfeldt, NSC member and Kissinger's assistant, sent a memorandum to Kissinger in August that demonstrated sympathy for Heath's position and accepted the validity of the reasoning.²⁴ Nixon subsequently wrote to Heath on 15th August conveying a disappointment at the cancellation, but the President also expressed understanding of the domestic strife that prevented the visit.²⁵

Both leaders' major objective at the Chequers meeting was to establish a close personal relationship. There was no suggestion that Heath would act aloof or try to distance the UK government from the US in favour of a closer relationship with Europe.²⁶ The Prime Minister's objective was to reinforce the closeness of the UK-US relationship and to ensure that the US would treat the UK accordingly.²⁷ Nixon's major objective was similar, and he opened the talks suggesting that the two leaders agree to candour and confidence within their personal relationship. It was his belief that the strength of the "special relationship" was dependent upon regular consultation, and not just in times of crisis.²⁸ Although the use of the term "special relationship" may have annoyed Heath, the prospect of a close relationship with the President was not one that he rejected.

At Chequers in October 1970, the two leaders demonstrated a great deal of convergence on foreign policy. Heath supported Nixon's plans to withdraw ground troops from Vietnam, offered technical assistance to the US in helping to combat Soviet movements in the Indian Ocean, and agreed with Nixon's analysis that the Soviets currently saw a military conflict with China as a more pressing concern than such a conflict with the West.²⁹ On Nixon's part, he demonstrated his private support for the British position on the sale of arms to South Africa under the Simonstown agreement. The President agreed that despite international pressure to cease the supply of arms, "you just have to

²³ Kissinger *White House Years* p934.

²⁴ NPL NSC Box 764 Presidential Correspondence UK Heath memorandum from Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger 13/8/70

²⁵ NPL NSC Box 764 764 Pres Corresp Heath NSC Pres UK Heath 1970 Letter from Nixon to Heath 15/8/70.

²⁶ Heath, E (1998) *The Course of My Life: My Autobiography* Hodder and Stoughton: London p372; FCO 7/1812 Briefs for the Prime Minister in preparation for Nixon's visit to Chequers.

²⁷ UKNA FCO 7/1812 Briefs for the Prime Minister in preparation for Nixon's visit to Chequers.

²⁸ UKNA FCO 7/1815 Conversation between Heath and Nixon 3/10/70.

²⁹ Heath, *Old World* p12; UKNA FCO 7/1815 Conversation between Heath and Nixon 3/10/70.

bite that bullet” when it comes to national interests.³⁰ He also pledged not to support any voices in Congress that may come out in support of what both men referred to at the time as “Black Africa”.³¹ Nixon was keen for Heath to know that he had the American President’s private backing, even if difficult executive relations with Congress meant that the Prime Minister could not always enjoy it publicly. Despite Kissinger’s claim that Heath was looking to keep the president at arm’s length by limiting talks to an hour and half as a result of The Queen’s presence, archival records paint a different picture. UK Ambassador in Washington John Freeman reported that the Queen’s presence actually impressed the President greatly and that the Royal pageantry made up for any disappointment Nixon may have felt about the truncation of the talks.³² The two leaders left the talks happy with what they had achieved; more substantial talks would come in December.

Discussion about UK entry into the EC, conspicuous by its absence at Chequers, was the first and major point of discussion at the UK-US talks in Washington in December 1970. Nixon agreed with Heath that the political arguments in favour of the UK joining the EC were stronger than the economic.³³ He told the Prime Minister that British political leadership in Europe was essential if Europe was to fulfil its potential in world affairs, and that he disagreed with elements in the US that feared a more powerful Western Europe. Both leaders believed that any stable balance of global power required a “strong political and economic entity in Europe”.³⁴ The major concern Nixon had with the process was that the agricultural lobby, a major supporter of his, could take exception to the perceived protectionist policies of the EC, especially the Common Agricultural Policy.³⁵ The Prime Minister explained that he wanted to avoid accusations of appearing as the US “Trojan Horse” that French president, Charles de Gaulle had long believed the British to be. Heath was clear with Nixon that his government’s primary foreign policy objective was to gain entry into the EC; only then could the UK begin to address the concerns of the US government.³⁶ Despite the reservations the President had over the economic implications of EC enlargement, there was no doubt that US support for UK entry was assured.

³⁰ UKNA FCO 7/1815 Conversation between Heath and Nixon 3/10/70.

³¹ UKNA FCO 7/1815 Conversation between Heath and Nixon 3/10/70.

³² UKNA FCO 7/1811 Freeman to Armstrong 8/10/70; Kissinger *White House Years* p89 Kissinger described how Nixon had a tendency to think highly of those that afforded him lavish receptions and Kissinger notes that the President “dearly loved ceremony”.

³³ UKNA FCO 7/1842 Record of conversation between Nixon and Heath 17/12/70; USNA CF 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2657 Pol UK-US Conversation between Nixon and Heath 17/12/70.

³⁴ UKNA FCO 7/1842 Record of conversation between Nixon and Heath 17/12/70; USNA CF 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2657 Pol UK-US Conversation between Nixon and Heath 17/12/70.

³⁵ USNA CF 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2657 Pol UK-US Conversation between Nixon and Heath 17/12/70.

³⁶ USNA CF 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2657 Pol UK-US Conversation between Nixon and Heath 17/12/70.

Prior to the December summit, Nixon insisted upon using the term “special relationship” in official communications with Heath, just as he had done with his predecessor, Harold Wilson.³⁷ The reason was in part to demonstrate defiance to those in the State Department that thought a severance of the “special relationship” would aid UK accession to the EC, and partly because he felt that to not use the term could undermine British self-confidence.³⁸ This attitude changed during the talks. In line with his support of the UK’s policy toward the EC, the President accepted the British preference for the term “natural” rather than “special” relationship.³⁹ Negotiations with the EC were at a critical stage and the desire of the UK to change the rhetorical categorisation of the UK-US relationship was accepted by the Administration.⁴⁰

Kissinger’s interpretation of the changing rhetoric was different. Although the altering of the terminology could have been seen as a concession to the French to help President George Pompidou accept the UK’s EC membership, it was indicative of a fundamental reorientation of the UK’s foreign policy.⁴¹ These claims have led to the inference that Heath’s first public mention of the “natural relationship” at a speech in Washington on December 17th signalled a downgrading of the UK-US relationship as the UK undertook a reorientation of its policy toward Europe.⁴² Although Heath was certainly concentrating UK foreign policy upon Europe and foresaw a less exclusive UK-US relationship, the change in rhetoric from “special” to “natural” was not a sudden indication of this. The UK’s third attempt at entry into the EC and reorientation of foreign policy toward Europe was the result of a decade of debate in Westminster and Whitehall.⁴³ The Americans supported the British intention to strengthen its geopolitical influence through shaping policy from the heart of Europe and they were willing to take some short-term economic pain to ensure that it happened. Despite Kissinger’s recollections, the December talks were interpreted by the majority of observers, as a huge success. The UK-US relationship was seen to have been at worst consolidated and at best, conclusively strengthened. In an interview on CBS TV show *Face the Nation* Heath confirmed that what he referred to as the “natural” friendship between himself and the President had blossomed

³⁷ Hathaway, R (1981) *Great Britain and the United States: Special Relations since World War II* Twyne: Boston. p94

³⁸ Kissinger *White House Years* p91.

³⁹ Heath *The Course of My Life* p472

⁴⁰ Spelling, A (2009) “Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations 1970-1974: A Reappraisal” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Vol 20 No 4 pp638-658.p641; Scott *Allies Apart* p11

⁴¹ Kissinger *White House Years* p964

⁴² Hynes *The Year That Never Was* p23.

⁴³ Scott, A (2011) *Allies Apart: Heath, Nixon and the Special Relationship* Palgrave Macmillan: New York.p23.

into an “intimate partnership”.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the *New York Daily News* proclaimed that the visit had “marked the first time since the Eisenhower administration that genuine personal friendliness had been enjoyed by the political leaders of the two nations.”⁴⁵ Whatever the historical accuracy of the statement, it was a reflection on talks between leaders that understood one another’s position. Indeed, from December 1970 onward, Nixon substituted the term “special” for “natural” in all of his official correspondence. Both in a letter bidding farewell to UK Ambassador John Freeman in January, and a letter to Heath in April 1971 Nixon referenced the “natural relationship” between the two countries. The adoption of the term by the President, who had previously used the term “special” in a deliberate manner, demonstrated that the change of rhetoric was not construed as damaging to the relationship.⁴⁶

By the end of 1970, both sides had recognised the new reality of Britain’s rapid reduction in global prestige throughout the late 1960s. Both felt that the quality of the UK-US relationship had, for various reasons, suffered during the Wilson-Johnson years. The President was an avowed believer in the strength of the Atlantic bond and was determined to restore a strong relationship with the US’s closest ally. The US government understood the changing context within which British foreign policy was operating and acted accordingly. UK interests remained largely aligned with those of the US and the UK still looked to the US as its primary provider of security. The relationship was evolving, but doing so within the context of a burgeoning relationship between the Prime Minister and the President.

2. The Middle East

Prime Minister Edward Heath proclaimed in November 1970 that his government would “establish clearly and unmistakably that British policies are determined by British interests”.⁴⁷ In his Guildhall speech, he made the argument that an expanded European community, with Britain at its heart, would “give back to Europe the influence which she once enjoyed”.⁴⁸ Heath said that Western Europe was well served by peace in the Middle East, something that superpower confrontation had failed to achieve. Heath claimed that a lack of European involvement in the region had “permitted the steady growth of the Soviet presence and influence in the area”. The implication therein was

⁴⁴ Hynes *The Year That Never Was* p24.

⁴⁵ Heath *The Course of My Life* p473.

⁴⁶ Spelling “Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations” p642

⁴⁷ NPL NSC Box 727 CO Europe-UK Vol IV Oct-Dec 70 Heath’s Guildhall speech 16/11/70.

⁴⁸ NPL NSC Box 727 CO Europe-UK Vol IV Oct-Dec 70 Heath’s Guildhall speech 16/11/70.

that US power alone was inadequate to protect western interests in the Middle East. In its analysis of the speech, the US Embassy in London reported that the change in British rhetoric was likely due to a perception at the highest levels of government that the US was not providing the UK with the whole picture in regard to policy in the Middle East.⁴⁹ British perceptions were not unfounded.

In late 1970, US-UK tension played out over the issue of the use of Cyprus as a base for potential US action in Jordan. In September 1970, Jordan was experiencing a civil war between the ruling Hashemite monarchy led by King Hussein and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), led by Yasser Arafat. On September 21st, Heath called a cabinet meeting to discuss a request from King Hussein to transmit a message to Israel requesting that they conduct air strikes over Syria - a mutual enemy and close ally of the PLO.⁵⁰ The decision was made by the British government to pass on the message to the Americans. The Americans were closer to Israel politically and Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir was then visiting the UN in New York. More importantly for the British though, should the situation escalate further, the government foresaw the possibility of the US requesting the use of the British air base on Cyprus for their own air strikes on PLO positions.

The British government was stuck between the need to protect Britain's Arab interests (largely in oil) and protecting the UK-US relationship. Allowing the Americans to use Cyprus as a base to attack Jordan would lead the Arab countries to see Britain as "having thrown in our lot with the United States and Israel", but a refusal "might seriously damage Anglo-American relations".⁵¹ Noting that public opinion would not allow for a significant split with the United States, the cabinet decided to suspend judgement on the lending of the Cypriate base.⁵² In the meantime, the British government looked to pre-empt any US request for the use of Cyprus. It resolved to steer the US away from any potential military action by concentrating upon discussions at the UN Security Council.⁵³ The cabinet discussions demonstrate that although British interests could be distinct from those of the US in the Middle East, the maintenance of the UK-US relationship, both in the region and more widely, was of utmost concern and that measures were quickly adopted to protect it.

In late September 1970, Nixon and Kissinger were considering the effects of their Middle East policy upon the UK-US relationship. In a memorandum dated 23rd September, Kissinger noted that having received notification from the British of King Hussein's request for an Israeli intervention in Syria,

⁴⁹ NPL NSC Box 727 CO Europe-UK Vol IV Oct-Dec 70 report on Heath's Guildhall speech 17/11/70.

⁵⁰ UKNA Cab 128/74 Cabinet conclusions 21/9/70.

⁵¹ UKNA Cab 128/74 Cabinet conclusions 21/9/70.

⁵² UKNA Cab 128/74 Cabinet conclusions 21/9/70.

⁵³ UKNA Cab 128/74 Cabinet conclusions 21/9/70.

“ostensibly” because Meir was in New York, Nixon now had a choice to make.⁵⁴ In preparation for Nixon’s meeting with Douglas-Home at the UN, the memorandum reminded Nixon that the US had told the UK nothing of its agreement in principle for the Israelis to make either a ground or air strike in Jordan. Kissinger framed the decision in such a manner that provided only one logical answer; the choice given was between “not revealing our agreement passed to the Israelis (which I recommend) and the problem of dealing later with offended British sensibilities”. Nixon looked to avoid a direct disagreement with the British, but also signalled his willingness to keep the Heath government in the dark regarding American interests and agreements.

Both the UK and US governments were faced with the challenge of maintaining an asymmetric, yet strong relationship. This required a degree of creativity in foreign policy-making; the British looked to prevent a difficult situation whilst the White House decided against full disclosure on an issue that would certainly cause conflict within the UK-US relationship. On a regional level, the allies could hold positions that favoured different sides in a conflict without threatening the sanctity of the UK-US relationship. The Atlantic partners would then work hard to ensure that these known divergences of interest would not harm the wider alliance.

The second Middle Eastern issue for the UK-US relationship immediately following Heath’s election was that of British military withdrawal from and subsequent federation of the Trucial States around the Persian Gulf. Having opposed Labour’s accelerated withdrawal from British positions East of Suez in January 1968, Conservative Party policy had carefully avoided an outright commitment to reverse the decision. Then-Shadow Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home maintained sufficient criticism of the policy to make it an issue at the June 1970 general election.⁵⁵ Douglas-Home promised that the Conservative government would consult with nations of the Persian Gulf immediately with a view to maintaining a UK presence. By 1970, opinion had changed among Gulf nations. After reacting angrily to Wilson’s announcement of British withdrawal in 1968, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had, by the time the Conservatives won the election, declared that they no longer desired a British presence. In addition, the British defence budget would not allow for a reversal of the decision.⁵⁶ Douglas-Home made US Secretary of State Rogers aware of the likely direction of British policy when they met in July 1970, where he confirmed that the major British presence in the Gulf would be naval.⁵⁷ By October 1970 British rhetoric reflected an abandonment of the desire to maintain a substantial

⁵⁴ NPL NSC CO Europe Box 727 UK Vol III Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon 23/9/70.

⁵⁵ Gause, GF (1985) “British and American policies in the Persian Gulf, 1968-1973” *Review of International Studies* Vol 11 No 4 p257.

⁵⁶ Gause “British and American policies in the Persian Gulf” p257.

⁵⁷ NPL NSC CO Europe Box 727 UK vol III Record of a meeting between Douglas-Home and Rogers 12/7/71

military presence in the region in favour of a concentration upon stability and security.⁵⁸ As a result, US expectations of a British presence in the region were lowered.

Amid the realisation that they could not maintain forces in the Persian Gulf, no matter the political will, the new UK government had two inter-connected issues to tackle in June 1970. There was a pressing need to unite the small Trucial states into a united body (later to become the United Arab Emirates). This could not be achieved, however without the agreement of Iran, which had an ongoing dispute with two of the Trucial States, Sharjah and Ras-el-Khaimah, over two small islands within the Gulf. Problems over Abu Musa and the Tunbs, what Heath referred to as “these wretched little islands” dated back to the late 19th Century when Foreign Office cartographers incorrectly drew a boundary that awarded sovereignty of the islands to the Trucial States rather than to the Iranians.⁵⁹ The Shah was adamant that Iran would not support the Union of Trucial States unless the island dispute was resolved. Unable to afford unfriendly relations with Iran, the other Trucial States would be unwilling to federate without the blessing of the Shah.

At a meeting in Brussels in July 1970, the Shah told Douglas-Home that Iran would take the islands by force if they were not given up voluntarily.⁶⁰ Bound to protect the Trucial States until December 1st 1971, the British did not want to find themselves at war with Iran. Douglas-Home succeeded in persuading the Shah to hold off at least until British treaty commitments had expired, but the problem of a de facto Iranian veto over the Trucial union remained.⁶¹ Ultimately, the Iranians seized the islands on November 30th, one day prior to the end of British treaty commitments to the Trucial States. Unwilling to go to war over one day, the British put up no resistance; Iran regained the islands it desired and the Trucial States minus Qatar and Bahrain federated to form the UAE.⁶²

The US supported the British position in as much as a federation of the Trucial States would contribute to stability in the region, but it was made clear to the British that any solution had to be acceptable to Iran.⁶³ US opinion on the matter was informed by Nixon and Kissinger’s concentration upon macro-scale geopolitics, a substantial shift in outlook from previous US administrations. UK

⁵⁸ USNA State Department RG 59 Central Files 1970-73 Box 2651 Pol 15 UK State Intelligence Bureau Research Study on UK Government 30/10/70.

⁵⁹ USNA RG 59 CF 1970-73 POL UK-US Meeting between Heath and Agnew 18/12/70.

⁶⁰ Petersen, TT (2009) *Richard Nixon, Great Britain and the Anglo-American Alignment in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula* Sussex Academic Press: Eastbourne p52.

⁶¹ Roger Louis, Wm (2003) “The British withdrawal from the Gulf, 1967-71” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* p99.

⁶² Roger Louis “British Withdrawal” p99

⁶³ Petersen *Richard Nixon, Great Britain* p64.

and US policy in the Persian Gulf during the Johnson administration had been to foster cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia as a replacement for British power in the region.⁶⁴ The strategy known as the “two pillar policy” dated back to 1966, when the Wilson government pressed the US for its implementation amid considerations of a UK withdrawal.⁶⁵ After attempting to encourage the UK to maintain a presence in the Middle East, the Johnson administration adopted the policy that would build and maintain Saudi and Iranian strength in the region.⁶⁶

In his monograph looking at UK-US relations in the Persian Gulf, Tore Petersen has argued that the Nixon administration forged ahead with the two pillar policy.⁶⁷ Nixon went about this early on in his presidency, breaking the links between governments and western oil companies. A move that allowed oil prices to rise and meant that the Saudis and the Iranians, in particular, could keep a larger share of their oil revenue.⁶⁸ The revenue could then be used by the larger Gulf States to invest in the military hardware necessary to maintain stability in the region. According to Petersen’s account, the two pillar strategy was a key component of the Nixon administration’s framework for a global peace and extension of the Nixon Doctrine outside of Southeast Asia.⁶⁹ Rohem Alvandi presents a different and more compelling explanation of US policy in the Persian Gulf. Alvandi’s central thesis is that US Gulf policy changed under Nixon in order to accommodate the predominance of Iranian power in the region.⁷⁰ Rhetorically US policy would still demonstrate support for a Saudi-Iranian partnership, but the Saudis were not considered a “pillar” in the same manner as the Iranians.⁷¹ Openly backing the Iranians over the Saudis would only succeed in offending Arab sensibilities and breed instability. Stephen McGlinchey supports such a contention. He notes that in the drafting of the White House-directed US National Security Study Memorandum for the Persian Gulf, the strength of the Iranian position was a “*de facto* operating principle”.⁷²

⁶⁴ Alvandi, R (2012) “Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah: The Origins of Iranian Primacy in the Persian Gulf” *Diplomatic History* p339

⁶⁵ Gause, “British and American policies in the Persian Gulf” p259.

⁶⁶ Petersen, TT (2009) *Richard Nixon, Great Britain and the Anglo-American Alignment in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula* Sussex Academic Press: Eastbourne p26.

⁶⁷ Petersen, *Richard Nixon, Great Britain* p3.

⁶⁸ Petersen, p3

⁶⁹ Petersen p50.

⁷⁰ Alvandi “Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah” p356

⁷¹ Alvandi, p356.

⁷² McGlinchey, S (2012) *Arming the Shah: US Arms Policies Toward Iran, 1950-1979* Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Cardiff University p138.

McGlinchey also notes that by 1970, the US had abandoned the idea of convincing Britain to reverse its decision to withdraw from military positions East of Suez.⁷³

Policy in the Persian Gulf demonstrated Nixon's penchant for personal politics. Nixon had a friendly personal relationship with the Shah of Iran that dated back to his first term as Vice President in 1953.⁷⁴ Both were stringent anti-communist practitioners of *realpolitik*. Far from the Johnson Administration's opinion of the Shah as a reformist, looking to exert Iranian power contrary to US interests, the Nixon administration wondered how far the Iranian leader could fulfil his ambitions of regional hegemony.⁷⁵ Safe in the knowledge of altered US policy, the Shah began to push for a "special relationship" with the US.⁷⁶ The Iranian leader believed that the Soviet Union was sparking proxy wars in Egypt and Iraq as part of a plan to destabilise the region and restrict the West's access to Middle Eastern oil supplies.⁷⁷ He was also aware that US travails in Vietnam demonstrated that the Americans could not maintain their global order through military force alone, and would thus require strong regional allies to reinforce the global fight against communism.⁷⁸ Within the context of a Nixon Doctrine that was expanding its scope beyond Southeast Asia, the Shah successfully pushed the White House for increases in arms supplies and strengthened his designs on regional hegemony. US arms sales to Iran increased from \$103m in 1970 to \$475m in 1971 and \$552m in 1972.⁷⁹ The Shah could rely upon his personal relationship with Nixon to pay dividends.

Kissinger refutes the notion that US policy in the Persian Gulf was based upon Nixon's personal allegiance with the Shah. Nixon's National Security Advisor claims that the Iranians needed strong US support in order to balance the power of the Soviet-backed Ba'athists in Iraq.⁸⁰ Alvandi argues that the strength of the Iraqi government is overstated by Kissinger. UK special envoy to the Persian Gulf, Sir William Luce, did not see the Iraqis as a threat: The Iranians had already demonstrated their dominance over Iraq in a dispute over the Shatt waterway in 1969.

In late 1970, British issues in the Persian Gulf occurred within the context of increased US support for Iran. The two countries' interests converged over the islands dispute, but their outlooks were

⁷³ McGlinchey, *Arming the Shah* p137.

⁷⁴ Alvandi "Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah" p356; McGlinchey p133

⁷⁵ Alvandi, p361.

⁷⁶ Alvandi, p349.

⁷⁷ McGlinchey p130

⁷⁸ McGlinchey p139

⁷⁹ McGlinchey p130; Gause "British and American policies in the Persian Gulf" p264.

⁸⁰ Alvandi p362.

different. The UK was looking to manage withdrawal on a regional level and to protect its oil supply through the provision of stability. Less concerned by the supply of oil, the White House was administering policy on a global level through supplying the most powerful actor in the region with the means to prevent Soviet infiltration and influence. US support for Iran was also underpinned by a strong personal relationship between Nixon and the Shah. Although the British and Americans were tackling regional issues in very different ways, it did not seem to have an effect on top-level UK-US relations, which were on an upward trajectory in late 1970. As long as the allies knew of each other's intentions, different geopolitical approaches could co-exist on a regional level, without damaging the quality of the UK-US relationship.

3. A Developing Crisis in South Asia

Unrest between the two wings of Pakistan, separated by 1,000 miles of Indian territory began soon after partition in 1947. The peoples of West and East Pakistan had a common religion, but also different cultures, heritages and languages. Language immediately became a point of conflict after Pakistan's founding father and first Prime Minister, Muhammed Ali Jinnah, proclaimed Urdu- a language not widely spoken in the Bengali-speaking Eastern wing- as the sole official language of the new state. Protests erupted in 1952 when the Prime Minister, a Bengali, Kwaja Nazimuddin, reiterated the discriminatory stance.⁸¹ A heavy-handed police response to the resultant Language Movement protests resulted in the death of a student and helped to ferment levels of resentment in the East. The subsequent nineteen years marked a struggle between Bengali nationalism and the efforts of West Pakistan elites to contain it.⁸²

A number of statistics indicate the degree to which the people of East Pakistan were exploited and discriminated against by the ruling powers in the West. Despite the East having a population of 75 million compared to 55 million in the opposite wing, between 1947 and 1969 66% of US aid had gone to the more prosperous west;⁸³ by 1971 there were 7,600 doctors in the East, compared to 12,400 in the West;⁸⁴ and in military terms, only 7% of the Pakistani army originated from East Pakistan.⁸⁵ The "economic exploitation" of East Pakistan was readily recognised by both the UK and the US governments. A 1970 report carried out for the FCO on the prospects of an economic disaster

⁸¹ Raghavan, S (2013) *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* Library of Congress: Cambridge: Mass. p7; Choudhury, GW (1972) "Bangladesh: why it happened," *International Affairs* Vol 48 p 247.

⁸² Raghavan, 1971 p7.

⁸³ Ganguly Ganguly, S (2001) *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions Since 1947* Columbia University Press: New York p53

⁸⁴ Ganguly *Conflict Unending*, pp52-523.

⁸⁵ Warner G (2005) "Nixon, Kissinger and the Break-up of Pakistan, 1971" *International Affairs* Vol 81 No 5 p1102.

in East Pakistan agreed with a USAID conclusion that there was “a disguised transfer of capital resources of at least \$95 million from East to West Pakistan during the year 1967/68”.⁸⁶ The report went on to describe how this “milking process” had taken the form of a heavy overvaluation of the Pakistani rupee that acted as a de facto tax on exports and a subsidy on imports. The West was the natural benefactor of such an arrangement given its status as a net importer and the East’s as a net exporter. It is within this context that Bengali nationalism gathered steam in the wake of Pakistan’s 1965 war with India over Kashmir.

Following a wave of nationwide protests throughout 1968, the president of Pakistan, Ayub Khan, announced that he would not contest the general election that was scheduled for 1970.⁸⁷ To satisfy demands for a civilian government and ostensibly to ensure a stable transfer to an elected body, Ayub stepped down to be replaced by General Yahya Khan.⁸⁸ Yahya’s task was to return Pakistan to the political environment present at its creation in 1947, namely one person one vote within a parliamentary democracy.⁸⁹

Sandhurst trained, Yahya had served in the British army during the Second World War. His persona was one of a strong, straight-talking leader; a contrast to the more softly spoken Ayub. The new president’s motivations for the decisions he made in 1970 and 1971 remain a matter for debate. However, based upon the memoirs of a senior Pakistani Brigadier, Srinath Raghavan asserts that Yahya’s government wanted to take advantage of the sectarian nature of Pakistani politics to produce a deeply divided National Assembly.⁹⁰ A fragmented government would not be able to come to an agreement on a new constitution. Furthermore, the constitution had to conform to strict rules decreed by Yahya himself in March 1970. On January 1st 1970, the President lifted the ban on political activity that had been imposed by the military regime since his swearing in nine months previously. The starting gun had been fired in Pakistan’s first general election on the basis of universal suffrage.

The frontrunner in the East was the leader of the Awami League (AL), Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib). Mujib came to prominence amid a wave of discontent that engulfed East Pakistan following the 1965 war with India over Kashmir. Many in the East felt they had been abandoned by a

⁸⁶ UKNA FCO 37/705 Report for the FCO by Tarlton and Brown 7/4/70.

⁸⁷ Raghavan 1971 p23.

⁸⁸ Raghavan p21.

⁸⁹ Jackson, RJ (1975) *South Asian Crisis: India-Pakistan-Bangladesh* Chatto and Windus: London p22; Kux, *Disenchanted Allies* p180.

⁹⁰ Raghavan p34.

government more concerned with acquiring new territory than protecting the population of its own Eastern wing. The war confirmed the long-held notion that the government in the West cared more for its ethnic links with Kashmir than it did for its national links with East Bengal. In 1966 Mujib unveiled a 6 point plan aimed at providing autonomy for East Pakistan. The Six Points called for a parliamentary democracy and a federal constitution; the restriction of federal powers to foreign affairs and defence; separate currencies that allowed for the maintenance of foreign exchange within each wing; the devolution of fiscal and trade policy to the provinces; and the ability for each province to raise its own militia force.⁹¹

Mujib served a brief prison sentence in 1968 after being accused of hatching a plot to secede East Pakistan from the West; this is an accusation he would continue to deny.⁹² He was released on the same day that Yahya Khan took over from Ayub Khan on February 21st 1969, to rapturous applause at a rally organised by the student wing of his party.⁹³ During the 1968 protests against Ayub, the Student Action Committee (SAC), a faction that heavily supported the AL, had drawn up an 11 point plan headlined by calls for direct elections and full autonomy for the East. These demands erred further toward secession than Mujib's six points. Mujib maintained his desire to continue within a unified Pakistan up until the army cracked down on East Pakistan in March 1971, but he endorsed the 11 point plan.⁹⁴ Raghavan contends that Mujib's support for the 11 point plan at the Dacca rally meant that the, moderate by comparison, Six Points became a minimal position after the election.⁹⁵ His links to the student wing of the party also boosted opponents that accused him of agitating for secession.

In the Western Wing, Zulfikur Ali Bhutto was looking to take power with a victory for his Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The former foreign minister had formed the party upon his release from prison in 1967 following his outspoken criticism of Ayub's leadership during the 1965 war over Kashmir. Bhutto epitomised the sectarian, personality based politics that dominated Pakistan in 1970. Often accused of demagoguery, Bhutto contributed to the polarisation of the West and East wings.⁹⁶ In the East, he was a symbol of the West Pakistani establishment that had been exploiting East Pakistan since partition. During the 1965 war, when asked how the East would be defended whilst Pakistan

⁹¹ Raghavan, 1971 p21

⁹² Ganguly *Conflict Unending* p54.

⁹³ This was the same day that Yahya took over from Ayub.

⁹⁴ Raghavan 1971 p23.

⁹⁵ Raghavan p23.

⁹⁶ Bass, G (2013) *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide* Knopf: New York p26.

concentrated its forces on Kashmir, he answered that the Chinese would take care of it.⁹⁷ Bhutto was a populist committed to a united Pakistan. Highly sceptical of the six point plan, he continued to argue that it represented a veiled manifesto for secession.

In substance, the AL and PPP's policies were similar in a number of areas. They were both parties of the left, they were both professed supporters of democracy and they both advocated a neutralist foreign policy for Pakistan. Mujib and Bhutto also had a common desire for a speedy transfer of power from the military government to a civilian National Assembly. Their differences were over larger issues relating to the future of the state and signified the ethnic division of the country. The PPP wanted a centralised government whereas the AL was calling for full autonomy for the regions. A hallmark of Bhutto's career had been his strong stance against India. In contrast the AL was looking for a cooperative relationship with Pakistan's neighbour. The National Assembly was sure to be split along sectarian lines. The PPP did not field any candidates in the Eastern wing, while the AL's presence on ballot papers in the West was tokenistic.⁹⁸

Impeding a speedy transition of power were the rules governing the framing of a new constitution. The Legal Framework Order (LFO) announced by Yahya in March 1970 set constraints upon the National Assembly in a number of areas. Alongside the provision for a democratic constitution and the primacy of Islam, the LFO contained a number of controversial and contradictory constraints: the disparity in wealth and resources between the West and East Wing needed to be addressed; the territorial integrity of Pakistan had to be ensured; and autonomy for the regions must not be allowed to compromise the federal system.⁹⁹ Crucially, the LFO required the National Assembly to concentrate solely upon the constitution until a draft was agreed: this must be done within 120 days. Otherwise the Assembly would face dissolution and the calling of new elections. Once the constitution was agreed, it had to be personally approved by Yahya himself, who also acted as the sole arbiter of the LFO. The latter clauses were widely criticised by politicians of all stripes, including the Awami League and PPP for contradicting the democratic principles that governed the transfer of power.¹⁰⁰

Scheduled for October 1970, the elections were beset by problems. Floods in August engulfed 11 districts in East Pakistan and caused the election to be postponed until December 8th. This disaster was followed by the devastation caused when the Bhola Cyclone hit land in the southern regions of

⁹⁷ Choudhury, GW (1972) "Bangladesh: why it happened," *International Affairs* Vol 48 p245.

⁹⁸ Raghavan 1971 p34.

⁹⁹ Ganguly Unending Conflict p56.

¹⁰⁰ Ganguly, p56.

East Pakistan; official estimates of fatalities range from 200,000 to 1,000,000.¹⁰¹ Within an area of 3,000 square miles, 90% of crops were destroyed and an estimated 3,000,000 people were severely affected.¹⁰² The Pakistan government faced fierce criticism for its response to the disasters from all quarters in the Eastern wing. Mujib went as far as to accuse the government of “criminal negligence” and warned that civil war could break out if the elections were postponed once more.¹⁰³ The AL was the only party pressing for a quick election and many opponents eventually boycotted the polls in protest. The path was open for a resounding AL victory.

Despite the Awami League’s command of the majority of electoral support in the East, the election was difficult to predict. UK and US missions in Pakistan estimated the AL would win anywhere between 55% and 75% of the seats available in the East.¹⁰⁴ The PPP was even more of an unknown quantity; the extent to which Bhutto could attract votes outside of his home province of Sindh was questionable. Exact levels of support for each party were very difficult to gauge; Pakistan was a developing society in which much of the electorate was illiterate and resided in remote villages. Many cast their vote based upon word of mouth and would put a mark next to a recognisable symbol rather than the name of the party spelled out. Yahya stayed up all night watching the results come in on television. When the shock results came in, he demanded an explanation from his closest advisors.¹⁰⁵

Yahya’s hope for a result conducive to military-backed stability had been dashed. The cyclone had played into the hands of the AL, who won an overall majority in the National Assembly.¹⁰⁶ A concession within the LFO had been to allow East Pakistan a majority of seats within the National Assembly as a function of its population. The military regime predicted the AL would only win between 46 and 70 seats; one can imagine Yahya’s shock when Mujib’s party returned 160 of 162 seats in the Eastern province, giving them an overall majority in a National Assembly of 300. Mujib himself had only predicted the AL could win up to 80% of the seats in the East, and now faced

¹⁰¹ Mujahid, S (1971) “Pakistan: First General Elections” *Asian Survey* Vol 11 No 2 p159

¹⁰² Mujahid, “Pakistan: First General Elections” p159.

¹⁰³ Blood, A (2002) *The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh: Memoirs of an American Diplomat* University Press Ltd: Dhaka pp116-117.

¹⁰⁴ UKNA FCO 37/535 Meeting between FCO and State Department officials 3/11/70.

¹⁰⁵ Raghavan 1971 p34.

¹⁰⁶ Jackson *South Asian Crisis* p24

pressure he could not have imagined he would be under.¹⁰⁷ Pushed by the student wing of his party, Mujib was forced to insist that the AL now had a mandate to draw up the constitution alone.¹⁰⁸

An even greater shock was the scale of the PPP's election victory. Although winning only 81 of the 138 seats available in the West, they had performed much better than expected throughout the Western wing and had become the most powerful party in West Pakistan. The former foreign minister was in a tactically stronger position than his counterpart in the East. He first of all called for a PPP-AL consensus on the constitution; an outwardly reasonable demand that would expose Mujib's rigidity.¹⁰⁹ Any compromise would require Mujib to step back from the Six Points; when this did not happen Bhutto declared on December 20th that no government could be formed without the PPP.¹¹⁰ As leader of the largest party in the West, Bhutto claimed a mandate to be a part of any future government. Were he not to get his wish, he would derail the whole process with a boycott of the National Assembly.¹¹¹

The two most powerful parties in the National Assembly were thus the two most unlikely and unable to work with one another. A set of demands that were widely seen as up for discussion prior to the election the Six Points had become non-negotiable in the wake of the Awami League's resounding victory.¹¹² Unable to accept what he saw as a mandate for secession, Bhutto adopted a strong stance, intent on ruining the democratic process unless he had a say in the framing of the constitution. There was to be a difficult road ahead if Pakistan was to make the transition to a democratically elected body that would govern both disparate wings of the country. In his memoir, US Consul General in Dacca, Archer Blood, concluded that the Pakistan general election of 1970 demonstrated that "[S]ome elections can be too conclusive for the polity they are designed to serve"¹¹³. The election produced a result that nobody wanted and gave great scope for pessimism.

Despite the potentially destabilising result of the Pakistani elections, South Asia was not on the agenda within top-level Anglo-American discussions in late 1970. Briefs prepared for Heath in advance of Nixon's visit to Chequers in October 1970 did not contain any analysis of South Asia,

¹⁰⁷ USNA RG 59 CF 1970-73 Box 2523 Pol 2 Pak Rawalpindi to State Department 12/10/70.

¹⁰⁸ Sisson, R and Rose LE (1990) *War and Secession: Pakistan, India and the creation of Bangladesh* University of California Press: Oxford p56.

¹⁰⁹ Jackson *South Asian Crisis* p27.

¹¹⁰ Sisson and Rose, *War and Secession* p60.

¹¹¹ Sisson and Rose, p60.

¹¹² Jackson, p24.

¹¹³ Blood, *Cruel Birth* p133.

neither did briefs in advance of his visit to Washington in December.¹¹⁴ After years of frustration with India and Pakistan, US policy had drifted into indifference under the Johnson administration and the trend appeared to be continuing under Nixon. The 1970 and 1971 foreign policy reports to Congress contained one and three pages on the region respectively and simply referred to the traditional emphasis on stability and a desire not to interfere with Soviet interests in the area.¹¹⁵ In late 1970, South Asia was relatively unimportant in the context of the Nixon administration's global geostrategy. As long as India and Pakistan were not threatening stability through conflict, the region was not a priority. The UK was also de-prioritising the region in 1970. As part of the re-orientation toward Europe, diplomatic posts were being cut in Pakistan. Such a process led the UK High Commissioner in Pakistan, Sir Cyril Pickard, to begrudgingly accept that entry into the EC would inevitably mean a decrease in UK influence in parts of the world such as South Asia.¹¹⁶

The impressions of the UK and US missions on the ground in Dacca demonstrated a degree of congruence. There was a measure of sympathy for Yahya among UK and US officials following the elections. In a November meeting between FCO and State officials to discuss South Asian affairs, there was general agreement that Yahya was a "reluctant dictator" and that he was genuine in his stated desire to transfer power to an elected government as soon as possible.¹¹⁷ This sentiment was mirrored by both the US Ambassador to Pakistan, Joseph Farland and the British Foreign Secretary, Alec Douglas-Home.¹¹⁸

British and American missions agreed that Mujib was also in a difficult position. Following the election result, Archer Blood knew the six point plan would be difficult to implement in its entirety. The fifth of the six points, allowing each federating unit to set up its own trade missions abroad, was particularly contentious. The Consul General questioned "[H]ow could a nation maintain a coherent and consistent foreign policy if its component units were free to follow their own economic policies?"¹¹⁹ UK and US diplomats in Pakistan were united in their belief that Mujib's ability to negotiate was now constrained by his own success.¹²⁰ The AL leader would have to stand his ground

¹¹⁴ UKNA FCO 37/1813 List of briefs for talks with Nixon at Chequers October 1970.

¹¹⁵ Kux, *Disenchanted Allies* p182.

¹¹⁶ UKNA FCO 37/701 Pickard to FCO 19/6/70.

¹¹⁷ UKNA FCO 37/535 Meeting between FCO and State officials 3/11/70.

¹¹⁸ USNA CF 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2526 Pol 2 Pak Islamabad to State 9/12/70; UKNA Cab 128/47 Cabinet conclusions 1/12/70.

¹¹⁹ Kux *Disenchanted Allies* p51.

¹²⁰ USNA CF 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2526 Pol-14 State Intelligence Brief "Election results suggest fresh problems" Pak 8/12/70; UKNA FCO 37/684 Rawalpindi to FCO 8/12/70.

on drafting a constitution alone if he were to keep his party united. Mujib's inability to make even the smallest concession meant the drafting of a constitution seemed a difficult process.

Bhutto's image within UK-US circles was not a positive one. He was described as a "cynical opportunist" and as "utterly unscrupulous" by British officials in Pakistan who thought that his tough stance on Kashmir was nothing more than a populist ploy.¹²¹ The Americans were equally wary of the former Pakistani foreign minister, whose ambivalence toward the US was well documented. In private, Bhutto assured American officials that he had no ill-feeling toward the Americans and that his time studying at USC and Berkeley had been the happiest period of his life.¹²² These assurances came despite vigorous criticism of US foreign policy during the election campaign.¹²³ He was widely believed to be an individual that would do or say anything to preserve his own power, and was not to be trusted. It was within this context that his policy in the aftermath of the election was interpreted. Bhutto was willing to sacrifice the handover of power to the civilian government to fulfil his ambition to become prime minister.

The desired outcome of the election for British and American diplomats would have been a speedy transfer to a Mujib-led government of a united Pakistan. Although not necessarily easy to deal with, his pro-Indian and pro-western stances made him preferable to Bhutto or a continuation of the military government.¹²⁴ In December 1970, UK and US missions in Islamabad and Dacca hoped Yahya's claims that Mujib and Bhutto were already on the way to a settlement were true.¹²⁵ The road to a stable Pakistan would prove to be more traumatic than anyone could have imagined, as the geopolitical importance of the region rapidly increased in 1971.

Conclusion

The second half of 1970 was a time of flux within the UK-US relationship. The UK was on the brink of joining the EC, British withdrawals from East of Suez were nearing completion and there was new thinking on foreign policy in the White House. Nixon and Heath looked to navigate these issues through a strong personal relationship: a relationship they succeeded in developing at their meetings in October and December. The candour demonstrated by both men in their discussions highlighted the value of intimate consultation within the UK-US relationship. Heath clearly indicated

¹²¹ UKNA FCO 37/684 Halliley to Priestly 14/4/70; UKNA FCO 37/870 Islamabad to FCO.

¹²² USNA CF 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2525 Pol 12 Pak Report of Conversation between Farland and Bhutto.

¹²³ USNA CF 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2525 Pol 12 Pak Report of Conversation between Farland and Bhutto.

¹²⁴ UKNA FCO 37/697 Record of meeting between James and Slatcher 30/12/70.

¹²⁵ USNA RG 59 Box 2526 Pol 15-1 Pak Islamabad to State.

to Nixon that use of the term “natural relationship” was linked to a desire not to appear as an American “Trojan Horse” within the EEC. Following the Washington summit in December 1970, top-level UK-US relations were in good health.

In the Middle East however, UK and US approaches continued to differ. In looking to steer the Americans away from a request to use its Cypriote air base, the British Cabinet demonstrated both an understanding of American interests and a desire to mitigate potential disagreements in order to preserve the UK-US relationship. In not revealing to the British the US secret agreement to allow Israel to enter Jordan, Nixon not only demonstrated an understanding of British interests, but also a willingness to conceal information from his closest ally. Similarly, with regard to the islands dispute between Iran and the Trucial States, the UK was aware that the Americans wanted an agreement satisfactory to Iran, and acted accordingly.

US foreign policy in the Persian Gulf set a precedent for the White House approach toward regional affairs. All matters were subservient to the overarching aim to curb Soviet power and influence around the globe. Powerful allies, such as Iran would be supported as the Nixon Doctrine was tentatively rolled out beyond Southeast Asia. Any US support for British aims, which were assessed on regional basis, would have to fall within this wider context. In his relationship with the Shah, Nixon had demonstrated his tendency to favour leaders with which he had a personal connection. Nixon’s support for Iran went beyond what was required to rebuff Soviet advances. This was a pattern that would repeat itself in South Asia.

South Asia was not discussed by Heath and Nixon in 1970. Prior to March 1971, it remained a region of low importance within the global Cold War. Study of the Middle East in late 1970 has demonstrated that, even in areas of great sensitivity, differences in regional interests could be managed if there was a clear understanding between the UK and US governments of the other’s interests. With regard to Pakistan, the FCO and State Department were largely in agreement on policy prior to the December 1970 elections. They agreed that a Mujib-led government would be the best outcome for both countries’ interests. Both assumed that stability in South Asia would continue to be the guiding force in the foreign policy of their respective governments in the region. Both the FCO and the State Department were unaware that in 1970 and 1971, Nixon and Kissinger were willing to risk stability on the subcontinent and cordial UK-US relations for the higher goal of a rapprochement with China.

Chapter 3: A Breakdown in Consultation

Introduction

This chapter charts the breakdown in UK-US consultation in the run-up to US President Richard Nixon's announcement on July 15th 1971 that he was due to visit China in early 1972. The announcement marked a turning point in 1971 for the UK-US relationship as cordial relations in the 12 months previous descended into rancorous disagreements. The chapter explains the ongoing crisis in Pakistan and the high levels of consultation and cooperation between the UK and US missions on the ground before exploring the knock-on effects the White House's secret "opening to China" had upon US intra-governmental, and consequently, US-UK relations.

Section one charts events in Pakistan up to July 1971. After elections in Pakistan had produced a deadlock in the constitution-making process, the months leading to March 25th produced little result as the province moved closer to civil war. On the night of March 25/26th the situation took a terrifying turn as the Pakistani military moved in to suppress the Bengali nationalists and to target East Pakistan's Hindu minority. The second section focuses on the relationship between the FCO and State Department, both on the ground in Pakistan and in London and Washington. Interestingly, both bureaucracies had very similar intra-departmental disagreements but trust and consultation played a large part in a cooperative and productive Anglo-American relationship.

At the same time as East Pakistan was descending into a battleground for guerrilla warfare, Nixon and Kissinger were in the latter stages of planning the "opening to China". The crisis on the subcontinent proved an unwanted distraction amid a secret plan to improve the US relationship with China. Nixon and Kissinger used the President's strong personal relationship with Pakistan President Yahya Khan and a "one time exception" arms deal to coax the Pakistani President into acting as an interlocutor with Peking. Section three explains the reasoning and subsequent process behind the White House policy that looked to exploit the divisions within the Sino-Soviet relationship and the subsequent tacit support for Yahya's actions in East Pakistan.

The final two sections assess the effects that White House secrecy had upon both intra-governmental relations and intra-State Department relations before turning to UK-US relations. Aware only of the vague White House intention to eventually improve relations with China, the State Department was unaware of the diplomatic moves the White House had made made via Pakistan. Such deception led to the foreign service's authority in conducting policies in South Asia being based upon completely different premises to the their superiors in the White House. State's authority was undermined and internal disagreements exacerbated following Nixon's announcement on July 15th. Finally, the chapter assesses the consequences that the White House's secret foreign

policymaking had upon Anglo-American relations. Throughout early 1971, the UK was itself looking to improve its relationship with China through supporting its membership of the UN as a precursor to an exchange of ambassadors. Consultation had been a key component of the renaissance of the UK-US relationship under Heath and Nixon in late 1970, and the British government maintained such a spirit over the issue of China. Communicating with the White House via a State Department oblivious to the true intentions of the US government, the UK was continually asked to delay its decision to support China's membership of the UN. When it was revealed on July 15th that White House secrecy and deception had cost the UK a speedy exchange of Ambassadors, the relationship was destined for a torrid second half to 1971- especially in South Asia.

1. Deadlock in Pakistan

In January 1971, the position of the two electoral victors had not changed since Pakistan's general election a month earlier. The result had granted the AL an overall majority in the National Assembly and the PPP became the most powerful party in the Western wing. However, AL leader Mujib was still a hostage to his own success. Powerful secessionist elements within his party saw the Six Points as a minimally acceptable outcome, whereas Bhutto and President Yahya Khan's reputations still depended upon the continued territorial integrity of Pakistan.

At a speech in Dacca on January 3rd, Mujib reaffirmed his commitment to draft a new constitution for Pakistan. He exclaimed that any new constitution would need to be based exclusively upon his party's Six Point Plan for East Pakistani autonomy. During the speech, Mujib exclaimed his desire to seek the cooperation of leaders in the West, and declared that he would not be shaken nor intimidated.¹ The Awami League leader remained steadfast in his refusal to negotiate on the substance of his demands and he threatened the government in West Pakistan with a peaceful declaration of independence for "Bangla Desh" (land of the Bengalis). If the country was to remain united, any deal had to be entirely on the AL's terms. Two of the Six Points, a democratic government based upon universal suffrage and a separate militia force for East Pakistan, had already been agreed to by the military government in West Pakistan. Bhutto's PPP remained, though, steadfastly opposed to the other four, namely those of separate currencies for the two wings, the limiting of the central government to issues of foreign affairs and defence, the power of taxation to be afforded to each wing and the separation of foreign exchange earnings, meaning East Pakistan could keep its export revenues. Bhutto, a former foreign minister, saw the Six Points as a veiled bid

¹ United Kingdom National Archives (hereafter UKNA) Foreign and Commonwealth Office Files (hereafter FCO) 37/873 Dacca to FCO 4/1/71.

for secession; the separation of East Pakistan from West Pakistan was something both he and President Yahya were desperate to avoid.

Debate continues as to Yahya's true intentions in talks with Mujib in mid-January 1971. However, he was clear on the point that substantial negotiations needed to take place between the AL and the PPP, and an outline of the constitution be agreed before the National Assembly could meet.² This formula would inevitably require a climb-down from Mujib on the Six Points. Constrained by his own electoral success, Mujib refused to make any concessions - a move that confirmed in the President's mind his long-held suspicion that Mujib was indeed looking for secession for East Pakistan.³ Despite the fact that Mujib's obduracy was hardening the President's position, Yahya was keen to publicly display even-handedness. At a press conference on January 15th, the President referred to Mujib as "The future prime minister of Pakistan". Such rhetoric was designed to curry favour with non-AL supporting Bengalis and to maintain his international image as an "honest broker" of the impasse.

After talks between Bhutto and Mujib in late January produced very little, Bhutto looked to firm up anti-Mujib opinion in West Pakistan.⁴ Firstly, he was successful in influencing the government to the point that a former aide of Bhutto claimed that in the period from January to March 1971, the government and PPP's objectives were effectively in concert.⁵ Bhutto twice persuaded the President to postpone the convening of the National Assembly, once on February 11th and again on March 1st. These postponements gave Bhutto time to establish the PPP as the sole representative of West Pakistan in the mind of the public and rally leaders of other parties in West Pakistan against the Awami League. Further delays in the convening of the Assembly could also encourage splits within the AL which could either drive it to a more extreme position or make it more amenable to PPP demands.⁶ Bhutto found some success in presenting his view as that of the West Pakistani people, but smaller parties in West Pakistan were reluctant to back Bhutto's proposed boycott of the National Assembly.⁷

In response to what Mujib referred to as "electoral theft" when Yahya again postponed the convening of the National assembly on March 1st, Mujib called a province-wide Hartal (general

² Jackson, RJ (1975) *South Asian Crisis: India-Pakistan-Bangladesh* Chatto and Windus: London p27.

³ Raghavan, S (2013) *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* Library of Congress: Cambridge, Mass p38.

⁴ Raghavan, 1971 p39.

⁵ Raghavan, p40

⁶ Sisson, R and Rose, L (1990) *War and Secession: India, Pakistan and the Creation of Bangladesh* University of California Press; Los Angeles. p72.

⁷ Raghavan p39; Sisson and Rose, *War and Secession* p102.

strike) that would culminate in a rally at Dacca Racecourse on 7th March.⁸ Concerns were sparked both in Yahya's mind and around the world that the Awami League leader was to make a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) for Bangla Desh: a move that would surely force a swift and bloody response from the government in Islamabad. In an effort to prevent any UDI, Yahya sent a letter to Mujib on March 6th urging him not to make a "hasty decision". The letter also claimed that the President had a scheme in mind that would satisfy the Six Points and allow for the transfer of power to the civilian National Assembly.⁹

Mindful not to give the military regime any justification for military action, Mujib did not declare independence for Bangla Desh on March 7th.¹⁰ Rather he made four demands that had to be met before the AL would sit in the National Assembly: Martial Law, which had been in effect since Yahya assumed the Presidency 1969, had to be revoked; troops had to return to their barracks; there needed to be an enquiry into recent suppressions of Bengali protests; and power needed to be immediately transferred to elected representatives.¹¹ Mujib's speech has been described by Richard Sisson and Leo Rose as "a masterful demonstration on oratorical skill".¹² He both accepted Yahya's plea to negotiate and satisfied his core support in demonising the military government in West Pakistan and demanding emancipation for the Bengali people.¹³ The ball was now back in Yahya's court.

Yahya responded to Mujib by agreeing to travel to Dacca for talks beginning 17th March. Prior to Bhutto's arrival on the 20th, Mujib and the Awami League had been optimistic that an agreement could be found. Yahya had told Mujib that it may be possible for the military government to hand over power to elected officials before the framing of a constitution, as Mujib had demanded in his 7th March speech.¹⁴ As late as March 22nd it appeared that the impasse could be broken: British and American missions reported that the parties seemed to be close to a deal whereby the central government could retain control over foreign, defence, and monetary policy whilst a constitution was agreed.¹⁵ However, throughout the constitutional crisis, Yahya had insisted that although he had no principled opposition to the Six Points, Mujib must have Bhutto's agreement to implement

⁸ Bass, G (2013) *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide* Knopf: New York p28.

⁹ Raghavan 1971 p44.

¹⁰ Raghavan p41.

¹¹ Raghavan p45.

¹² Sisson and Rose, *War and Secession* p100.

¹³ Sisson and Rose, p100.

¹⁴ Raghavan p48.

¹⁵ UKNA FCO 37/870 Situation Report Dacca to FCO 22/3/71.

them.¹⁶ Bhutto's agreement was never forthcoming. In hindsight, it seems unlikely that talks in the third week of March were conducted in good faith by the parties from West Pakistan.¹⁷ Talks allowed the government to stall for time in order to allow preparations for the military suppression of the Bengali nationalist movement.

On March 25th, *Operation Searchlight* was ruthlessly put into action by the Pakistan Army. Its mission was to regain control of East Pakistan and to eliminate the Awami League; Bengali nationalists and the Hindu minority in East Pakistan. Dacca University, home to many influential Awami League supporters was specifically targeted; a dorm predominantly housing Hindu students was firebombed and the fleeing masses machine-gunned. Accounts of the night of March 25th/26th are filled with chaos, terror and murder. American Consul General in Dacca, Archer Blood, estimated that 4,000-6,000 people were killed in the following days.¹⁸ Mujib was quickly arrested and transported to West Pakistan. A prominent member of the Pakistan military establishment told US Ambassador Farland that the government's intention was to try Mujib for treason and "punish him accordingly".¹⁹ From March 25th onwards, Yahya refused to negotiate with the Awami League. In a speech on March 26th he openly accused Mujib of being a traitor, claiming that the Hartal organised by the Awami League in March was "an act of treason". Following the crackdown, East Pakistan quickly became the setting for sustained guerrilla warfare between the Pakistan Army and Bengali militants known as the Mukti Bahini. Any realistic hope for the continuation of Pakistan as a unified sovereign state ended on the night of March 25th 1971.

The conflict in East Pakistan provoked a refugee crisis of an unimaginable scale. Tainted by an association with India and blamed for the rise in Bengali nationalism, Hindus became a specific target for extermination and fled in their millions.²⁰ By mid-June, almost 6 million refugees had crossed the border into India, the vast majority of them Hindu.²¹ The crisis increased domestic pressure upon the Indian government, particularly within the border states of Tripura and West Bengal.²² Prior to March 25th Pakistan's neighbour and rival had attempted to remain aloof from the crisis, with a preference for the continued unity of Pakistan. Such an attitude quickly changed.

¹⁶ UKNA FCO 37/870 Situation Report Dacca to FCO 22/3/71.

¹⁷ Jackson *South Asian Crisis* p30.

¹⁸ United States National Archives (hereafter USNA) State Department Central Files 1970-1973 Record Group 59 (hereafter RG 59) 2530 POL 23-9 Pak Sisco to Rogers 3/4/71.

¹⁹ USNA Central Files 1970-73 RG 59 Box 2530 POL 23-9 Farland to State 27/3/71.

²⁰ Bass *Blood telegram* pp81-83.

²¹ Bass, p121.

²² Sisson and Rose *War and Secession*, p180.

Chapters four and five chart the impact of India's involvement and the issues it raised for the UK-US relationship.

2. UK-US relations on the ground in Pakistan

UK and US goals in South Asia were aligned in early 1971. Both wanted to continue a policy of communist containment through stability. In 1971 this meant that the most favourable outcome for the allies in Pakistan was an India-friendly, Mujib-led government of a united Pakistani state. Diplomats were under no illusions that such an outcome would come about easily, or that it could occur in a peaceful manner. Although there was still palpable sympathy for the Bengali cause among UK and US officials, frustration was beginning to build with Mujib's stubbornness on the Six Points.²³ The AL leader's lack of flexibility was breeding pessimism among UK and US officials as to the likelihood of a peaceful solution to the impasse. Such pessimism was compounded by their prevailing view of Bhutto as a demagogue intent on claiming power for himself at all costs. UK and US hopes for a resolution rested on Yahya's willingness to accept Mujib's Six Point plan in full.²⁴

The British and American missions worked closely together in Dacca. From March the US Consul General Archer Blood and UK Deputy High Commissioner Frank Sargeant cooperated on the evacuation of US and UK nationals. Having put together contingency plans for the evacuation of UK, US and other nationals, there were doubts over the continued availability of Dacca airport for emergency flights out of Pakistan. In response, Blood and Sargeant held a joint meeting with East Pakistan Martial Law Administrator Farman Ali on March 13th. They gained assurances that operations at Dacca airport could be speeded up to allow for emergency evacuation should it be necessary.²⁵ The joint representation was also successful in gaining Pakistani protection for UK and US nationals to safely travel from pre-arranged evacuation points to the airport.²⁶ Reflecting his friendly relationship with Sargeant, Blood asked that Farman's assurances be passed on to the UK High Commission in Dacca as his British colleague was busy that evening meeting with local British ex-pats.

The level of policy coordination on evacuation extended to a shared sensitivity toward the Pakistan government. Both the FCO and State Department were aware that a full-scale evacuation of ex-pats

²³ Bass, *Blood Telegram* p33.

²⁴ UKNA FCO 37/877 Sutherland to Wilford 11/3/71.

²⁵ Blood, AK (2002) *The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh- Memoirs of an American Diplomat* University Press Ltd: Dhaka p228. Blood notes that such a promise never materialised.

²⁶ USNA Central Files 1970-73 RG 59 Box 2530 POL 23-9 Farland to State 13/3/71.

could provoke a hostile response from Yahya, even after the military crackdown of March 25th. A full-scale evacuation could easily be interpreted as a lack of confidence in his ability and or willingness to bring about a peaceful solution to the crisis. In order to mollify such a response the British used, and the Americans adopted, the term “thinning out” to describe the movement of British and American citizens out of Pakistan.²⁷ However, on March 29th Blood and Sergeant jointly agreed to begin evacuation proceedings for all non-essential personnel.²⁸

Hope in Yahya’s ability to mediate in talks and maintain Pakistani unity via peaceful means was all British and American missions could cling to. On March 11th, Head of the South Asian Department at the FCO Iain Sutherland, in a minute sent to various posts at the FCO, said that British objectives would only be to ascertain Yahya’s true intentions and made it clear that the UK was not looking to play an intermediary role. Sutherland explained that a diplomatic intervention by the British government would be ineffective and counter-productive. The FCO realised that any hope for a settlement rested on Yahya’s ability to accept the Six Points, and then convince Bhutto to follow suit.²⁹ American opinion was similar, although US diplomats in Dacca found themselves under heavier pressure to intervene. In a February meeting with Mujib, Blood was asked by the Awami League leader if the US could bring diplomatic pressure to bear in order to soften Yahya’s position on autonomy for East Pakistan. Blood was commended by his Ambassador in Islamabad for flatly refusing the request: Mujib again asked for a US intervention with Yahya on March 23rd, but again to no avail.³⁰ The State Department’s position was clear. Any intervention with Yahya could make it appear as if the US was in favour of secession for East Pakistan.³¹

Hopes for a peaceful settlement on March 24th turned to horror on the night of March 25th as the Pakistani army moved in. Based on reports from Dacca, the British Ambassador to Pakistan, Sir Cyril Pickard reported from Islamabad of “callous disregard” for life on the part of the Pakistani Army as they ruthlessly cleared the streets in M-24 tanks on the night of March 25th/26th.³² On March 27th, the Deputy High Commissioner reported on an attack at Dacca University in which he described the police guard at the campus as having been “massacred”.³³ In mid-April Sargeant continued to describe how the “Army have been steadily continuing their reign of terror”, burning and looting

²⁷ USNA CF 1970-1973 RG 59 Pol 23-9 Box 2530 Pak State to Islamabad 30/3/71.

²⁸ Blood, *Cruel Birth* p233.

²⁹ UKNA FCO 37/876 Sutherland to various posts 11/3/71.

³⁰ USNA Central Files 1970-73 RG 59 Box 2530 POL 23-9 Blood to Farland 24/3/71.

³¹ USNA Central Files 1970-73 RG 59 Box 2530 POL 23-9 Farland to State 12/2/71.

³² UKNA FCO 37/879 Islamabad to FCO 29/3/71.

³³ UKNA FCO 37/879 Dacca to FCO 27/3/71.

villages in the countryside outside of Dacca.³⁴ Cables from the US Consul General in Dacca reflected strikingly similar sentiments. On March 28th, Blood sent a cable entitled “Selective Genocide” in which he described how the Awami League hierarchy, student leaders and intellectuals had been “marked for extinction”.³⁵ On March 31st, Blood sent another cable describing how the Pakistan military was continuing to commit “wanton acts of violence” in countryside villages on the outskirts of Dacca.³⁶

Consultation between Blood and Sargeant’s missions in Dacca was considerable in the months following March 25th. The missions keenly shared reports of events in Dacca. Blood’s cable to the State Department on March 29th described how Sargeant had sent a British official to see Blood to report an incident in which British citizens taking photographs of the military were only saved from execution through the intervention of officials from the Deputy High Commission.³⁷ Blood again cited British sources when reporting on April 1st that three planes full of Pakistani military reinforcements dressed in civilian clothing had landed at Dacca airport to be briefed by Pakistan Air Force officials.³⁸ There was also evidence of consultation on events at higher levels within the bureaucracies as British situation reports in April were passed by the FCO to the US Embassy in London.³⁹

Like the missions in Dacca, the bureaucracies in London and Washington shared an outlook on the crisis, but one that was far more focused upon the continued unity of Pakistan than the prevention of bloodshed. The US Consul General’s cable of March 28th entitled “Selective Genocide” has since become known as the “Blood Telegram” after the furore it caused in Washington. The Consul General reasoned that “[F]ull horror of Pak military atrocities will come to light sooner or later. I, therefore, question [the] continued advisability of [the] present USG (US Government) posture of pretending to believe GOP (Government of Pakistan) false assertions.”⁴⁰ The dissent cable from Dacca gained signatures in support from both the Consulate and the State Department and was quickly leaked.⁴¹ More than a week later, Secretary of State Bill Rogers personally responded to the cable,

³⁴ UKNA FCO 37/879 Dacca to FCO 13/4/71.

³⁵ USNA CF 1970-1973 Box 2530 Pol 23-9 Pak Dacca to State 6/4/71; For further descriptions see Hitchens, C (2002) *The Trial of Henry Kissinger Verso*: London p45; Bass, *The Blood Telegram*.

³⁶ USNA CF 1970-1973 Box 2530 Pol 23-9 Pak Dacca to State 31/3/71.

³⁷ USNA CF 1970-1973 Box 2530 Pol 23-9 Pak Dacca to State 29/3/71.

³⁸ USNA CF 1970-1973 Box 2530 Pol 23-9 Pak Dacca to State 1/4/71.

³⁹ USNA CF 1970-1973 Box 2530 Pol 23-9 Pak London to State 31/3/71

⁴⁰ USNA CF 1970-1973 Box 2530 Pol 23-9 Pak Dacca to State 28/3/71.

⁴¹ Hitchens, C (2002) *The Trial of Henry Kissinger Verso*: London p45. Blood, *Cruel Birth* p215.

assuring Blood that US policy had been restrained in order to ensure the continued cooperation of the Pakistan government in bringing a peaceful end to the crisis.⁴² Rogers also emphasised the fact that the US was heavily supporting UN humanitarian initiatives. At this point the State Department was working toward the same policy outcome as the White House. It would later become clear, though, that it was based on a very different premise.

Sargeant's reporting caused a similar, albeit lower scale, problem for the FCO. In early April an exchange between Sutherland and a fellow South Asian Department staff member, P.F. Walker, reveal a scepticism toward Sargeant's reporting. They agreed that Sargeant had been unfair to President Yahya in describing his approach to talks in March as "desultory" and "lethargic" and felt that although the outlook was far from positive, the Deputy High Commissioner's assumption that a future bloodbath would occur was misplaced.⁴³ This discussion built on the concerns of the UK's High Commissioner in Islamabad, Sir Cyril Pickard who in a conversation with US Ambassador Joseph Farland revealed that the UK government was "terribly concerned about the emotional and rumour-laden reporting which had emanated from his Dacca Deputy High Commissioner".⁴⁴ Blood and Sargeant were both removed from their posts in June 1971 for very similar reasons. Blood at the behest of the White House that had been angered by the leaked "Blood Telegram" and Sargeant for his perceived lack of care in reporting from Dacca.⁴⁵ Their dismissals allowed both bureaucracies to focus upon maintaining the unity of Pakistan without the distraction of evocative reports of the violence from East Pakistan.

The State Department and FCO faced similar internal conflicts between March and June 1971. British and American missions in Dacca were as aligned in their condemnation of the West Pakistan regime as their parent bureaucracies were determined not to intervene. Internal debates on policy mirrored one another; both departments felt that their representatives in Dacca were "going native" and were overly motivated by a sentimental attachment to East Pakistan. An often overlooked aspect of British and American policy in the aftermath of March 25th is the degree to which both foreign services were committed to a non-interventionist stance as a means to maintain influence with Yahya and the unity of Pakistan. Rather, the focus for analysis has been upon the policy of the Nixon-Kissinger White House as it supported Yahya Khan as part of a higher geopolitical aim; that of the "opening to China".

⁴² USNA CF 1970-1973 Box 2530 Pol 23-9 Pak State to Dacca 6/4/71.

⁴³ UKNA FCO 37/889 Walker to Sutherland 9/6/71.

⁴⁴ USNA CF 1970-1973 RG 59 Pol 23-9 Pak Islamabad to State 16/4/71.

⁴⁵ Blood *Cruel Birth* p233.

3. Nixon, Kissinger and China

In a 1967 article for *Foreign Affairs* Richard Nixon explained his thinking on US foreign policy toward Communist China. Whilst he recognised Peking as the main threat to stability in South East Asia, and emphasised that the US must not rush into recognition of the communists, confer upon them a seat at the UN, nor make trade deals (three moves he made as president), he argued that the US could not “afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations”.⁴⁶ Nixon argued that a nuclear-armed China, outside of non-proliferation treaties could be free to distribute such weapons freely among communist insurgent groups around the world.⁴⁷ Only once the Chinese leadership realised that its imperialist aims could not be achieved would Peking begin to alter its outlook. In Nixon’s view, this required a binding together of American allies in South-East Asia to prevent Chinese expansion. An emphasis on America’s Asian allies taking a greater role in the defence of the region became the rationale behind the Nixon Doctrine.

Nixon’s ideas in the late 1960s sat well with his future National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger. A speech written by Kissinger for Republican Presidential Primary Candidate Nelson Rockefeller in May 1968 described how a “subtle triangle” could be created between the US, China and the Soviet Union within which the US could improve its relationship with both communist powers.⁴⁸ A gradual but deliberate rapprochement with China would not only help produce a rival for the Soviet Union’s control of global communism and force Moscow into adopting positions more favourable to the US, but also help toward a smoother American withdrawal from Vietnam.⁴⁹ Stronger relations with Peking could bring about a linkage between the withdrawal of US military forces from Taiwan and Chinese cooperation in Indo-China.⁵⁰ Improved relations with Peking and Moscow could also bring pressure to bear on the government in Hanoi to bring the war to an end.⁵¹

The beginning of Nixon’s first term was an ideal time for the United States to improve its relationship with China. In 1969 the Sino-Soviet relationship reached its nadir when the two engaged in a brief armed conflict over the Ussuri River in the far eastern reaches of the border between the two states. Relations between the communist powers had been deteriorating for over a decade and the border

⁴⁶ Nixon, RN (1967) “Asia After Viet Nam” *Foreign Policy* Vol 6 No 1 p121.

⁴⁷ Nixon, “Asia after Viet Nam” p122.

⁴⁸ Kaufman (2001) *Confronting Communism: US and British Policies Toward China* University of Missouri Press: USA p213.

⁴⁹ Kaufman *Confronting Communism* p213.

⁵⁰ Scott, A (2011) *Allies Apart: Heath, Nixon and the Special Relationship* Palgrave Macmillan: New York p58.

⁵¹ Kaufman, p214.

had been a matter of dispute since the late 1950s. In the wake of Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, the Chinese felt that the Brehznev Doctrine of interventionism in order to uphold Soviet-defined socialism could eventually be applied to them.⁵² In response, the Chinese began to demonstrate support for Romania and Yugoslavia, and to ensure that their protests were to be taken seriously, they launched an attack on the Soviet Union along the disputed border.⁵³ Various clashes occurred throughout the summer of 1969 before talks between Soviet foreign minister Alexei Kosygin and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai led to a cooling of the conflict in October.⁵⁴ The upshot for Nixon and Kissinger was that China now viewed the Soviet Union as a threat on at least the same level as the US, and this made them more amenable to a rapprochement.⁵⁵

Domestic opinion was also conducive to an improvement in Sino-US relations in 1969/70. Domestically, the once-powerful Congressional "China Lobby" that had acted on behalf of the Nationalists on Taiwan since the Communists took control of the mainland was declared by the *New York Times* to be "moribund" in April 1970.⁵⁶ American public opinion was also beginning to turn in favour of supporting Peking's admission to the UN.⁵⁷ The US public mood mirrored a shifting of opinion within the UN itself toward Peking's membership. US officials realised that the "important Question" requiring a two-thirds majority vote to seat Peking at the expense of the nationalists was quickly running out of support.⁵⁸ The US could be left in an awkward position if it found itself in opposition to a UN majority vote to seat the communists.

Not only was the timing good for the development of diplomatic ties with China, Nixon was ideally suited to the task. His pragmatic policy toward China was more palatable, especially among American conservatives, as a result of his staunch anti-communist credentials. Nixon made his name in leading the campaign to bring Alger Hiss, a US government official accused of being a Soviet spy, to trial in 1950. He was also one of the chorus of politicians that accused President Truman of having "lost" China; and as Vice President he had supported President Eisenhower's decision to ward off Communist aggression over the islands of Quemoy and Matsu.⁵⁹ Nixon not only brought to the

⁵² Garthoff, R (1994) *Detente and Confrontation* the Brookings Institution: Washington DC p200.

⁵³ Garthoff *Détente and Confrontation* p200. Hanhimäki, JM (2004) *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* Oxford University Press: London p40.

⁵⁴ Garthoff *Détente and Confrontation* p211.

⁵⁵ Garthoff p200. Hahnheimaki *Flawed Architect* p56.

⁵⁶ Kaufman *Confronting Communism* p214

⁵⁷ Kaufman p214

⁵⁸ Kaufman p226

⁵⁹ Kaufman p211

Presidency his credentials, but also his unique way of operating. In 1969 he immediately set out to achieve an “Opening to China”.

Nixon and Kissinger’s distrust of the Washington bureaucracy heavily influenced the manner in which the “Opening to China” was conducted. Nixon had a deep-seated dislike for the State Department. Kissinger recalls how Nixon believed that officials from State had held disdain for him during his time as Vice President and was upset that contact had not been maintained during his time out of office in the 1960s.⁶⁰ The appointment of his friend Bill Rogers, a man with no previous experience in foreign policy, as Secretary of State was a move designed to protect the President from interference from the bureaucracy.⁶¹ In order to prevent any bureaucratic dissent, the decision was made to conduct diplomatic approaches toward China in complete secrecy. Although the State Department was aware of the gist of US foreign policy toward eventually improving relations with Peking, it was unaware of the specific diplomatic manoeuvres that took place to bring about Nixon’s visit to China in 1972.⁶² The White House did not trust the State Department to guard against leaks that could derail the process of rapprochement. Nixon and Kissinger believed any public debate would severely hamper and slow their attempts to reach out to China within the confines of Nixon’s first term.

The White House strategy toward China in 1969 and 1970 has been described by Nixon’s former speechwriter, Bill Safire, as akin to “applying the opposite of water torture, a bit-by-bit relaxation of economic restrictions, little flatteries and probes through the Pakistanis and Romanians”.⁶³ The first move made in 1969 was to very slightly relax the long-held trade and travel embargo on China, by allowing US citizens to travel to the Chinese mainland and to allow the shipment of grain to China by American companies.⁶⁴ This was followed up by Nixon’s discussions of Sino-US relations with the two countries. During his world tour of 1969 he asked both Pakistani President Yahya Khan and Romanian President Nicolae Ceaușescu to convey a message to the Chinese to the effect that the US believed that Asia could not “move forward” unless China was brought out of its international

⁶⁰ Kissinger *White House Years* p11.

⁶¹ UKNA FCO 7/1807 letter from Freeman to Greenhill 28/10/70.

⁶² Garthoff *Détente and Confrontation* p219.

⁶³ Safire, W (1975) *Before the Fall: An Inside View of the Pre-Watergate White House* Tower Publications: New York p371.

⁶⁴ Kissinger *White House Years* p180.

isolation.⁶⁵ Both channels for communication remained in use throughout 1970, but by April 1971 Pakistan's lack of ties to the Soviet Union made it the preferable interlocutor.⁶⁶

Throughout the period 1969-1971 Yahya Khan was provided with a significant incentive to cooperate with American requests vis-à-vis China. Yahya wanted the US to lift the arms embargo imposed on both India and Pakistan following the conflict over Kashmir in 1965. Pakistan had been disproportionately weakened by the US embargo, as India obtained a significant proportion of its military supplies from the Soviet Union and also had a domestic arms manufacturing industry that was superior to that of Pakistan. By 1969, Pakistan had fallen far behind its neighbour in an arms race on the subcontinent. Talk of a new US arms deal was first mooted when Nixon visited Yahya in August 1969. The Pakistani President pressed for the US to provide replacements for previously ordered arms and/or to authorise the sale of 100 Turkish owned, and US supplied tanks to Pakistan.⁶⁷ At this early stage, Nixon provided no guarantees on arms sales, but gave assurances that he would continue to foster friendship between Pakistan and the US.⁶⁸

After many months of silence on the matter from the White House, in May 1970 Nixon and Kissinger were cajoled on the matter by Pakistan Ambassador in Washington, Agha Hilaly. In a meeting with the State Department's Head of Near East Asian affairs (a department whose remit also included South Asia), Joe Sisco, Hilaly brought up the fact that Nixon had promised in the August 1969 meeting that a decision on arms to Pakistan would be made within a few months.⁶⁹ Grateful for Pakistani cooperation over China, Nixon authorised a "one time exception" to the arms embargo in the summer of 1970. Among the deal were twenty aircraft and 300 armoured personnel carriers that amounted to around \$50 million.⁷⁰ On providing the deal to the Pakistanis, Kissinger was keen to emphasise the fact that the "one time exception" was made as a personal favour from Nixon to Yahya. Whilst relaying the decision to the Pakistani Ambassador Agha Hilaly, Kissinger said that the decision had been made "on the basis of his [Nixon] personal intervention and personal interest

⁶⁵ Kissinger p180.

⁶⁶ Kissinger p704.

⁶⁷ USNA FCO 37/684 New Delhi to FCO: Background information on the post Ayub Pakistan 15/1/70.

⁶⁸ Khan, R (2000) *The American Papers: Secret and Confidential India-Pakistan-Bangladesh Documents 1965-1973* Oxford University Press: Pakistan.p356

⁶⁹ Khan, *The American Papers*.p356

⁷⁰ Kissinger *White House Years* p849.

based on the President's desire to help Pakistan".⁷¹ Nixon's personal relationship continued as a feature of US policy throughout 1971.

Whilst the US and China continued to make public signs of reconciliation in the form of an invite to the American table tennis team to play on the Chinese mainland in April 1971, Yahya continued to play a key role. Messages from the Chinese in December indicated that Chinese Premier Zhou En-Lai would be willing to meet with an American emissary. Kissinger has argued that, by May, the Pakistani channel had become indispensable in fleshing out Kissinger's secret meeting with Zhou which was set for July 9th.⁷² Yahya was a willing collaborator in Kissinger's plan to reach China without public detection.⁷³ The plan was for Kissinger to slip off into China after a visit to New Delhi and then Islamabad. Whilst in Pakistan, Kissinger feigned a stomach ache, which then prompted Yahya to invite the National Security Advisor to the Presidential rest house in the Nathiagali hills outside of Islamabad. Kissinger's "recovery" period provided a cover story for his trip to Peking.⁷⁴ Kissinger has described how Yahya "personally reviewed each detail of my clandestine departure; he put the full facilities of his government at our disposal and lent me his trusted personal pilot".⁷⁵ Nixon and Kissinger repaid Yahya's favour throughout 1971.

Kissinger's talks with Zhou were focused upon Taiwan and Vietnam. The National Security Advisor succeeded in gaining agreement in principle to withdraw American forces from Taiwan in return for Chinese support for American withdrawal from Vietnam.⁷⁶ Kissinger was keen to demonstrate America's worth as an ally to the Chinese throughout 1971, so much so that Seymour Hersh has alleged that the National Security Advisor went as far as to share highly sensitive intelligence and high resolution photographs of Soviet military positions.⁷⁷ Kissinger's account omits any sharing of classified information but rather focuses on the headline achievement of the talks; an agreement with the Chinese for Nixon to visit Peking in early 1972.⁷⁸ Nixon announced his impending visit to communist China in a televised announcement on July 15th, and he revealed to great surprise that

⁷¹ Nixon Presidential Library (hereafter NPL) NSC Box 1024 HAK Memcons Memorandum of conversation between Kissinger and Hilaly 17/6/70.

⁷² Garthoff *Détente and Confrontation* p231.

⁷³ Kissinger *White House Years* p739.

⁷⁴ Kissinger pp738-739.

⁷⁵ Kissinger p739.

⁷⁶ Hersh (1983) *The Price of Power: Nixon in the Kissinger White House* Summit Books: New York p365.

⁷⁷ Hersh *Price of Power* p376.

⁷⁸ Kissinger, p752.

Kissinger had already secretly visited China in an attempt to normalise relations between the two countries.⁷⁹

The crisis in East Pakistan provided an unwanted headache for the White House. Although there is a great deal of debate over the necessity of Yahya's involvement in the China initiative after the crackdown on March 25th, as US-Chinese communication was still occurring via Romania, he was by far the White House's preferred option.⁸⁰ Nixon and Kissinger believed that in order to secure the "opening to China" they needed to support their mutual ally in his desire to keep Pakistan united. In March, Kissinger had persuaded State Department officials that the US should not counsel Yahya against military action, and should adopt a policy of "massive inaction" toward the ongoing crisis.⁸¹ Nixon and Kissinger's unwillingness to condemn Yahya's brutality reflected their desire to continue to protect the China link and demonstrate to Peking the US' reliability as an ally.⁸² In a memorandum from Kissinger outlining policy options toward Pakistan on April 28th, Nixon chose to adopt a policy designed to help Yahya end the war as quickly as possible. This entailed the continuation of economic and food aid, as well as the continued supply of non-lethal military spares and equipment, to make sure Yahya did not think that the US was cutting him off. At the bottom of the memorandum, Nixon added a handwritten note instructing "To all hands, Don't squeeze Yahya at this time".⁸³

Amid increasing pressure from American missions in Dacca and New Delhi and mounting press accusations of moral insensitivity toward the evident slaughter on the subcontinent, the Nixon Administration refused to condemn Yahya's government.⁸⁴ In letters to the Pakistani President on May 7th and May 28th, Nixon failed to criticise Yahya for the use of military force on his own population. Instead he opted to mildly encourage Yahya to continue on the path toward a political solution and to encourage the return of the vast numbers of refugees that had fled East Pakistan into India.⁸⁵ Whilst in Pakistan, Kissinger reminded Yahya that the refugee flow could give India the

⁷⁹ Kissinger p759-760.

⁸⁰ Garthoff *Détente and Confrontation* p264; Hitchens *Trial of Henry Kissinger* p47; Hahnhimaki *Flawed Architect* p156.

⁸¹ Van Hollen, C (1980) "The Tilt Policy Revisited: Nixon-Kissinger Geopolitics and South Asia" *Asian Survey* Vol 20 No 4 p341.

⁸² Banerjee, S (1987) "Explaining the American 'Tilt' in the 1971 Crisis: A Late Dependency Approach" *International Studies Quarterly* Vol31 p203.

⁸³ National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No 79 *The Tilt: The U.S. and the South Asian Crisis of 1971* Document 9 Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon 28/4/71.

⁸⁴ Kissinger *White House Years* p854.

⁸⁵ Khan *American Papers* p564; Kissinger p857.

pretext for a war they were confident of winning.⁸⁶ As the crisis moved into the second half of 1971, the Nixon Administration concentrated upon humanitarian support and a return home for the refugees as a diversion from its tacit support of the military regime.

The White House suffered embarrassment in June as the *New York Times* reported that a freight ship bound for Pakistan had been loaded with US arms. The revelation prompted Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Democrat Frank Church to write to the President claiming the shipment was a “violation” of the current US policy to ban all supply of arms to Pakistan whilst the current crisis continues.⁸⁷ Church was referring to a decision made by the State Department in early April in response to evidence that US arms were being used against the Bengalis, to impose a temporary “hold” on US supplied military equipment to Pakistan.⁸⁸ The impression of a full embargo was then given in a statement made by a State Department spokesman on April 9th in which reporters were assured that, in terms of military equipment “there is nothing in the pipeline” and that no arms had been shipped under the “one time exception”.⁸⁹ However, required White House approval had not been given to such a move. As Nixon told Church, “[T]he Administration...has not imposed a formal [arms] embargo that would prevent shipment to Pakistan of military items”.⁹⁰ The amount of arms delivered was small and issued under commercial licences to commercial vendors in Pakistan before the State Department’s decision in early April. Nonetheless, US arms supplies to Pakistan continued into October 1971. The incident heightened US domestic criticism of the Nixon administration and publicly exposed the disconnect between the White House and the State Department prior to the China announcement on July 15th. Only then did officials at State realise the true extent to which they had been cut out of the foreign policymaking process.

4. State kept in the dark

Having no knowledge of the initiative designed to “open” China, State Department officials believed the “one time exception” to Pakistan to be a strange policy. In February 1970, Acting Secretary of State Elliot Richardson wrote a memorandum for the President that explicitly stated the case against the supply of arms to Pakistan. He wrote that the State Department was “more convinced than ever”

⁸⁶ Bass *Blood Telegram* p170.

⁸⁷ Khan *American Papers* p606. Kissinger p859.

⁸⁸ Van Hollen “Tilt Policy Revisited” p344.

⁸⁹ USNA CF 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2530 Pol 23-9 Pak State to Islamabad 9/4/71.

⁹⁰ Khan, *American Papers* p608.

that the US should retain an arms embargo to South Asia.⁹¹ He reasoned that relations with both India and Pakistan were good at present and that the supply of arms to Pakistan would jeopardise this for a negligible gain in influence. Furthermore, he asserted that arms supply to Pakistan would have a net negative effect on US interests in South Asia. Such a move would damage the relationship with India, a country that was relatively more important to US interests than Pakistan.⁹² Undersecretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Joe Sisco was particularly concerned that the breaking of the 1965 arms embargo in favour of Pakistan would cause lasting damage to Indo-US relations. Prior to the announcement, US Ambassador to India, Kenneth Keating added to growing State Department discontent in expressing concern that the supply of arms to Pakistan would renew the South Asian arms race and prompt India to call for a similar lifting of restrictions in their favour.⁹³ In February 1971, Keating ramped up his opposition to the “one time exception” when he branded it a “terrible mistake” that only increased the risk that US arms would once again be used in a South Asian conflict, as they had been in 1965.⁹⁴

Despite deep reservations throughout the organisation, the State Department defended the decision to grant a one-time exception amid vociferous Indian protests. At a November meeting in New Delhi with Indian Foreign Secretary T.N. Kaul, Keating and Assistant Undersecretary for Near East Asian Affairs, Christopher Van Hollen, in an attempt to mollify Indian protests, explained that Indian sensitivities had been taken into account in the US Government’s decision to supply arms to Pakistan.⁹⁵ Van Hollen explained that the decision had been made so that the US could increase its levels of influence with the Pakistani government. He assured Kaul that the amount of equipment supplied under the exception was too insignificant to have an effect on the military balance of power on the sub-continent and emphasised that this exception was strictly “one time only” in nature (State officials were unaware that Kissinger had in fact left the door open to future exceptions).⁹⁶ In response, Kaul mirrored Keating’s concern from two months earlier that US arms supply policy could

⁹¹ Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS) 1969-1976 Vol E-7 Documents on South Asia Doc. 47 Memorandum from Richardson to Nixon 10/2/70.

⁹² FRUS 1969-1976 Vol E-7 Documents on South Asia Doc. 47 Memorandum from Richardson to Nixon 10/2/70.

⁹³ USNA Central Files 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2530 Pol 23-9 Pak State to New Delhi 20/8/70.

⁹⁴ USNA Central Files 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 1779 Def 12-5 PAK Letter from Keating to Schneider 4/2/71.

⁹⁵ USNA Central Files 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2369 POL IND-PAK Memorandum of conversation between Keating, Van Hollen and Kaul 16/11/71.

⁹⁶ USNA Central Files 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2369 POL IND-PAK Memorandum of conversation between Keating, Van Hollen and Kaul 16/11/71. Although it was a one-time exception, Kissinger had left the door open for future exceptions. In June 1970, he made it clear to Pakistan Ambassador Agha Hilaly that the granting of the one-time exception “does not preclude future discussions of other such one-time exceptions”; NPL NSC Box 1024 HAK Memcons Memorandum of conversation between Kissinger and Hilaly 17/6/70

spark conflict, citing the fact that since the American announcement, levels of anti-Indian propaganda in Pakistan had increased significantly. In October, a US State Department Desk officer confidentially told a UK Embassy official that the “one-time exception” was bound to put the State Department in “an India-Pakistan crossfire”.⁹⁷ The prediction turned out to be an accurate assessment of the State Department’s position in late 1970.

Indian protests had died down by early 1971, but the State Department remained in an awkward position. Many bureaucrats disagreed with major aspects of their own government’s policy on South Asia, and they were completely unaware of the White House’s true rationale. One diplomat that did not oppose White House policy toward Pakistan was US Ambassador to Pakistan, Joseph Farland. In communications over arms policies, he had supported Nixon’s decision to make an exception to the arms embargo, relaying his view that the US should not be “overly impressed” with Indian protests and disagreed with Keating’s assertion that US supply to Pakistan could spark an arms race.⁹⁸ However, until June 1971, he too was unaware of Nixon and Kissinger’s true motives. He was only told of the plans for Kissinger’s secret trip to Peking when he was summoned to meet Nixon in California and sworn to secrecy.⁹⁹ In July, Farland played a crucial role in ensuring Kissinger’s stomach ache ruse was not uncovered by making sure US Embassy doctors were predisposed at the required time.

The desired outcome of the crisis for the State Department during during the first half of 1971 did not differ significantly from that of the White House inasmuch as the continuation of Pakistan as a unified state was the desired outcome. However, until July, the bureaucracy was hampered by its lack of knowledge of the extent of close relations between Yahya and the White House. Its support for the Pakistan government was based upon considerations for South Asian stability. In a memorandum for Rogers in January, Joe Sisco explained that any position other than support for the unity of Pakistan could undermine and upset the government in the Western wing, and in any case, politicians in the Eastern wing could act as a moderating force in relations with India.¹⁰⁰ Also, an independent and weak East Pakistan could be ripe for Chinese infiltration and result in further instability.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ UKNA FCO 37/605 Byatt to Sutherland 22/10/70.

⁹⁸ USNA Central Files 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2526 POL 15-1 PAK Farland to State 4/11/70.

⁹⁹ Garthoff *Détente and Confrontation* p231.

¹⁰⁰ USNA Central Files 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2526 POL 14-PAK Sisco to Rogers 18/2/71.

¹⁰¹ USNA Central Files 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2526 POL 14-PAK Sisco to Rogers 18/2/71.

Prior to the military crackdown, the State Department was unaware of the influence US opinion evidently had upon Pakistan's President. Throughout early 1971 the US mission on the ground had to allay high-level Pakistani fears that the US was working to split rather than preserve Pakistan. Farland had to twice remind Yahya in January and February that the US did in fact support the continued unity of Pakistan.¹⁰² Well into March, it was State's assumption that Yahya was distrustful of American intentions, which seems unlikely given the favours that the White House had conferred on him in return for acting as an interlocutor with the Chinese. The result was a perception within the State Department that any US intervention with Yahya was ineffective and that other powers were better placed to persuade the President against using military action.¹⁰³

Doubt about the extent of US influence played out in the form of reaching out to the UK to intervene with Yahya. On the eve of Mujib's Dacca racecourse speech on March 7th, there was much concern that a potential Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) would precede an immediate military intervention by the Pakistani military. In a meeting with a UK Embassy official in Washington, Van Hollen reached out to the British in an attempt to prevent Yahya from taking repressive action that would seriously jeopardise the unity of Pakistan. He put it to the Embassy that the UK was better placed than the US to persuade Yahya not to act militarily in the event of a UDI.¹⁰⁴ Van Hollen believed that any approach by the US government would fuel fears in West Pakistan that the US government supported the secession of East Pakistan. The British responded negatively to the proposal. UK Ambassador to Pakistan Sir Cyril Pickard believed that such an intervention would be "quite fruitless and extremely dangerous to our interests" in much the same manner that the State Department imagined a US initiative could be.¹⁰⁵ The White House wanted to avoid bloodshed too, although the situation in Pakistan had yet to fully catch Nixon and Kissinger's attention in March. The difference between the White House and the State Department was the rationale: State policy had a humanitarian element in wanting to prevent unnecessary bloodshed that would make the splitting of Pakistan inevitable. The White House was most concerned with supporting the Pakistan government, and Yahya personally, as a means to prove their worth as an ally and protect the link to China.

The White House's secret policy also hampered the manner in which State Department machinery functioned and exacerbated disagreements within the bureaucracy. Following the crackdown by the

¹⁰² USNA Central Files 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2521 POL PAK Farland to State 2/1/71

¹⁰³ UKNA FCO 37/877 Cromer to FCO 6/3/71.

¹⁰⁴ UKNA FCO 37/877 Washington to FCO 6/3/71.

¹⁰⁵ UKNA FCO 37/877 Islamabad to FCO 7/3/71.

West Pakistani military government on the Bengali nationalist movement on March 25th, the American consulate in Dacca and the US Embassy in New Delhi began voicing dissent against what they saw as a US foreign policy that was supporting the widespread murder of civilians in East Pakistan, (discussed further in Section four below). US diplomats on the ground were protesting against a policy, the full rationale for which, they did not understand. Meantime their superiors at the State Department defended the policy of non-interference based on a different set of calculations to the White House. In retrospect, an official at the Consulate in Dacca believes that, had they known of the China initiative, the dissent cables would likely still have been sent, although “the decibel level would have been down a notch or two”.¹⁰⁶ It seems certain that US diplomats at the State Department and on the ground would have been less focused on rancorous infighting and more on the situation at hand had the White House’s secretive foreign policymaking not been the order of the day.

From April through to July, the State Department continued to be constrained by a major White House initiative of which they had no knowledge. An April 16th State Department report to the Kissinger-chaired Senior Review Group, a committee of the National Security Council, neatly demonstrated the differences in White House and State Department policy premises. The report’s major contention was that the US government should begin to reconsider its position in support of a united Pakistan.¹⁰⁷ The State Department reasoned that the vicious use of military force had killed the notion of a united Pakistan in Bengal and that the fighting was not likely to end in the short term. Therefore support for two viable states could be an option as it was the likely eventuality. The report, along with others presented to the executive branch between March and July, was disregarded by the Executive branch. The State Department’s assessments, unbeknown to them, were ignorant of the wider context.¹⁰⁸

The inability of the executive branch to reveal its true motives led to what Van Hollen has since described as “little coherent policy direction” being given to the bureaucracy.¹⁰⁹ The Assistant Undersecretary for Near East Asian Affairs cited embarrassment over revelations that US arms were being shipped to Pakistan in June 1971 as a case in point. In April the State Department, which had long been opposed to arms supply to Pakistan and the “one time exception”, gave the impression to reporters that the US had imposed a temporary moratorium on the small amount of military spare

¹⁰⁶ Bass *Blood Telegram* p177.

¹⁰⁷ USNA Central Files 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2535 POL PAK-US Assessment of US-Pakistan relations 16/4/71.

¹⁰⁸ Van Hollen “Tilt Policy revisited” p345.

¹⁰⁹ Van Hollen p345.

parts bound for Pakistan.¹¹⁰ In reality, the White House had never formally responded to a State Department request for such an action, and the ban on arms supply had never been imposed. Therefore, when *The New York Times* broke the story that US arms were being loaded on a Pakistani ship headed for Islamabad, Nixon was forced by leader of the Senate Committee on Foreign relations, Frank Church, to publicly explain the confusion.¹¹¹

The arms embargo was put to the White House as an “interim decision” that required Executive approval. The fact that no response was received led to embarrassment when arms shipments to Pakistan were reported by *The New York Times* in June.¹¹² Van Hollen alleges that, as a result of a lack of presidential leadership and the dismissing of State Department opinions, White House guidance on policy for State was vague and unhelpful.

Before July 15th, State was pursuing a policy for which it did not understand the true rationale and about which serious reservations were held throughout the organisation. The Department had been ignored, neglected and had inter-departmental relationships unnecessarily strained. Being cut out of the loop to such an extent severely harmed its credibility in the latter half of 1971.

5. The UK kept in the dark

Like the Nixon administration, the Heath government was looking to improve its relationship with Communist China in late 1970 and early 1971. The Chirep issue, that of Peking’s seating at the UN, had been a minor bone of contention within UK-US relations since the UK formally recognised the Communist government in 1950. By the autumn of 1970 the British foresaw that majority opinion at the UN, influenced by the stance of many new African members, would soon favour the seating of Peking at the expense of Taiwan.¹¹³ For the British government, this meant that it could look to drop support for the “Important Question” a motion that ensured that a two thirds majority vote would be needed to seat the communists. A long held agreement between the UK and US over Chirep had been that the UK would support the “Important Question” resolution as long as there was no overall majority in favour of Peking: the agreement was about to expire. British negotiations with China had stalled in mid-1970 as a result of the UK’s stance on Chirep: by the end of the year Heath and

¹¹⁰ Khan *American Papers* p606.

¹¹¹ Khan, *American Papers* p608.

¹¹² Van Hollen, p344.

¹¹³ UKNA FCO 37/1813 Briefs for Heath’s visit to the US December 1970.

Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home had decided to make a sustained effort to end the UK's ambivalent attitude toward China.¹¹⁴

British relations with Peking had steadily improved in the years preceding 1971. Relations had soured in the 1960s amid the brutality of the Cultural Revolution, but began to improve in 1967 when UK officials returned to the Embassy in Beijing having been evacuated years earlier.¹¹⁵ In 1970, Mao made two symbolic gestures of reconciliation. He held a meeting with British charge d'affaires John Denson and sent a birthday message to the Queen.¹¹⁶ In November of 1970 discussions shifted to an exchange of ambassadors. Peking's charge in London told the FCO of the Chinese desire to tear down their current London Embassy and build a new one "capable of accommodating an Ambassador".¹¹⁷ The theme was built upon by Zhou when he promised Denson in March 1971 that the Chinese would rebuild the British Embassy that had been damaged by protestors years earlier.¹¹⁸

Keen to support a burgeoning trade relationship with China and to ensure favourable conditions for the handing back of Hong Kong in 1997, the British pushed forward with their own rapprochement.¹¹⁹ In early 1971, the British were expecting the Chinese to formally request they drop support for the Important Question as a precondition for an exchange of Ambassadors. In an attempt to mollify possible US objections to the dropping of support for the Important Question, the UK kept the US government informed of the process at every turn.¹²⁰ In February, British Washington Embassy Minister John Moberly explained the UK's position to Kissinger's Assistant National Security Advisor Hal Sonnenfeldt. In a report of the conversation for the NSC, Sonnenfeldt explained that the British wanted to take the US position "into account" before committing to a policy. Aware that the Chinese request could come at any time, the British were keen to learn when the White House may come to a decision on the Important Question: a matter the British were aware was currently under review.¹²¹ When Sonnenfeldt was unable to provide a timescale, British Embassy official Guy Millard pressed the issue, as British ministers would have to make a decision in

¹¹⁴ Scott *Allies Apart* pp62-63.

¹¹⁵ Scott p62.

¹¹⁶ Scott p63.

¹¹⁷ Kaufman *Confronting Communism* pp226-227.

¹¹⁸ Kaufman p227.

¹¹⁹ Scott p63.

¹²⁰ Heath, E (1997) *The Course of My Life* Bloomsbury Reader: London p494.

¹²¹ NPL NSC CO Europe UK Box 728 Jan-Aug 1971 NSC Memorandum for the record 19/2/71.

the very near future and did not want to be found in an isolated position vis-à-vis the US.¹²² Mutual frustration over China began to build.

In March, reports reached Washington that the British government were soon to make a decision to drop support for the Important Question without waiting for the outcome of the White House policy review. Such concern prompted US Embassy officials to call upon Foreign Office Minister Anthony Royle to remind the UK that any British decision on China made before the White House review concluded could be damaging to UK-US relations. Without giving any indication of when a US decision would be made, the US Embassy delegation strongly urged the UK to delay any decision on Chinese representation at the UN until the White House had made up its mind.¹²³ Royle responded by explaining that although no public announcement would be forthcoming and the UK would inform the US before any solid decision was made, a decision could not be put off for any longer than “a few weeks”. The White House did not take kindly to the pressing of the issue by the Foreign Office. In a memorandum for Kissinger ahead of his meeting with FCO Minister Geoffrey Rippon, Sonnenfeldt suggested that Kissinger “take the opportunity to suggest that we do not like being confronted by the British with deadlines on the China representation issue”.¹²⁴ Tempers were clearly frayed on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Chirep issue continued along the same vein through high-level meetings between Foreign Secretary Home and Secretary of State Rogers. In London at the end of April, Home told Rogers that the UK’s position on the Important Question was “wearing terribly thin” and that the government would have to change its position in the very near future.¹²⁵ Unaware of the true thinking of the White House, Rogers continued the US government line of urging the British to delay their final decision for another month, to which Home agreed.¹²⁶ In terms of the direction in which US policy was headed on Chirep, Rogers told Home that the Americans were heading toward a position that would allow for both Peking and Taiwan to sit in the UN. However, the seating of Taiwan was a further point of disagreement between the allies, the British feeling that a “Two Chinas” solution was unworkable as neither the communists nor the nationalists would agree to such a formula.

In a June 3rd meeting with Home in Lisbon, Rogers was still unable to clarify the American position on Chinese representation at the UN and had no timetable within which a decision would be made.

¹²² NPL NSC CO Europe UK Box 728 Jan-Aug 1971 NSC Memorandum for the record 19/2/71.

¹²³ NPL NSC CO Europe UK Box 728 Jan-Aug 1971 London to State 5/3/71.

¹²⁴ NPL NSC CO Europe UK Box 728 Jan-Aug 1971 Memorandum from Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger 8/3/71.

¹²⁵ UKNA FCO 82/59 Record of Conversation between

¹²⁶ Scott *Allies Apart* p64.

The Secretary of State did, however, drop opposition to the UK making its own decision before the completion of the White House policy review.¹²⁷ Therefore on June 22nd, Royle told the Chinese charge that the UK would no longer support the Important Question, would not support any further delay in the seating of Peking at the UN, and would oppose any form of “Two Chinas” solution that would allow Taiwan to maintain its UN membership.¹²⁸ The British also assured Peking that as long as the Chinese responded positively to a request to exchange ambassadors, the UK would withdraw its consulate from Taiwan.¹²⁹ The British were then caught by surprise when on July 10th the Chinese significantly increased their demands for an Ambassador exchange to the point where they required an official exchange of notes whereby the UK recognised Taiwan as a province of the People’s Republic.¹³⁰ The official British line on Taiwan was that its sovereignty was undetermined and de facto support for the communist position on the matter was a step the government was reluctant to take.¹³¹ An announcement by President Nixon days later, however, made it difficult for the UK to refuse Chinese terms.¹³²

Nixon’s July 15th revelation that Kissinger had secretly visited Peking and arranged a trip for the President to China in 1972 caused understandable consternation in London. The British quickly realised that whilst the Americans had been urging the British to delay their decision on making a concrete move toward improving relations with China, they had been secretly arranging a move of their own.¹³³ Not only had the British been deceived by the White House’s secretive foreign policymaking, but it had also harmed their national interest. The price for an exchange of ambassadors with China had increased as a direct result of China’s improved position with the US.¹³⁴ White House secrecy had directly impinged upon British foreign policy. Publicly, the UK welcomed the US-China rapprochement as it signalled a convergence of British and American opinion over the role of China in International politics, but Prime Minister Heath flatly refused to send Nixon a message of congratulations.¹³⁵

¹²⁷ Scott p66.

¹²⁸ UKNA FCO 82/60 Briefs for Home’s meeting with Rogers 20/7/71.

¹²⁹ UKNA FCO 82/60 Briefs for Home’s meeting with Rogers 20/7/71.

¹³⁰ UKNA FCO 82/60 Briefs for Home’s meeting with Rogers 20/7/71; Scott p66.

¹³¹ UKNA FCO 82/60 Briefs for Home’s meeting with Rogers 20/7/71.

¹³² Scott p67. The UK agreed to Chinese terms when Peking became a UN member in October 1971.

¹³³ Scott *Allies Apart* p67.

¹³⁴ Scott p66.

¹³⁵ Scott p67.

The British government had been aware of the disconnect between the White House and the State Department since at least the autumn of 1970. Then-Ambassador John Freeman sent a letter, seen by the Prime Minister, to Permanent Under-Secretary of State Denis Greenhill explaining the White House's tendency to formulate policy without consulting the State Department.¹³⁶ Freeman described how Nixon interpreted his role as Chief Executive very literally and was too heavily reliant upon Kissinger. The letter described how the White House formulated policy alone on important matters such as the concurrent Strategic Arms Limitation Talks and Vietnam, while less important matters would be under the purview of the State Department. For the British there was no way to definitively draw the line and know upon which matters the State Department was kept fully and truthfully informed.

Knowledge of the White House-State disconnect did not soften the blow of July 15th. In Greenhill's communication with Freeman he described how an invitation from Sonnenfeldt for the British to bypass the bureaucracy on important issues must be declined.¹³⁷ The Permanent Undersecretary reasoned that such a move would put at risk the FCO's vital relationship with the State Department. Not only was the vast majority of UK-US business conducted between the bureaucracies, but British opinions were far better represented when presented to the Executive branch via State. Therefore State's evident lack of effectiveness in presenting its own views to the President had a knock-on effect for the presentation and consideration of British views. The State Department's communications with Britain, and every other state, were being deliberately undermined by the White House.¹³⁸ Necessarily, this meant that a lack of trust became endemic within the FCO-State relationship. There was now no issue on which the British could confidentially trust the word of a State Department so distrusted by the White House that it was not receiving accurate instructions with which to conduct policy. A previously cooperative relationship in South Asia was now under threat.

Conclusion

Nixon and Kissinger's approach toward South Asia in two ways continued the pattern of US foreign policy in the region since 1947 and acted contrary to it in another. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities in East Pakistan in March 1971, South Asia was considered a low priority within the global Cold War.

¹³⁶ UKNA FCO 7/1807 letter from Freeman to Greenhill 28/10/70. The letter was also confirmed to have been seen by the Prime Minister.

¹³⁷ UKNA FCO 7/1807 letter from Greenhill to Freeman 15/10/71.

¹³⁸ Scott *Allies Apart* p69.

Although a departure from Johnson's blanket arms embargo to South Asia, the White House decision to grant a "one time exception" fitted within the previous administrations' preferences for strong support from an allied Pakistan over India's commitment to non-alignment. After the Pakistan Army's crackdown on Bengali nationalists on March 25th, the White House continued an American tendency to sacrifice Indian goodwill for gains in the global struggle against the Soviet Union. It can be argued however that Nixon and Kissinger in fact took something of a departure from the policy of previous administrations inasmuch as they tacitly jeopardised stability on the subcontinent through their continued support for Yahya Khan, a President that demonstrated little ability to bring the situation to an end. The British leaning toward India on the subcontinent did follow a post-war pattern of favouring the larger, more populous and more economically lucrative Commonwealth member.¹³⁹

The secrecy with which Nixon and Kissinger conducted their policy consequences for operational credibility of the State Department. Although the State Department was in line with the White House in wanting to maintain the unity of Pakistan, its priority was South Asian stability, not the "opening to China". The State Department's lack of information undermined both its standing with Yahya's government and eventually the British FCO. The British government was aware that the White House kept many secrets from the State Department, but Nixon's announcement of Kissinger's secret trip to Peking on July 15th exposed its true ramifications. Not only was the State Department excluded from one of the biggest shifts in US post-war foreign policy, it also had the effect of undermining policy in South Asia: US requests for the UK to intervene with Yahya demonstrated how far the bureaucracy had been misled and the UK misinformed with regard to the US' true standing with the Pakistan government.

The US insistence upon the UK deferring its decision to drop support for the Important Question and Nixon's 15th July revelation undermined the clear consultation evident between the governments in late 1970 and early 1971. At the top level, much of the work put into developing what Heath referred to as a "natural friendship" between himself and the President was quickly eroded. The previously productive Heath-Nixon relationship was quickly filled with British resentment and mistrust. Although publicly supportive of a US policy that finally aligned with the British opinion on accepting China into mainstream international politics, privately Heath was fuming at the lack of consultation.¹⁴⁰ This contravention of a crucial norm within the UK-US relationship ensured frosty

¹³⁹ Smith, SC (2010) "Coming Down on the Winning Side: Britain and the South Asian Crisis, 1971" *Contemporary British History* Vol 24 No4 p463.

¹⁴⁰ Scott *Allies Apart* p68.

top-level relations as the crisis in South Asia marched toward a conflict between India and Pakistan in the second half of 1971.

In early 1971, White House secrecy also disrupted the dynamics of the UK-US relationship on the ground in Pakistan. Consultation was a key feature of the relationship between the US Consul General and the UK Deputy High Commissioner in Dacca. Archer Blood and Frank Sargeant worked together in highlighting the plight of the Bengalis and cooperated on the evacuation of British and American citizens. Ultimately, the White House's exacerbation of disagreements within the State Department led to Kissinger's insistence upon the removal of Archer Blood from Dacca, and the imposition of a Consul General sympathetic to the White House line. Frank Sargeant was removed from his post in Dacca for similar reasons minus the internal turmoil. ¹⁴¹

As he had with the Shah of Iran, Nixon busily demonstrated his personal style of diplomacy. As he gained a personal allegiance with the Shah to protect against Soviet infiltration of the Middle East, he developed a "special relationship" with Yahya to cultivate a rapprochement with China. Nixon's commitment to personal diplomacy in pursuit of wider geopolitical aims became a feature of US policy in the second half of 1971, even after Yahya had outlived his usefulness as an interlocutor. July 15th was a turning point for UK-US relations in 1971; a breakdown in consultation and Nixon's continued allegiance to Yahya Khan provided the context for the UK and US to "tilt" in opposite directions as the South Asian crisis continued into the summer of 1971.

¹⁴¹ Blood *Cruel Birth* p233.

Chapter 4: Tilting in Opposite Directions

Introduction

This chapter builds on the theme developed in chapter three regarding the consequences of the secretive White House foreign policymaking system for UK-US relations. The chapter consists of six sections that assess events on the ground in Pakistan, the international reaction to the crisis and the nature of the UK-US relationship into the summer of 1971. Much of the chapter pivots around President Richard Nixon's July 15th announcement that National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger had visited China to make preparations for a presidential visit to Peking in 1972. This announcement had repercussions both for the international context surrounding the crisis in East Pakistan and for the UK-US relationship.

The opening two sections describes the ongoing situation in South Asia after the Pakistan Army's crackdown in East Pakistan on March 25th 1971. Section One charts Yahya's unwillingness to stop the war through an accommodation with the Awami League inability to slow the number of refugees crossing the border from East Pakistan into India. An understanding of the situation is developed in order to provide context for later discussion of the UK's and US' respective positions on the return of the refugees. Section two introduces the Indian response to the ongoing crisis. After an initially cautious reaction to the events of March 25th, India looked to focus international attention upon the atrocities that were being committed by the Pakistani regime. Top Indian officials including Prime Minister Indira Gandhi travelled the world in an attempt to foster international sympathy for the plight of the refugees and highlight the burden that the situation had placed upon India. Section three considers the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation that was signed by India and the Soviet Union on August 9th 1971. The section provides an analysis of the motivations of the signatories and the implications it had for the crisis in South Asia. Different UK and US interpretations of the treaty's significance with regard to the intentions of India and the Soviet Union are important for understanding UK-US differences with regard to the crisis.

The final three sections demonstrate the consequences that White House secrecy had for the UK-US relationship in the second half of 1971. Section four charts the White House's rationale for its continued favour for Yahya Khan: a policy that has become known as the "tilt" toward Pakistan. Alongside the need to prove the worth of the US as a potential ally to China, the White House developed a unique interpretation of Indian and Soviet motives with regard to conflict on the subcontinent. The assumptions developed by Kissinger, in particular, shaped US policy toward South Asia and ensured the White House continued its support for Yahya. The fifth section analyses the differences in opinion between the White House and the State Department after the split between

the two was indirectly publicised on July 15th. The section highlights the high level of discord that marked relations between the two organisations. In the midst of the South Asian crisis, the section assesses the increasing extent to which the bureaucracy was cut out of the foreign policymaking process.

The final section assesses the effect that Nixon's announcement of the White House's rapprochement with China on July 15th, and the evident White House-State Department discord had on UK-US relations. The section assesses the difficulties that the UK government faced communicating with the US government. The section also highlights the areas of agreement that the British shared with the State Department, but not the White House. Namely, the need for international focus to be on Yahya's responsibility for the creating conditions amenable to the return of refugees to return from India to East Pakistan, and a shared assessment of Indian and Soviet aims. The chapter ends by drawing conclusions as to the difficulties that the White House foreign policymaking style contributed to the cooling of the UK-US relationship in the latter half of 1971, before an assessment of the impact that the July 15th announcement had upon UK-US relations in South Asia.

1. Crisis in Pakistan

On the evening of March 25th/26th 1971 the Pakistani military expected *Operation Searchlight* to be a surgical strike that would eliminate the Awami League and prevent the military personnel stationed in East Pakistan from switching sides.¹ The action was designed to create political conditions susceptible to the rise of political parties more palatable to West Pakistan political parties, and the military establishment.² The plan was to carry out the mission in such a way that would not provoke India, nor bring the conflict close to the Indian border. None of the objectives were fully achieved. Many of the Awami League's senior leadership escaped to India; 20,000 Bengali members of the Pakistani armed forces turned on their leaders. And Yahya's plans to produce a stable government in East Pakistan never materialised.³

¹ Sisson, R and Rose, L (1990) *War and Secession: India, Pakistan and the Creation of Bangladesh* University of California Press; Los Angeles p157.

² Sisson and Rose *War and Secession* p157.

³ Jackson, RJ (1975) *South Asian Crisis: India-Pakistan-Bangladesh* Chatto and Windus: London p56. Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS) 1969-1976 Volume E7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972 Doc 131 National Intelligence Estimate "Prospects for Pakistan" 12/4/71.

On March 26th Yahya immediately looked to shift the blame for what was already becoming a military debacle, onto the shoulders of Mujib and the Awami League.⁴ This tactic continued into April when the Pakistani President claimed that the already evident outflow of refugees from East Pakistan was a result of murders that had been committed by Bengali separatists and he complimented his West Pakistani forces on the level of restraint they had shown.⁵ Yahya also acted to ban the Awami League as a political organisation and ordered the complete censorship of the press within newly imposed Martial Law regulations. Although Mujib's obduracy on the Six Points had undoubtedly helped bring the crisis to such a bloody head, British officials believed it undeniable that it was Yahya's *Operation Searchlight* that initiated the widespread violence that engulfed East Pakistan for the remainder of 1971.⁶

Accused alongside the Awami League by Islamabad of inciting secessionist militarism in East Pakistan were the Indian government. Although wanting to avoid a military confrontation with India Yahya wanted to demonstrate to the world that the aims that the nefarious aims of Indian imperialism were to dismember and destroy Pakistan.⁷ In May, a government spokesman accused India, along with Hindus living in East Bengal of looking to undermine the nation of Pakistan through communal agitation dating back to the turn of the century.⁸ Accompanying the official government statement was a paper entitled *The Awami League's Bid for Secession*. The report expanded upon the notion that, incited by the Hindu minority and with arms smuggled over the border from India, the Awami League was planning an armed uprising set for March 26th, a coup that was only prevented by the swift actions of West Pakistan's military.⁹ British diplomats believed there was validity to claims that elements within the Awami League had been stockpiling weapons, but Head of the South Asian Department at the FCO, Iain Sutherland believed the Pakistan government's claims to be a post-hoc justification for their actions on the 25th/26th March.¹⁰

⁴ US National Archives (hereafter USNA) State Dmmt Central Files 1970-1973 Record Group 59 (hereafter RG 59) Box 2530 POL 23-9 PAK Islamabad to State 26/3/71.

⁵ USNA State Dmmt Central Files 1970-1973 Record Group 59 Box 2530 POL 23-9 PAK Islamabad to State 26/3/71.

⁶ UK National Archives (hereafter UKNA) Foreign and Commonwealth office files (hereafter FCO) 37/885 Draft minute Sutherland to Wilford [undated].

⁷ UKNA FCO 37/885 Hallilley to Webb 10/5/71.

⁸ UKNA FCO 37/886 Official Statement of Pakistan Government 6/5/71.

⁹ UKNA FCO 37/886 Pakistan Government Report *The Awami League's Bid for Secession* 6/5/71.

¹⁰ UKNA FCO 37/886 Hallilley to Webb 10/5/71; FCO 37/886 Sutherland to Wilford [undated].

By late April, the Pakistani military had regained a measure of control in East Pakistan, particularly in Dacca and the major port city of Chittagong.¹¹ In May, Yahya accelerated his plans to hand over power to a government amenable to the wishes of leaders in the Western Wing. Awami League National Assembly members that had not been disqualified or accused of a crime would be allowed to take up their seats as independents, with by-elections to be held for the remainder of the seats. On May 26th, Yahya told US Ambassador Farland that, in mid-June, elections would be held in about seven percent of East Pakistani constituencies and that the new National Assembly would be “presented” with a constitution that had been drawn up by an appointed legal committee.¹² The government’s plans not only drew scepticism from the diplomatic community in Pakistan, but also from the PPP leader, Zulifukur Ali Bhutto. Bhutto’s ownership of the majority of National Assembly seats in the Western Wing gave him significant leverage over Yahya’s decision-making. On June 28th, Bhutto publicly announced his belief that the military government had no intention of handing over power to an elected civilian body, and they never did.¹³

By mid-1971, Yahya was also forced to address the growing refugee crisis. In May, a conservative estimate put the number of refugees crossing the border from East Pakistan into India at 60,000 per day.¹⁴ By July, over 6 million people had fled and by December the number was around 10 million.¹⁵ The crisis provided the Indian government with fuel to condemn Pakistan on the global stage. Yahya offered the first invitation for refugees to return on May 21st. In a public statement he acknowledged the fact that innocent people had been forced to flee their homes in East Pakistan, but claimed that the numbers had been exaggerated and that India continued to encourage people to leave so that it could further exploit the situation.¹⁶ He claimed that law and order had been restored in East Pakistan and that “Bona Fide” Pakistan citizens were welcome to return. However, his pleas rang hollow. As refugees continued to cross the border despite the President’s repeated invitations for them to return throughout June.¹⁷ UK High Commissioner in Islamabad, Sir Cyril Pickard saw the initial May announcement as being largely for domestic consumption in West Pakistan and certainly

¹¹ FRUS 1969-1976 Volume E7, Documents on South Asia, 1969-1972 Doc 131 National Intelligence Estimate “Prospects for Pakistan” 12/4/71.

¹² UKNA FCO 37/887 Meeting between UK Charge D’Affaires, US Amb. Farland and Yahya 25/5/71.

¹³ Jackson *South Asian Crisis* p52.

¹⁴ Sisson and Rose *War and Secession* p152.

¹⁵ Bass, G (2013) *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide* Knopf: New York p121.

¹⁶ UKNA FCO 37/887 Islamabad to FCO Text of Yahya’s statement 21/5/71.

¹⁷ Sisson and Rose, *War and Secession* p169.

designed to convince the international community that Pakistan was proactive on the question of refugees.¹⁸

The Pakistan government's focus upon the return of refugees changed the tone of the international debate and forced India to alter its position, but it contributed little toward a solution. In an attempt to further soften international attitudes toward his regime, Yahya announced that new elections were to take place in East Pakistan whilst the Pakistani military controlled large areas of the province in May and June. Although they controlled large areas of the countryside, Bengali guerrillas had yet to become a cohesive and effective fighting force. Plans for elections therefore relied on the government's ability to control East Pakistan and its infrastructure. Such control soon became impossible amid the Mukti Bahini's gains during the summer monsoon season as the guerrillas systematically targeted the Army's communication and supply lines. Ultimately, fresh polls could not take place.¹⁹ The humanitarian crisis caused by the outpouring of refugees despite Yahya's calls for their return continued to cause problems for Pakistan's government and formed the basis for India's decision to mount an attack in December.

2. India's response

Although the response was reserved, the Indian government was largely pleased by the result of Pakistan's general election in 1970.²⁰ The Indian government kept a low profile during the constitutional negotiations in early 1971 as overt support could embarrass Mujib, who faced regular attacks for his more conciliatory stance toward Pakistan's neighbour. Also, India's own general election took precedence - an election in which Indira Gandhi increased her control over India's parliament, the Lok Sabha.²¹ The Indian government assumed that Yahya, along with Bhutto would be reluctant to hand over power and would cheat Mujib with deception and the threat of force.²² Ultimately though, the Indian government believed that the government in Islamabad had gone too far down the path of handing power over to a civilian government for the Martial Law Authorities to retain viability.²³ They believed a peaceful settlement was in everyone's interest and they saw negotiated settlements as the tradition on the subcontinent, Sisson and Rose quote the reasoning of

¹⁸ UKNA FCO 37/887 Islamabad to State 22/5/71.

¹⁹ Sisson and Rose *War and Secession* p174.

²⁰ UKNA FCO 37/684 Slatcher to Birch 11/12/71.11

²¹ Sisson and Rose p141; Jackson *South Asian Crisis* p36.

²² Sisson and Rose, p141.

²³ Sisson and Rose, p141.

one Indian leader inasmuch as the British negotiated with Mahatma Gandhi, so Yahya would negotiate with Mujib.²⁴

The initial Indian reaction to the events of March 25/26 was restrained. The most fervent criticism of the Pakistani military from within India came from the press, where unsubstantiated stories emerged of three hundred thousand people being killed in the days following the crackdown. Many opposition politicians and the media exerted pressure upon Indira Gandhi to act swiftly.²⁵ In a statement to the Lok Sabha on March 31st, Gandhi highlighted the plight of the East Pakistani people at the hands of Yahya's military regime but did not, as many of her critics demanded, pledge to directly intervene. She declared that the Pakistan government were suppressing the people of East Pakistan by "bayonets, machineguns, tanks, artillery and aircraft" but only went as far as to offer "sympathy and support" for those affected.²⁶ Gandhi and her government were keen not to imply that the Indian government would provide material support to the Bengalis or recognise the newly formed government of Bangladesh-in-exile.²⁷ The Indians continued to believe that, after a brief military confrontation, negotiations would begin in earnest. This was the way in which previous internal disputes in Pakistan had played out.²⁸

There were three major reasons for the ambiguous Indian response. Firstly, India was wary of the highly factional Bangladesh government-in-exile. The word of Mujib, as given via the Bangladesh Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed was disputed by other officials and the Indian government foresaw a difficult decision as to who to support should the exile government fracture.²⁹ Secondly, high-ranking military personnel regarded the oncoming monsoon season as a barrier to an early military intervention. Waiting until later in the year would also allow for snow to fall on the Himalayas which would impede any Chinese intervention. Finally, India worried about the international implications for any intervention or extension of diplomatic recognition, both among Islamic nations with which

²⁴ Sisson and Rose *War and Secession* p141.

²⁵ Bass *The Blood Telegram* p89. USNA RG 59 Box 2530 POL 23-9 PAK New Delhi to State 3/4/71.

²⁶ "Indian Support for East Pakistan Cause" *The Times (London, England)*, Thursday, Apr 01, 1971; pg. 6; Issue 58136.

²⁷ Sisson and Rose pp142-143; Bass *Blood Telegram* p89.

²⁸ Sisson and Rose p142.

²⁹ Raghavan Raghavan, S (2013) *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* Library of Congress: Cambridge, Mass p66.

they had close ties, and the scorn of the wider international community that could consider a military intervention illegal and a violation of the UN charter.³⁰

A cable from the US Embassy in New Delhi accurately summed up the strategy of the Indian government at the end of March and described two aspects thereof that continued for the remainder of 1971. It noted that alongside the strong public condemnation of the Pakistani government, the Indian government looked to covertly fund and train the Mukti Bahini.³¹ Initially this was to be done via the Indian government's refusal to prevent "private" individuals from donating to the Bengalis, but quickly morphed into outright support for the separatists. In the few weeks following March 25th, up to 20,000 Bengali members of the Pakistan military joined the Mukti Bahini but enjoyed only limited support from the Indian Border Security Force, a branch of the Indian armed forces formed in the wake of the 1965 conflict over Kashmir.³² Once the various Bengali guerrilla forces formed a unified command in July, they began to make substantial gains. Training inside of India began to bear fruit in August when the Mukti Bahini made a series of successful attacks on Pakistani merchant ships and engaged in successful acts of sabotage elsewhere that severely disrupted the Pakistani Army's supply lines.³³ Also in July, the British Deputy High Commission in Calcutta reported that the Mukti Bahini (then known to many as the Mukti Fauz) had become better trained and better equipped, had high morale and were enjoying a great deal of cooperation from the civilian population.³⁴ Opinion in London began to shift toward the idea that the effectiveness of the Bengali forces would eventually take the fight beyond the capacity of the Pakistani army in terms of scale and expenditure.³⁵ The Indian strategy, designed to weaken the Pakistani Army ahead of a possible invasion in November, was working.³⁶

Indian support for the Bengali guerrillas was well known from the outset in London, Washington and throughout the world. A State Department Intelligence brief on April 24th explained that there were reliable reports that India was providing small arms, ammunitions and communication equipment

³⁰ Pai, N (2008) "The 1971 East Pakistan Genocide: A Realist Perspective" *The Indian National Interest* available at <http://www.genocidebangladesh.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/03/eastpakistangenocide1971-realistperspective1.pdf>; Raghavan, pp68-69; Sisson and Rose pp151-152; Bass p94; Jackson *South Asian Crisis* p45.

³¹ USNA RG 59 Box 2530 POL 23-9 PAK New Delhi to State 30/3/71.

³² Sisson and Rose *War and Secession* p144.

³³ Jackson *South Asian Crisis* p62.

³⁴ UKNA FCO 37/890 Calcutta to New Delhi 8/7/71.

³⁵ UKNA FCO 37/890 Burrows to Sutherland 13/7/71.

³⁶ Bass *The Blood Telegram* pp99-100.

and other supplies to Bengali forces.³⁷ In May, Deputy High Commissioner Frank Sargeant reported from Dacca that he could be certain that training camps had been set up in India for the training of guerrillas and that they were receiving support from the Indian government.³⁸ The international press also widely reported upon Indian support for the Mukti Bahini, which gave the Pakistan government cause to accuse India of interfering in its domestic affairs and working for the secession of East Pakistan. The urging of restraint upon India with regard to the Mukti Bahini became a theme for both UK and US diplomacy as the crisis came to a head in late 1971.

The US Embassy in New Delhi also described how India looked to mobilise an international diplomatic effort designed to focus international attention upon the atrocities being committed by the Pakistan army, and the resultant influx of refugees into West Bengal.³⁹ In May, India called upon the international community to stop providing economic aid to Yahya's regime before embarking upon a global PR campaign against Pakistan. This was to both avoid international fatigue in a region that had already seen two large-scale conflicts since 1947 and to avoid being equated on the international stage with a government they had begun the armed conflict within East Pakistan. There was a contradiction, however, in the message put out by the Indian government that caused them problems in the international realm. Sisson and Rose have pointed out that from the beginning of the crisis on March 25th/26th, India was keen to present the situation as a battle between two Muslim groups within Pakistan, rather than a conflict between Pakistani Muslims and Indian Hindus.⁴⁰ India's claim that the forcing of millions of people over the border into India as refugees was an act of "indirect aggression" contradicted their argument that the crisis not be considered a conflict between India and Pakistan.⁴¹

In May, June and July, Gandhi, Foreign Minister Swaran Singh, and other high-ranking Indian diplomats toured Asia, the Middle East and Europe gaining nothing more than sympathy and aid contributions for the refugees in West Bengal.⁴² They secured the support of the Israeli government but found that Islamic nations naturally favoured the Pakistanis.⁴³ On May 24th, Gandhi called upon the "Great Powers" to act in East Pakistan and warned that otherwise India would be forced to do so

³⁷ USNA RG 59 Box 2531 POL 23-9 PAK State Department Bureau of Intelligence report 24/4/71.

³⁸ UKNA FCO 37/877 Dacca to FCO 12/5/71.

³⁹ USNA RG 59 Box 2530 POL 23-9 PAK New Delhi to State 30/3/71.

⁴⁰ Sisson and Rose, *War and Secession* p189.

⁴¹ Sisson and Rose, p189

⁴² Bass, *Blood Telegram* pp139-141.

⁴³ Bass *Blood Telegram* p140.

itself, but failed to receive a positive reaction.⁴⁴ The Americans were steadfast in supporting Yahya's efforts to end the war, and the Soviet Union continued to provide economic aid to Pakistan.⁴⁵ However, the situation changed after Nixon's July 15th announcement that the rapprochement between the US and China was well under way. In the first week of August, Gandhi was invited to Moscow and received a "people's welcome" upon her arrival.⁴⁶ On August 9th, India signed a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union that helped shape events over the coming four months and shone a light upon the consequences that White House secrecy had upon UK-US relations.

3. The Indo-Soviet Treaty

In the wake of the 1965 Indo-Pakistan conflict, the Johnson administration left the door open for the Soviet Union to negotiate a settlement between the two parties at Tashkent. The issue of Kashmir had become a thorn in the side of the USSR, and India and Pakistan's agreement to resort to exclusively peaceful means to resolve the dispute provided relief. Prior to the mid-1960s, the Soviet Union's policy in South Asia was directed toward preventing the US from forming military alliances in South Asia that would strengthen its ring of containment.⁴⁷ By 1965 however, the focus of policy had changed toward the need to contain Chinese influence on the subcontinent.⁴⁸ Rather than expend blood and treasure fighting each other, the Soviets much preferred a situation whereby peaceful relations between India and Pakistan could unite South Asia in opposition to the Chinese threat.⁴⁹

To India's chagrin, the Soviet Union made a departure from their traditional leaning toward India in favour of a more even-handed policy post-Tashkent, and Soviet arms supply to Pakistan in the late 1960s proved extremely worrisome for New Delhi.⁵⁰ However, by 1969, the Soviet attitude had altered. Key to the restoration of a preference for India was the need for Indian support for Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev's "Asian Collective Security System".⁵¹ Indian acquiescence was crucial to the success of the proposal, and the Soviets were willing to suspend their military aid to Pakistan if India signed up.⁵² It was proposed that Indian support for the Soviet plan would take the form of a treaty

⁴⁴ Jackson *South Asian Crisis* p45.

⁴⁵ Jackson, p70.

⁴⁶ Bass, p218.

⁴⁷ Donaldson, RH (1972) "India: The Soviet Stake in Stability" *Asian Survey* Vol 12 No 6 p476.

⁴⁸ Donaldson, "The Soviet Stake in Stability" p476.

⁴⁹ Donaldson, p476.

⁵⁰ Sisson and Rose *War and Secession* p196.

⁵¹ Sisson and Rose *War and Secession* p197.

⁵² Sisson and Rose p197.

of friendship between the two nations, and a draft was drawn up in March 1969.⁵³ The draft encountered trouble when Indira Gandhi was wary of overtly supporting the Collective Security System, as it could compromise India's commitment to non-alignment. The second draft of the treaty completed in May 1970 reflected a compromise whereby Indian support for the Soviet proposal remained ambiguous while the Soviet Union "suspended" arms supplies to Pakistan.⁵⁴ Eventually, concerns over the vulnerability of her minority government to anti-Soviet attacks combined with accusations of abandoning the policy of non-alignment led Gandhi to leave the treaty on the table.⁵⁵

The initial Soviet reaction to the events of March 25/26 was, although condemnatory of the Pakistani military, open to continued cooperation with Islamabad. On April 2nd, Soviet President Nicolai Podgorny wrote a letter to Yahya in which he expressed the Soviet people's concern at the numerous casualties in East Pakistan, as well as disapproval at the arrest and imprisonment of Mujib.⁵⁶ However, the letter maintained that there was true friendship between the two countries and implied that healthy relations were possible in future should Yahya "correctly interpret the motives" by which the Soviets were guided in making such an appeal.⁵⁷ At the time, the State Department saw the strength in Podgorny's message as a clear indication that the Soviets were responding to Indian pressure, but subsequent research suggests an alternative explanation.⁵⁸ Indian pressure on the Soviets only came after they had seen encouragement for a more aggressive Indian position in Podgorny's letter, and even then their representations fell on deaf ears. Gary Bass has explained that the Indian Ambassador to Moscow, D.P. Dhar and Indira Gandhi's most senior advisor, P.N. Haksar were bitterly disappointed when their hopes that Soviet support may extend to war with Pakistan were dampened by calls for restraint from Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin.⁵⁹

The Soviet attitude toward the crisis remained somewhat ambivalent into mid-1971. Although seeming to sympathise more with India than Pakistan, the Soviet Union refrained from explicit endorsement of Indian policies and continued economic aid to Pakistan.⁶⁰ In the first week of July

⁵³ Sisson and Rose p197.

⁵⁴ Sisson and Rose p198.

⁵⁵ Sisson and Rose p199. Bass *The Blood Telegram* p135.

⁵⁶ Jackson South Asian Crisis Appendix 4 "President Nikolae Podgorny's letter to President Yahya Khan of 2 April 1971".

⁵⁷ Jackson South Asian Crisis Appendix 4 "President Nikolae Podgorny's letter to President Yahya Khan of 2 April 1971".

⁵⁸ USNA RG 59 Box 2530 POL 23-9 PAK Van Hollen to Sisco 4/3/71.

⁵⁹ Bass, *The Blood Telegram* p136.

⁶⁰ Jackson, *South Asian Crisis* p70.

Moscow Radio announced that Soviet policy continued to be guided by the “Tashkent spirit” of cooperation in South Asia.⁶¹ Robert Jackson has argued that, in the four months following the commencement of *Operation Searchlight* the Soviet Union were still attempting to appear even-handed in their pursuit of stability on the subcontinent post-Tashkent; this changed on July 15th when Nixon made his China announcement.

There is debate over the motives for the signing of the Indo-Soviet treaty just over three weeks later on August 9th. Jackson and others have argued that Nixon’s announcement of his secret China initiative brought home the danger to the Soviet Union of a US-China-Pakistan axis in South Asia. This, indeed, was Gandhi’s public reasoning.⁶² Both India and the Soviet Union were wary of growing Chinese power and the possible increase in Peking’s influence in Islamabad that could result from rapprochement with the US. Therefore the Indo-Soviet treaty represented a trade whereby India gained a measure of insurance against a Chinese retaliation in exchange for increased Soviet influence in New Delhi. Sisson and Rose have argued that, for the Indians, the treaty was signed in haste to reassure both the Indian bureaucracy and the wider public that attempts to gain international support for India’s position on East Pakistan had not come to naught.⁶³ Their research suggests that the Indians were confident that China would not intervene on Pakistan’s behalf and that the idea of a military allegiance between Washington and Peking at such an early stage in talks was fanciful.⁶⁴ There is agreement among scholars, however, that the timing of the Indo-Soviet treaty was a reaction both to India’s realisation that war with Pakistan was increasingly inevitable and the Soviet Union’s need to make a significant international statement in response to July 15th.⁶⁵

The only amendment to the earlier 1970 draft of the Indo-Soviet friendship treaty, and the most controversial, was Article IX. The clause bound the two countries to not aid any third party attack on the other and to immediately consult with one another should they be subject to a third party attack. The subtext or lack thereof sparked international disagreement for the remainder of the year.

“Article IX: Each High Contracting Party undertakes to abstain from providing any assistance to any third country that engages in armed conflict with the other party. In the event of either being subjected to an attack or a threat thereof, the High Contracting Parties shall

⁶¹ Jackson, p70.

⁶² Jackson, p71.

⁶³ Sisson and Rose, *War and Secession* p198.

⁶⁴ Sisson and Rose pp198-199.

⁶⁵ Sisson and Rose p199; Jackson p71; Raghavan 1971 p122; Bass *The Blood Telegram* p218.

immediately enter into mutual consultations in order to remove such threat and to take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and the security of their countries”.

*The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation, 9 August 1971.*⁶⁶

Naturally, such a close association with one of the superpowers called into question India's credentials as the de facto leader of the non-aligned movement. Gandhi's government justified its actions by emphasising the fact that the treaty fell short of a mutual defence pact and claimed that it would happily sign such treaties with other nations, including the United States.⁶⁷ The treaty also explicitly stated Soviet respect for Indian non-alignment.⁶⁸ What the Indians gained from the treaty was a measure of security against an attack from China and a greater measure of Soviet support for their policy positions. Meanwhile the Soviets improved their standing in New Delhi, and gained a stronger foothold from which to stabilise the situation on the subcontinent.⁶⁹

Despite the signing of the treaty, the Soviet position in favour of stability and, if possible, the continued unity of Pakistan did not change until late September/early October.⁷⁰ In fact, in the days leading to the signing of the treaty, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko was insistent upon the Soviet line that a political solution was the only manner in which the situation should come to a head. When Ambassador Dhar conveyed a message from Gandhi in which the prime minister solicited Soviet support and cooperation should a war be “forced upon India”, the Soviet premier refused to commit to such an undertaking.⁷¹ In the following days Kosygin refused to entertain requests for assistance in the event of a hypothetical war that the Indians promised they would do everything to avoid. In fact, he counselled restraint in the starkest of terms, telling Dhar that “you [India] should be more careful...otherwise you will face many difficulties and many dangers”.⁷² Gromyko believed that India's military strength relative to Pakistan, together with the Indo-Soviet treaty, would be enough to prevent Islamabad from launching an attack on India.⁷³ Although the Soviet Union had leant toward India and against China and the US in response to July 15th, it had continued to remain

⁶⁶ Jackson *South Asian Crisis* p188.

⁶⁷ Kapur, A (1972) “Indo-Soviet Treaty and the Emerging Asian Balance” *Asian Survey* Vol 12 No 6 pp 469; Sisson and Rose p200.

⁶⁸ Donaldson “The Soviet Stake in Stability” p484.

⁶⁹ Donaldson p484.

⁷⁰ Hanhimäki, JM (2004) *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* Oxford University Press: London p164. Donaldson “The Soviet stake in Stability” p484.

⁷¹ Raghavan 1971 p129.

⁷² Raghavan 1971 p129; Sisson and Rose *War and Secession* p202.

⁷³ Raghavan p170

somewhat aloof from the crisis in East Pakistan and was plain with New Delhi in expressing its desire for India to avoid war.

Although clear in their position that India show restraint, the Soviet Union did begin to side with India's stated international position. On July 19th UN Secretary General U Thant followed up an aide memoire for the Security Council with a letter to the President of the Security Council a day later. In it, Thant placed the events squarely within the context of continued "unresolved differences between India and Pakistan...which gave rise to open warfare only six years ago" and suggested that UN personnel be stationed on both sides of the border to facilitate the safe repatriation of refugees.⁷⁴ In this case, the Soviet Union leant their support to the Indian objection to being equated with Pakistan and opposed any UN Security Council proposal unacceptable to India.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, Soviet relations with Pakistan remained ambivalent. In April, Podgorny's letter had led to what Yahya himself described as an "inevitable deterioration in relations" between Pakistan and the USSR.⁷⁶ However, the Soviets continued to send economic aid to East Pakistan and discussions continued on the subject of an overland transit route between the two countries through Afghanistan.⁷⁷ The Soviets were unwilling to completely close off relations with Pakistan, and were looking to position themselves for positive relations with an independent East Pakistan.⁷⁸

During the first Indo-Soviet consultations held under the provisions of the treaty in late September 1971, much to Indian dismay, the Soviet position had not changed despite the continued influx of refugees over the border into India. In Moscow on September 27th, Gandhi requested both military aid and that the Soviets publicly push for a political solution in Pakistan that would begin with the release of Mujib from prison in Karachi.⁷⁹ The Soviet leadership agreed only to consider these options whilst continuing to urge restraint.⁸⁰ Only upon Indian insistence did the resultant communique contain a passage that explained how the Soviet side "took into account" Gandhi's statement that the Indian government reserved the right to take any necessary action to prevent the

⁷⁴ Jackson *South Asian Crisis* Appendix 7 *U Thant's Memorandum to the President of the Security Council*.

⁷⁵ Jackson, p73.

⁷⁶ USNA RG 59 Box 2531 POL 23-9 PAK Islamabad to State report of UK High Commissioner's meeting with Yahya 21/4/71.

⁷⁷ Jackson pp73-74.

⁷⁸ Jackson pp73-74.

⁷⁹ Raghavan 1971 p225. Sisson and Rose *War and Secession* p243

⁸⁰ Raghavan p225.

flow of refugees into India from East Bengal.⁸¹ In terms of the Soviet position, the communique simply read that the government stood by the position set out in Podgorny's letter of April 2nd.⁸²

Soviet support for India increased in the following weeks. State-controlled press outlets steadily became more critical of the Pakistani government and the Indians were able to secure much-desired military aid. As tension between India and Pakistan intensified, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Nikolay Firyubin arrived in New Delhi for talks on October 22nd specifically under the provisions of Article IX of the Indo-Soviet friendship treaty.⁸³ These talks came after a discussion between Podgorny and Yahya in which the Soviet President had come away believing that Yahya was unwilling to work toward a reasonable solution. Yahya managed to convince Podgorny of his obduracy through insisting that he would never negotiate with "that traitor [Mujib]"; it is here that Srinath Raghavan argues that the Soviet government decided to lend their full support to the Indians.⁸⁴ Firyubin's visit marked a convergence of Indo-Soviet views on the situation in East Pakistan.⁸⁵ To reinforce the shifting of the Soviet position, a senior Soviet Air Marshall was sent to New Delhi to negotiate the defence supplies requested by India, which led Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh to confidently tell a parliamentary consultative committee that they could now rely on "total support" from the Soviet Union.⁸⁶

Although still looking to counsel restraint and maintain stability in South Asia, the Soviet Union had taken the decision that a "tilt" in favour of India was the most sound policy course. Moscow was far from sure that an Indian invasion of East Pakistan would be in its interest. For instance, the resultant Indian domination of the subcontinent would render them less dependent upon Soviet support.⁸⁷ Nonetheless, the Soviet Union decided to support Indian calls for Yahya to negotiate with Mujib, shore up the Indian position at the UN with the use of its Security Council veto, and continued to supply arms up to and during the December war. If the Indians were set on invading East Pakistan, the Soviets decided they would rather maintain favourable relations with the likely victorious party than sour its ties with the future South Asian hegemon.⁸⁸

⁸¹ Raghavan p225. Donaldson "Soviet Stake in Stability" p484.

⁸² Jackson p84; Raghavan p225; Sisson and Rose p243.

⁸³ Donaldson "Soviet stake in Stability" p485.

⁸⁴ Raghavan 1971 p226.

⁸⁵ Donaldson p485; Raghavan p226.

⁸⁶ Donaldson p485; Raghavan p226.

⁸⁷ Sisson and Rose, p244.

⁸⁸ Sisson and Rose, *War and Secession* p244.

4. The Tilt

In his memoir, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger made a brief attempt to dampen criticism that Nixon's July 15th speech altered the course of events on the subcontinent. He claims that en-route to India on June 28th 1971, he was made aware of reports that the Soviet Union had both leant its approval to Indian support for the Bengali guerrillas and had promised India protection against Chinese reprisals should it decide to invade East Pakistan.⁸⁹ Subsequent research has not supported the reports, of which Kissinger does not reveal the source. During his visit to India, which was scheduled solely as cover for his eventual trip to Peking, Kissinger assured New Delhi that the US would take a dim view of any "unprovoked" Chinese attack. Kissinger, however, acknowledges that it was only after the July 15th announcement that the Indians realised both why Kissinger had mentioned such an eventuality, as well as the meaning of "unprovoked".⁹⁰

Though July 15th altered the geopolitical context, Indo-US relations had already suffered as a result of the US' continued support for Yahya in the first half of 1971 and subsequent revelation that \$3.8 million worth of munitions had left the US bound for Pakistan between March and September 1971.⁹¹ These factors combined with the Indian government's continued denial of its evident support for the Mukti Bahini to produce a frosty relationship. On the first day of Kissinger's visit, whilst maintaining the untruth that the Indian government had not given any arms to the Mukti Bahini, Gandhi's most senior advisor P.N. Haksar berated Nixon's National Security Advisor for the US government's continued supply of arms to Pakistan, no matter how small the quantities.⁹² Kissinger was also lambasted at the hands of Indian Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram, who explained the enormous pressure he was under to act against Pakistan and accused the US of being "almost entirely" responsible for Pakistan's continued ability to wage war in East Pakistan.⁹³

From as early as June 28th, Kissinger held the opinion that the Soviet Union had given a de facto green light to attack Pakistan. On his trip to South Asia, prior to his secret excursion to Peking, he received what he referred to as "disturbing information" (Kissinger does not disclose the source) to the effect that the Soviet Union had abandoned its policy of restraint toward India and had promised New Delhi protection against Chinese reprisals should they invade East Pakistan.⁹⁴ These opinions were then reinforced after the signing of the Indo-Soviet treaty, something he described as a

⁸⁹ Kissinger, HA (1979) *The White House Years* Weidenfeld and Nicolson; London p860.

⁹⁰ Kissinger, *White House Years* p860.

⁹¹ Bass, *The Blood Telegram* p206.

⁹² Bass, p162.

⁹³ Bass, p164.

⁹⁴ Kissinger *White House Years* pp859-860.

“bombshell”.⁹⁵ In his memoir, Kissinger focuses on Article IX and argues that the term “appropriate effective measures” rendered the treaty a significant strategic move that signalled the malign intentions of both signatories.⁹⁶ For India, he believed that the treaty conveyed Soviet support for an attack on East Pakistan and allayed their fears of Soviet disapproval that could lead to an end to military aid.⁹⁷ For the Soviets, Kissinger provides a two-pronged reasoning for their actions. Firstly, in Pakistan, they could humiliate a mutual ally of both China and the US and demonstrate two rivals’ lack of reliability as an ally; Secondly, the Soviets thrust a dilemma upon the Chinese: to intervene in East Pakistan could provoke a Soviet response, whilst not doing so would make them appear ineffective on the world stage.⁹⁸ Kissinger believed that the treaty represented a green light provided by the Soviets for India to attack Pakistan.⁹⁹

Kissinger’s interpretation of Soviet intentions were unique inasmuch as they were not shared entirely, even by one of his closest advisors. In a July 7th memorandum for President Nixon, General Alexander Haig explained the Soviet Union may have concluded that, in a crisis such as that in East Pakistan, they would have to adopt a position in opposition to Islamabad. However, the Deputy National Security Advisor went on to explain that although the Soviet Union may provide some form of guarantee to India, which eventually came in the form of the Indo-Soviet treaty, “It would be a major and radical break in Soviet policy to issue the Indians a blank check”.¹⁰⁰ The notion that the Soviet Union both desired and actively encouraged India to attack Pakistan is possibly the largest weakness within the White House’s policy rationale in 1971.

There is a great deal of controversy over the true significance of the Indo-Soviet treaty from an American standpoint. Almost all scholars and commentators agree that it was far from a “bombshell” and most disagree with Kissinger’s interpretation. Raymond Garthoff points to the fact that prior to the signing of the treaty, Kissinger had clarified the comments he made during his trip to India when he told Indian Ambassador in Washington, L.K. Jha, that the US would not help India if China attacked them after an invasion of East Pakistan.¹⁰¹ From the State Department, Christopher Van Hollen has claimed that Nixon’s July 15th announcement was considered a true “bombshell”, not

⁹⁵ Kissinger p866.

⁹⁶ Kissinger pp866-867.

⁹⁷ Kissinger p867.

⁹⁸ Kissinger p867; Garthoff, R (1994) *Detente and Confrontation* the Brookings Institution: Washington DC p267; Hahnhimaki *Flawed Architect* p165.

⁹⁹ Hahnhimaki p165; Kissinger p860.

¹⁰⁰ Nixon Presidential Library (hereafter NPL) NSC Indo-Pak S.Asia Memorandum from Haig to Nixon 7/7/71.

¹⁰¹ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation* p266.

the Indo-Soviet treaty. In terms of substance, Garthoff argues that the treaty did not represent the unequivocal Soviet support for an invasion that Kissinger infers.¹⁰² Similarly, Seymour Hersh endorses the State Department view, to be discussed in section four below, that the treaty did not contain specific clauses pledging mutual defence and emphasised India's non-aligned status.¹⁰³ Henry Kissinger is an extremely polarising figure within the study of 1970s foreign policy, and his detractors can be as vociferous in their criticism as Kissinger is in defence of his policies. There seems little doubt that the Indo-Soviet treaty was signed in response to July 15th and was not as shocking as Kissinger claims. However, there was more substance to the treaty than Garthoff and Hersh, among others give credit. Although far from the green light for invasion that Kissinger claims, it did signal the beginning of an alteration in Soviet policy and gave India further courage in its convictions for the remainder of 1971.

Nixon and Kissinger have been further criticised for the basis of their decisions on South Asia. As Jussi Hahnheimaki has pointed out, the White House decided its policy with the use of four key assumptions that were reinforced by the Indo-Soviet treaty; First that India was bent upon using East Pakistan as a pretext to destroy West Pakistan; Second, that the Soviets were encouraging Indian aggression; Third, the Chinese were ready to attack Pakistan; and finally the Soviets would be willing to follow the Chinese into Pakistan and risk sparking a global conflict.¹⁰⁴ Nixon and Kissinger's decisions from August 9th until the end of the Indo-Pakistan conflict on December 18th 1971, were guided by these principles. White House critics believe Kissinger was misguided by the "underlying fallacy" that the Indians were acting as a Soviet proxy and subsequently misapplied his realpolitik.¹⁰⁵

With these assumptions in mind, and whilst looking to avoid a conflict between India and Pakistan Nixon and Kissinger continued to see the protection of the link to China as their utmost priority.¹⁰⁶ In meetings with State Department officials in the weeks following July 15th, Nixon was keen to let the bureaucracy know that he did not want the events in South Asia to become capable of jeopardising the link to China.¹⁰⁷ It is clear from Kissinger's memoir that in July and August 1971, the White House perceived its flagship foreign policy achievement to be in need of fierce protection. Therefore Nixon and Kissinger were willing to ward off any semblance of a threat to its development.¹⁰⁸ It is in this

¹⁰² Garthoff, p266.

¹⁰³ Hersh (1983) *The Price of Power: Nixon in the Kissinger White House* Summit Books: New York p452.

¹⁰⁴ Hahnheimaki *Flawed Architect* p165.

¹⁰⁵ Garthoff *Détente and Confrontation* p267; Hahnheimaki p165; Hersh *The Price of Power* p451.

¹⁰⁶ Kissinger *White House Years* p864.

¹⁰⁷ Kissinger p864.

¹⁰⁸ Kissinger pp864-865; Kissinger pp766-767.

context that the White House was keen not to upset Peking through taking a harsher line with Yahya Khan. Critics point to the fact that during Kissinger's July meeting with Chinese Premier Zhou En-Lai, the two men agreed to the setting up of a direct line of communication via the American Embassy in Paris, a move that reduced Yahya's value as an interlocutor to practically nil.¹⁰⁹ However, although Islamabad was no longer required in order to communicate with Peking, Nixon and Kissinger felt that being seen to abandon a friend when politically convenient would have undermined the US' credibility as a reliable ally.

More convincingly, critics of White House policy highlight the notion that Nixon and Kissinger misread the intentions and interests of the Chinese government. The initial Chinese response to the crisis was comforting for the Pakistan government albeit somewhat reserved. On April 12th, Chinese premier Zhou En-Lai wrote a letter to Pakistani President Yahya Khan that supported the continued unity of Pakistan, emphasised the point that the crisis was an internal matter for Pakistan and chastised the Indian government for its "gross interference" in the affairs of Pakistan.¹¹⁰ However, for the Pakistan government the Chinese pledge of "firm" support did not go far enough in guaranteeing a direct Chinese involvement in the event of an Indian offensive in East Pakistan. Also, according to Sisson and Rose's sources there was a crucial sentence that was deleted from subsequent Pakistani, and Indian publications of the letter. The statement that "the question of East Pakistan should be settled according to the *wishes of the people of East Pakistan*" (emphasis in original) was removed as it would naturally imply support for a kind of political settlement not desired by the Pakistan government.¹¹¹

Chinese support for Pakistan and a commitment to come to its aid in the event of an Indian attack waned over the course of 1971. In August and September 1971 the government in Peking was in turmoil as a result of the Lin Biao affair, an alleged coup d'état aimed at unseating Leader Mao Zedong that ended with Vice-Premier Biao's death under suspicious circumstances in a plane crash on September 16th. Three days later, Zhou En-Lai claimed he had no time to meet with the Pakistan Ambassador to discuss the crisis in East Pakistan. Clearly the Asian subcontinent was not a priority for the Chinese at this time.¹¹² Instead, Zhou sent vice foreign minister Han Nien-Lung who told the Ambassador in no uncertain terms that China did not wish to aggravate evident tension on the

¹⁰⁹ Garthoff *Détente and Confrontation* p265.

¹¹⁰ USNA RG 59 Box 2531 POL 23-9 PAK Islamabad to State "Text of Chou En-Lai letter to President Yahya" 13/4/71.

¹¹¹ Sisson and Rose *War and Secession* p204.

¹¹² UKNA FCO 37/903 Peking to FCO 16/9/71.

subcontinent.¹¹³ By November, the Chinese actively encouraged the Pakistan government to come to a political solution. Upon the return of the Bhutto-led Pakistani delegation to China which had been sent to solicit stronger support from the Chinese, the US Embassy in Islamabad reported that the message from Peking had an “eye-opening” effect on the West Pakistani military leadership. A senior Pakistan official told Ambassador Farland that the Chinese advised Islamabad to work toward a political settlement, and suggested that they not take any offensive action against India and should not call for a UN Security Council meeting to discuss the dispute.¹¹⁴ Kissinger himself visited China for a second time in October 1971 where he found Zhou En-Lai reluctant to discuss South Asia.¹¹⁵ Kissinger’s own impression of the Chinese position was that they “seemed more sober” than they had in July regarding the possibility of conflict. The only comment Zhou made was to reaffirm Chinese support for Pakistan and disdain for India.¹¹⁶ The White House’s unique interpretation of the Chinese position is crucial in understanding its disagreements with the State Department, and subsequently the British government.

As a result of its various policy assumptions and aims, as well as pressure from Congress and the media, White House policy focused upon the refugee issue in East Pakistan. Such a focus, it was believed, would help dampen criticism of the US government’s lack of humanity and remove the probable (and eventual) Indian pretext for an invasion.¹¹⁷ Kissinger’s opinion, similar to that of Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny, was that Yahya did not have the requisite qualities to solve the crisis alone. For the US, the refugee issue was an area where they could provide solid assistance.¹¹⁸ In a July 16th meeting of the National Security Council Kissinger explained his opinion that India was intent upon beginning a war, whilst on the other hand the Pakistani Army was not up to the task of maintaining control of East Bengal in the long term.¹¹⁹ Therefore the aim of the US government must be to prevent an Indian attack and help along a smooth path to East Pakistani independence through a reversal in the flow of refugees.¹²⁰

¹¹³ UKNA FCO 37/903 Peking to FCO 16/9/71.

¹¹⁴ USNA RG 59 Box 2531 POL 23-9 PAK Islamabad to State 11/11/71.

¹¹⁵ Hahnhimaki *Flawed Architect* p173.

¹¹⁶ FRUS 1969-1976 Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 Doc. 164 Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon November 1971 [no specific date supplied].

¹¹⁷ Hahnhimaki p162.

¹¹⁸ Kissinger, *White House Years* p863.

¹¹⁹ Kissinger, p863.

¹²⁰ Kissinger, p863.

Following July 15th, the White House set about proposing specific measures aimed at relieving and reversing the flow of refugees into India, with little success. The Pakistan government were, for Kissinger, surprisingly receptive to American proposals to station UN supervisors in the border regions to ensure safe passage for refugees and for the appointment of a civilian administrator to oversee the process. Naturally, the Indian government opposed any international legislation that implied they be treated as an equal of Pakistan with regard to the crisis. Kissinger saw the entire situation as a Catch-22: In order for there to be conditions for peace in East Pakistan, the Pakistan Army had to return to its barracks and the refugees had to return home. However, the Pakistanis would be unwilling to back down unless India stopped aiding and abetting the Mukti Bahini. In short, refugees would be unable to return as long as the Indian government remained uncooperative.¹²¹

The White House also used the promise of, and threats to cut off, aid in an attempt to prevent an armed conflict. In late July for the relief for the refugees, the US provided \$90 million directly to India and another \$150 million to international groups working along the India-East Pakistan border. The White House then threatened to cut off aid to India and eventually did so during the December war (see Chapter 5).¹²² Aid was also an issue with Pakistan, with the White House coming under increasing public and congressional pressure to cut off all aid to Yahya's government as media coverage focused upon East Pakistan in the summer of 1971. The Pakistani president eventually acquiesced to the White House's reluctant decision to do so in November, just in time for Indira Gandhi's visit to Washington.¹²³

5. The White House/State split exposed

Immediately prior to the China announcement, on July 12th 1971 the State Department had produced an extensive study of US policy in South Asia, and clearly stated its opinions on the region. Still three days from learning of the China initiative, the bureaucracy described an outlook on policy at odds with that of Nixon and Kissinger. In summing up the US government's present strategy, the paper described how the US had "no vital security interest" in South Asia and that continued stability remained the cornerstone of US policy.¹²⁴ More importantly, the paper persisted in the long-held State Department view that although relations with both India and Pakistan were important to the

¹²¹ Kissinger, p863.

¹²² Hahnhimaki *Flawed Architect* p162

¹²³ USNA RG 59 POL IND-PAK Islamabad to State 2/11/71.

¹²⁴ NPL Files of Henry Kissinger (hereafter H-Files) Box 048 SRG meeting 23/7/71 State Department Contingency Study for South Asia 12/7/71.

US, India was of “potentially greater significance” and that the “relative pre-eminence” (quotation marks in original) of India should be the guiding principles of US policy going forward.¹²⁵

Up until July, whilst blind to the China initiative, and aside from the notable exception of the embargo on arms sales to Pakistan, the State Department enacted a policy of respect for Pakistan’s sovereignty and territorial integrity that broadly coincided with the designs of the White House. The July 12th paper changed this coincidence of policy direction. Its first suggestion for the future was a public statement to be made by either the President or Secretary of State Bill Rogers that would urge restraint upon both India and Pakistan.¹²⁶ Furthermore, the paper argued that in the event that hostilities did break out on the subcontinent, US interests would be best served by a swift Indian victory without the intervention of any third parties. This eventuality would be followed by a swift and peaceful transfer of power. Much to Kissinger’s chagrin, the paper also recommended that if China were to intervene, the US should consider providing military assistance to India.¹²⁷ The July 15th announcement made it clear to all involved, if it was not already, that the executive and the bureaucracy had lined up on completely opposite sides of the debate.

In his memoir, Kissinger lays heavy criticism upon the State Department. He accuses the bureaucracy of a “flagrant disregard of unambiguous White House directives” with regard to South Asia.¹²⁸ Kissinger contends that Nixon had repeatedly ordered that the US treat Yahya with understanding rather than pressure.¹²⁹ Despite knowledge of Nixon’s wishes, the State department went ahead with private negotiations with Yahya to cut off the small amounts of US military aid headed for Pakistan in the aftermath of the March 25th crackdown.¹³⁰ Kissinger’s incredulity is somewhat ironic given the nature of White House policy toward China, but it highlights the efforts that were being made by the State Department to carry out policies that were contrary to the wishes of the President.¹³¹ The former National Security Advisor admits that what he perceived as State’s lack of understanding of the China initiative was a result of the manner in which the White House had

¹²⁵ NPL H-Files Box H-048 SRG meeting 23/7/71 State Department Contingency Study for South Asia 12/7/71.

¹²⁶ NPL H-Files Box H-048 SRG meeting 23/7/71 State Department Contingency Study for South Asia 12/7/71. Kissinger *White House Years* p864.

¹²⁷ NPL H-Files Box H-048 SRG meeting 23/7/71 State Department Contingency Study for South Asia 12/7/71; Kissinger p865.

¹²⁸ Kissinger, *White House Years* p864.

¹²⁹ Kissinger, p864.

¹³⁰ Kissinger, *White House Years* p864.

¹³¹ Kissinger, p864.

conducted its business, but maintained that the bureaucracy should always carry out the will of the elected President, irrespective of its own opinion.¹³²

Deputy Undersecretary for Near Eastern Affairs during the 1971 crisis, Christopher Van Hollen had a very different interpretation. He dismisses Kissinger's suggestion that the disagreements were over a number of "trivial issues" which were of too technical a nature to present to Nixon. Rather, it was the case that the disagreements were over a fundamental issue. State's view was that war between India and Pakistan could only be avoided if there was a political accommodation in East Pakistan, and therefore the US should privately encourage Yahya to accept a settlement that provided autonomy for the Bengalis.¹³³ In a sense Van Hollen believed it was the White House that was perpetuating its own Catch-22. The goal of the entire US government remained that of preventing war on the subcontinent, something that required the return of East Pakistani refugees and the ceasing of Indian aid to the Mukti Bahini. In State's view, such an outcome could only be accomplished if Yahya came to an accommodation with the Awami League.¹³⁴ However, upon his return from South Asia and China in July, Kissinger held the opinion, later to be shared by the Soviet Union, that Yahya would only listen to advice on relief assistance and would never negotiate with Mujib or the Awami League.¹³⁵ He therefore shot down any suggestion that the US government counsel Yahya in the direction of such an accommodation. Evidence presented in section three suggests that Kissinger was correct on this matter.

Another key point of disagreement between the White House and the bureaucracy was that of the intentions of the Soviet Union. As discussed above, Nixon and Kissinger were firm in their belief that the Soviet Union were intent on encouraging India to attack and ultimately destroy West as well as East Pakistan. The State Department disagreed. Van Hollen cites both Undersecretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Joseph Sisco and Director of the CIA Richard Helms' adherence to the idea that there was no evidence to support the notion that a Soviet-backed India was intent upon destroying Pakistan. Here, subsequent evidence supports the State Department's position. Gary Bass has recently put forward the argument that Indira Gandhi, in fact took an early decision to go to war with Pakistan in April, but was persuaded by her senior Generals to wait until the end of the monsoon season to invade. Srinath Raghavan's analysis disagrees. He claims the story surrounding the talking down of Indira Gandhi by the Generals is "perhaps the most tenacious of all myths about

¹³² Kissinger pp864-865.

¹³³ Van Hollen, C (1980) "The Tilt Policy Revisited: Nixon-Kissinger Geopolitics and South Asia" *Asian Survey* Vol 20 No 4 p345.

¹³⁴ Van Hollen "Tilt Policy Revisited" p346.

¹³⁵ Van Hollen p345.

the 1971 crisis".¹³⁶ Instead Raghavan makes the case that Gandhi knew that India was vulnerable should Pakistan mount an attack from the Western wing as well as to a Chinese intervention. He thus argues that Gandhi only definitively decided to escalate Indian operations in late November.¹³⁷ On the charge that India had the backing of the Soviets to dismember Pakistan, Kissinger is alone in making such a case.

At Senior Review Group meetings between White House and State officials on July 23rd and July 30th, Kissinger describes the differences between the organisations as being as acute as at any point during Nixon's first term.¹³⁸ State disagreed with a White House it accused of being totally obsessed with a China link that was clouding its judgement of what the State Department saw as a regional issue.¹³⁹ Although it was widely known beforehand that the relationship between the State Department and the Nixon White House could be frosty, July 15th made plain the extent of the situation and caused embarrassment for the State Department. The summer of 1971 was a point of turmoil for the US foreign policymaking system amid a quickly changing geopolitical landscape. The infighting had already affected policy in the form of an arms embargo that turned out not to be an embargo, and was having an effect on relationships with allies, most notably the United Kingdom.

6. The UK's tilt toward India

On July 15th, Prime Minister Edward Heath was given just thirty-five minutes warning of President Nixon's historic announcement, which was enough time to put together a statement in support of the burgeoning rapprochement.¹⁴⁰ In substance, the announcement finally marked a convergence of UK and US opinion on China, and was a crucial step toward welcoming Peking into the international community and away from the Soviet Union. Andrew Scott has argued that it was not the substance of the decision, but the manner in which the American decision was made that caused consternation in London, after the UK had kept the US informed at every turn during its concurrent improvement in relations with China.¹⁴¹ Kissinger's trip left both the FCO and Downing Street feeling betrayed and used by the White House. In a meeting with US Under-Secretary of State John Irwin on July 20th, FCO Minister Geoffrey Rippon let it be known that Whitehall was surprised at the announcement. In a minute regarding the meeting, Rippon noted that the FCO's shock was particularly acute since Kissinger had met with Cabinet Secretary Sir Burke Trend at the end of June and not given any

¹³⁶ Raghavan, 1971 pp68-69.

¹³⁷ Raghavan p67.

¹³⁸ Kissinger White House Years p864.

¹³⁹ Kissinger p865; Van Hollen "Tilt Policy Revisited" p347.

¹⁴⁰ Scott, A (2011) *Allies Apart: Heath, Nixon and the Special Relationship* Palgrave Macmillan: New York p61.

¹⁴¹ Scott, *Allies Apart* pp62-65.

indication of an abrupt turn in US policy.¹⁴² For his part, Heath duly refused to send Nixon a note of congratulations and began to doubt the word of the Americans in other areas of foreign affairs.¹⁴³

On August 11th, Nixon sent a letter to Heath explaining his China policy in broad terms. The President argued that the shock of the July 15th announcement should not obscure the fact that the ongoing development of relations with Peking was part of an evolution in US policy toward China that had taken place over the course of his Administration. Only four days later on August 15th, the UK government was again angry at a lack of consultation after they received only a few hours' notice of what has been referred to as the second "Nixon Shock" of 1971.¹⁴⁴ Long-held British fears of American neo-isolationism and protectionism were stoked when Nixon announced a new economic policy where the headline measures were an end to dollar convertibility and the imposition of a 10% import surcharge.¹⁴⁵ Although the measures were not specifically aimed at Britain and had wider reaching ramifications for Germany and Japan, Downing Street and the FCO were again outraged at the continued lack of consultation.¹⁴⁶

The second "Nixon Shock" reinforced the level to which the State Department had been excluded from the policymaking process. The Washington Embassy reported in the Autumn of 1971 that the manner in which US foreign policy was formulated was a large part of the problem within what it saw as a poor year for UK-US relations. In a letter to Permanent Under-Secretary Denis Greenhill, Minister at the Embassy, Jonny Graham explained that the "shocks" that took place over China and the new monetary policy were even more harmful in light of the fact that foreign secretary Home's talks with secretary of state Rogers in June had given the British "an expectation of rather more consideration".¹⁴⁷ It is clear that the damage caused by the lack of consultation was beginning to have a negative affect not only at the very top level, but also within the relationship between the FCO and the State Department, where Graham accused State of not treating the UK with the same level of confidence over the Middle East as it used to.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴² UKNA FCO 82/61 Minute by Geoffrey Rippon 20/7/71; Scott p66.

¹⁴³ Scott, pp67-68.

¹⁴⁴ UKNA PREM 15/715 Nixon to Heath 15/8/71.

¹⁴⁵ UKNA PREM 15/715 Nixon to Heath 11/8/71.

¹⁴⁶ Scott, p70.

¹⁴⁷ UKNA FCO 82/61 Graham to Greenhill 9/9/71. Graham was referring to meetings Home and Rogers had over the course of 1971 to September. They met in London on 24/7/71, and at a meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Lisbon on 3/6/71.

¹⁴⁸ UKNA FCO 82/61 Graham to Greenhill 9/9/71.

The response and strategy of the FCO remained as it had been when former Ambassador John Freeman had reported in October 1970 on Nixon and Kissinger's tendency to draft foreign policy alone.¹⁴⁹ Then, Denis Greenhill believed that the FCO should not risk harming its relationship with the White House by raising a complaint or, more crucially, jeopardise its relationship with the State Department through bypassing the bureaucracy and communicating directly with the White House.¹⁵⁰ In September 1971, Greenhill again did not advocate any action on the British part, and acknowledged that the British simply had to accept the "realities of power" and put up with the manner in which "Kissinger et al" conducted themselves.¹⁵¹ During an informal meeting, US Secretary of State under the Johnson Administration, Dean Rusk told Greenhill that the manner in which the Nixon Administration was working with regard to the State Department was worse than he could ever remember.¹⁵² Although not the only reason for the relative deterioration in UK-US relations, the White House's foreign policymaking system was considered the single most significant factor.

Although there was a good level of understanding within the FCO of the White House-State Department disconnect, the scale of the issue still proved perplexing. Upon his visit to the UK on July 20th 1971, John Irwin, who was acting as a last-minute replacement for Secretary of State Bill Rogers, was not briefed to discuss the circumstances under which Nixon came to his decision to visit China.¹⁵³ Furthermore, in discussion with UK Ambassador Lord Cromer in Washington on July 21st, Rogers admitted that the US government did not know the effect that the China announcement would have upon the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁴ FCO Minister Geoffrey Rippon concluded that the conduct of US foreign policy is "all very odd" and one that would not aid the strength of the US' relationships with its allies, seen as the UK seemed not to be alone in being kept in the dark.¹⁵⁵ That the UK was not singled out for deception seemed the only saving grace for a White House decision that had provoked fury in London.

Less than a week after Nixon's China announcement and immediately following discussions with Rogers and Irwin, the FCO experienced at first hand the White House's lack of candour with its own foreign service. At the top of Cromer's report of his conversation with Kissinger on July 21st 1971, he

¹⁴⁹ UKNA FCO 7/1807 Freeman to Greenhill 28/10/70.

¹⁵⁰ UKNA FCO 7/1807 Greenhill to Freeman 15/11/70.

¹⁵¹ UKNA FCO 82/61 Greenhill to Graham [handwritten response] 9/9/71.

¹⁵² UKNA FCO 82/61 Greenhill to Graham [handwritten note] 9/9/71.

¹⁵³ UKNA FCO 82/61 Minute by Geoffrey Rippon 20/7/71.

¹⁵⁴ UKNA FCO 82/61 Minute by Geoffrey Rippon 20/7/71

¹⁵⁵ UKNA FCO 82/61 Minute by Geoffrey Rippon 20/7/71

made it clear that none of the information contained in the cable should be passed back through official diplomatic channels as it was very likely that the State Department did not agree with Kissinger's analysis.¹⁵⁶ The meeting was a de-brief for the British Ambassador on Kissinger's visits to New Delhi and Islamabad prior to his trip to Peking. Kissinger said that the Indians were under a great deal of public pressure and that the government was in danger of talking itself into a war. He also said that Yahya Khan was an honourable man although his timescale for a transfer to civilian rule looked unrealistic.¹⁵⁷ Clearly believing that his comments would not be passed on to the State Department, Kissinger openly accused the US Embassy in New Delhi of 'going native'. He told Cromer that the dissenting Ambassador to India, Kenneth Keating and his staff were "more Indian than the Indians". Kissinger made it clear to the British that the White House's focus was upon preventing India from beginning a war that they were stoking through the funding and training of the Mukti Bahini. He made it plain that the State Department held a different, and opposing view that the responsibility for any war would be with the government in Islamabad.

It was immediately apparent to the UK government that the White House China policy was impacting their attitude toward Yahya Khan. Rippon noted on July 20th that the Pakistani Government must have been closely involved in preparations for Kissinger's secret visit in early July. In his view, that development went some way toward explaining the White House's lack of willingness to chastise Yahya or to "make any statement over recent weeks that might cause offence in Islamabad".¹⁵⁸ In terms of the State Department's involvement, India Desk Officer Tony Quainton confirmed to a British Embassy official that the White House had indeed ceased all communication on South Asia with the State Department.¹⁵⁹ These developments necessarily complicated communication between the two governments with regard to the issue for the remainder of the year, especially as the FCO had made a conscious decision not to bypass the State Department.

Although the second half of 1971 was generally characterised by UK-US dissension over South Asia, there was agreement on a few key principles. First and foremost, both countries publicly stated that the crisis in East Pakistan was a strictly internal matter and that the continued unity of Pakistan was the desired outcome. Secondly, there was agreement that the return of the refugees was the key issue and that this had to be addressed in order to prevent a war between India and Pakistan.

¹⁵⁶ UKNA PREM 15/445 Cromer to FCO 21/7/71.

¹⁵⁷ UKNA PREM 15/445 Cromer to FCO 21/7/71. Kissinger *White House Years* p876, p915 Kissinger here is referring to Yahya's timetable whereby new elections could be held in East Pakistan in August. The White House later accepted and pushed for timetable that would have seen a civilian government take over in late December.

¹⁵⁸ UKNA FCO 82/61 Minute by Geoffrey Rippon 20/7/71.

¹⁵⁹ UKNA FCO 37/820 Boyd to Byatt 16/8/71.

Thirdly, there was agreement that restraint needed to be counselled upon India in order to prevent them from invading East Pakistan. However the UK government, along with the State Department, also believed that pressure should be put upon Pakistan to come to a political settlement and create conditions amenable to the return of the refugees; the White House, with its focus on the China initiative insisted that India make the first move by ceasing support for the Mukti Bahini. In a climate of rapidly deteriorating UK-US relations, these factors led to three key areas of policy divergence.

The first, and most fundamental difference between UK and US policy was where to apply political pressure in South Asia. Despite public neutrality and support for a united Pakistan, the British government operated a firmer line with Yahya and a more conciliatory line with India. In an April, letter to Yahya, Prime Minister Heath assured the President of the UK's opposition to an Indian intervention, but also stated that "there must be an end to the bloodshed and the use of force as soon as possible".¹⁶⁰ Heath implied that Yahya should re-engage in talks with Mujib, opining that the leaders that gained massive support in the elections must be part of any political settlement. Such language was clearly not in line with Nixon's policy not to "squeeze" the Pakistani President and was, in fact reminiscent of the language used by Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny in his letter to Yahya a few days earlier. In June, Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home repeated the same sentiments with a more urgent tone in a letter to Yahya. Meantime Heath assured Gandhi that the UK government was looking to convince Islamabad of the need to come to a peaceful political solution as quickly as possible.¹⁶¹

The second disagreement centred upon the provision of aid to Pakistan. In June the UK insisted that no new aid could be provided to Pakistan unless there was measurable progress toward a political settlement acceptable to the people of East Pakistan.¹⁶² In late July, Home re-emphasised the British position amid protests from Pakistan's High Commissioner in London. The foreign secretary said that the British position on aid was consistent with its policy since the beginning of the crisis and that the need for a settlement "acceptable to the people of East Pakistan" was merely a fact.¹⁶³ The Americans did not focus on a political solution as a precursor to the provision of aid. The US simply required the situation in East Pakistan to be amenable to the effective use of aid.¹⁶⁴ Although in their meeting, Foreign Secretary Home and Undersecretary Irwin agreed that the two positions amounted to a similar state of affairs, the aid policies of the two allies marked a key difference between the

¹⁶⁰ UKNA FCO 37/882 Heath to Yahya 7/4/71.

¹⁶¹ UKNA FCO 37/887 Draft Message to Gandhi 10/6/71; UKNA FCO 37/887 Message to Yahya 11/6/71.

¹⁶² UKNA FCO 37/829 FCO to New Delhi 8/6/71; UKNA FCO 37/829 Moon to Barrington 6/7/71.

¹⁶³ UKNA FCO 37/929 FCO to Islamabad 26/7/71.

¹⁶⁴ UKNA FCO 82/61 Meeting between Home and Irwin 20/7/71.

allies. The UK policy reflected its de facto apportionment of blame upon the Pakistan government in its requirement of a specific type of settlement, whereas the American position was deliberately vague and set a far lower standard of precondition for Islamabad to meet.

Finally, there was policy divergence over the interpretation of the Indo-Soviet treaty. A despatch from the UK Embassy in New Delhi on August 16th on the implications of the treaty represented the FCO's opinion. Although Indian non-alignment had been compromised to a certain extent and the Indians had moved further into the Soviet sphere of influence, they had demonstrated to audiences both at home and abroad that they had powerful friends in the international arena.¹⁶⁵ Meanwhile the Soviets had improved their ability to prevent a conflict on the subcontinent through increased influence in New Delhi, whilst they simultaneously left room for a future rapprochement with Pakistan and improved their standing with a future government of an independent East Pakistan.¹⁶⁶ Consultations with the Soviet Embassy helped reinforce the British interpretation. The Soviet First Secretary in London told a member of the FCO's Eastern Europe and Soviet Department that the Treaty was signed in an attempt to cool the increasingly worrisome situation on the subcontinent.¹⁶⁷ In sharp contrast to its reception in the White House, in London the Indo-Soviet Treaty was received on balance as a positive development. The FCO agreed with the Embassy in New Delhi's assessment that the Treaty decreased the chance of war and that in terms of counselling restraint upon India, the Soviet's interests were aligned with the West. Such an understanding of the international context would lead to more serious clashes with the Americans as the crisis escalated in late 1971.

Although London's relationship with New Delhi had taken a small hit after the British openly insinuated that the Indo-Soviet Treaty rendered India "less" non-aligned than it was prior to August 9th, UK-Pakistan relations had severely deteriorated by the middle of 1971. On July 29th Heath wrote another letter to Yahya, again calling on him to bring about a peaceful solution. This time the Prime Minister commented upon being "disturbed by the gap which seems to have been opening between our two governments".¹⁶⁸ However, Heath did not back down from the British position and maintained that the conditions for continued British aid did not constitute interference in Pakistan's internal affairs, as had been alleged in a note of protest that had been handed to the British Ambassador in Islamabad on July 5th.¹⁶⁹ The Prime Minister even urged sympathy for the Indian

¹⁶⁵ UKNA FCO 37/820 New Delhi to FCO 16/8/71. Smith, SC (2010) "Coming Down on the Winning Side: Britain and the South Asian Crisis, 1971" *Contemporary British History* Vol 24 No4 p456.

¹⁶⁶ UKNA FCO 37/820 New Delhi to FCO 16/8/71.

¹⁶⁷ UKNA FCO 37/820 Minute by Appleyard 17/8/71.

¹⁶⁸ UKNA FCO 37/929 Heath to Yahya 29/7/71; Smith, "Coming Down on the Winning Side" p454.

¹⁶⁹ UKNA FCO 37/929 Heath to Yahya 29/7/71; UKNA FCO 37/929 Islamabad to FCO 5/7/71.

government and cautioned Yahya on underestimating the efforts they had made to control hawks within India who were calling for more stringent action and the recognition of Bangladesh. It was clear by the end of July that the British government was following the FCO's advice from earlier in the year to recognise the fact that the relationship with India was fundamentally more important than the relationship with Pakistan. It was in Britain's interest to "tilt" in the opposite direction to the White House, and in favour of India.¹⁷⁰

That the British policy toward South Asia was in line with the State Department can be demonstrated by a report prepared for the Senior Review group on July 29th drafted by Senior Desk Officer for India at the State Department, Tony Quainton. Representative of the views of the State Department, the paper put forth the case that in order for the primary issue of the return of refugees to be solved, the US government needed to put pressure upon Yahya to restrain his military repression and that the basic requirement for a peaceful political settlement was an accommodation with the people of East Pakistan.¹⁷¹

Naturally, and as discussed above, State's recommendations did not fit with Nixon and Kissinger's opinion that the priority in terms of the return of refugees was that India needed to be restrained from supporting the Bengali guerrillas. However, State's approach to the crisis and subsequent recommendations aligned with the policy enacted by the British. The UK government and the State Department both regarded their respective relationships with India as the most important bilateral tie in South Asia. This helped them share the view of the crisis: A repressive Pakistani military regime that needed be told, in no uncertain terms, to recall its troops and respect the will of the Bengali people. Only then could conditions begin to become suitable for the return of the refugees that were pushing India close to the point of war. The only dissenting voices in 1971 on South Asia were the most important: Nixon and his small group of White House foreign policymakers.

Conclusion

In terms of broad UK-US relations, it is clear that Nixon only giving the UK government the shortest possible warning prior to his China announcement on July 15th sent UK-US relations on a downward trajectory. Top-level relations were then exacerbated when, three days after sending Heath a justification for his actions on July 15th, the President made another shock announcement on trade

¹⁷⁰ Smith, SC (2010) "Coming Down on the Winning Side: Britain and the South Asian Crisis, 1971" *Contemporary British History* Vol 24 No4 p451-470 p457.

¹⁷¹ FRUS 1969-1976 Vol E-7 Documents on South Asia Doc 142 Paper prepared for the Senior Review Group Meeting July 29 1971.

on August 15th. Norms of consultation that had traditionally been so crucial to the strength of the UK-US relationship had been contravened. The result for the remainder of 1971 was a feeling of deep mistrust of the US Administration in Downing Street and a reconsideration of the UK's relationship with the US (see Chapter 5). The tone of high-level communication became strained and infrequent as a result - a state of affairs that contrasted starkly with those in late 1970 and early 1971.

July 15th fully exposed the manner in which UK-US relations were being damaged downwards from the top. Nixon and Kissinger's policy to protect the link to China at all costs led to an overt and public undermining of the US bureaucracy. Below Heath, the FCO were offended by Kissinger's duplicity during a visit to London in late June and found very odd the fact that Secretary of State Rogers seemed to have very little idea as to what the international repercussions of Nixon's announcement would be. The British also likely resented being forced to participate in Kissinger's desire to keep information from the State Department as it presented them with a delicate problem. Having always valued its close relationship with the State Department, the FCO continued its refusal to deal directly with the White House. The British also feared a further deterioration of relations should they mount a, likely ineffectual, protest to the White House at its conduct of foreign policy. This meant that communication with the US became very difficult for the FCO. The White House foreign policy-making system meant the FCO could not be sure that the State Department had been fully briefed on any given issue. Whilst at the same time it had to be careful not to provide State with information from Kissinger that the White House did not want it to have. Clearly this was not the basis for a productive diplomatic relationship.

Simon Smith has argued that, after a brief period of neutrality, the British government sided with the very likely victors in any conflict, namely India.¹⁷² Although publicly neutral until later in 1971, the British government was never privately neutral in South Asia. The UK, along with the State Department approached the crisis from a point of view that favoured bilateral ties with India in preference to those with Pakistan. This viewpoint resulted in a policy that emphasised the need for the removal of the pretext for an Indian attack by focusing on the need for Pakistan to create conditions amenable to the return of refugees via a settlement with the Awami League. Although the FCO faced criticism from its diplomatic mission in Dacca over its position supporting Pakistan's claim that the crisis was a domestic issue, the British always saw the need for Yahya to act first if the crisis were to end. Meanwhile, the White House was focused upon being seen to be a good potential ally to China through support of Yahya. Both governments were fundamentally pursuing their

¹⁷² Smith "Coming Down on the Winning Side" p463.

national interest with little deference to one another's preference. The major difference was that the basis for the White House's policy toward South Asia was unknown to the British, and the international community, until July 15th

The policy effect of the July 15th announcement upon UK-US relations in South Asia is difficult to pinpoint. As the British were previously unaware of the China initiative prior to the announcement, it is impossible to know if the UK would have yielded to the US position in support of Yahya, had it been consulted. It is certainly possible the UK would have been more supportive of the US, given the positive trajectory of the relationship in late 1970 and early 1971. However, what is clear is that the UK-US policy divergence dated back, in terms of the East Pakistan crisis, to at least Heath's April 1971 letter to Yahya that called for an end to the bloodshed. In more general terms disagreements over South Asia between the Heath government and Nixon administration dated back further to the "one time exception" to the US arms embargo to Pakistan in the autumn of 1970. Although the China announcement caused an atmosphere within which the UK paid less deference to the views of the US, in South Asia, the fundamentals of divergent UK and US positions had begun prior to, and continued after July 15th.

The varying national interests of the UK and US led the two to fundamentally different interpretations of the international context. The White House saw the conflict exclusively in terms of global geopolitics. Nixon and Kissinger's focus on protecting the rapprochement with China led them to misread the intentions of the Soviet Union and see them exclusively as a malignant force pushing for the embarrassment of the US and China through the destruction of Pakistan. Whereas, the British, and the State Department, saw the crisis in East Pakistan as a regional issue in which all of the major global powers saw their interests lying in peace and, if possible, a united Pakistan. Both sides saw the Indo-Soviet treaty as confirmation of their perspective on the subcontinent, the White House that India and the Soviets had decided upon war and the UK that the Soviets were increasing their ability to counsel restraint.

As tension between India and Pakistan began to build inexorably in late 1971, The British government, the State Department and the White House all looked to prevent a war in South Asia. However, the opposing perspectives of the UK and the White House, which had cut the State Department out of the decision-making process, led to very different approaches to the prevention of an Indo-Pakistan war on the subcontinent. Nixon's "opening to China" had inadvertently set the UK and US on course for rancorous disagreements on South Asia at the UN Security Council in December 1971.

Chapter 5: Taking Different Sides

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to map out the divergent interests and breakdown in communication that led to rancorous UK-US disagreements over the 1971 war between India and Pakistan. Throughout the year, the British government and the White House had aligned on different sides of a policy divide over South Asia, but as Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited both capitals in late October and early November 1971, the differences came into sharp focus. However, amid a desire to improve a relationship that had deteriorated in large part due to the secrecy of the White House's foreign policy-making, both Heath and Nixon attempted to paper over their policy differences, even as tensions were rising on the subcontinent in late November. However, once the conflict between India and Pakistan escalated and reached the UN Security Council in December, UK and US disagreements could no longer be disguised and manifested themselves in a very public manner when the UK refused to support US resolutions that backed Pakistan and called for a ceasefire and the immediate withdrawal of Indian troops from Pakistani territory.

The first section creates the backdrop for the chapter. By mid-November 1971, the crisis on the subcontinent was nearing its climax. Pakistani President Yahya Khan had failed to stem the flow of refugees crossing the border from East Pakistan into India. However, despite many accounts' claim that the war between India and Pakistan began on December 3rd, the section explains that the "inter-state" war within the 1971 crisis began in mid-November when Indian forces launched an attack inside East Pakistan.¹ The brief conflict came to an end on December 17th, when following the surrender of Pakistani forces in East Pakistan, India declared a unilateral ceasefire on the border with West Pakistan, where fighting had also been taking place. This context is necessary to understand the actions of the UK and the US amid the crisis.

Section two takes the temperature of the UK-US relationship in the autumn of 1971. Chapter 4 discussed in detail the consternation felt in London over President Nixon's announcement that his Assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger, had secretly visited Peking ahead of a state visit by himself early in 1972. By September, the White House had made another surprise announcement of a new economic policy, which included a 10% surcharge on imports, which further discomforted UK-US relations. The continued lack of willingness on the part of the Nixon Administration to consult with the UK before announcing major shifts in foreign policy prompted a reconsideration of the UK-US relationship in London. The UK continued its policy of trying to "have

¹ The term "inter-state" war is used to distinguish between the war between India and Pakistan and the war between the Pakistan military and the Bengali guerrillas.

its cake and eat it” in terms of strong relations with Europe and the US, but the section demonstrates UK-US relations were becoming increasingly strained as 1971 wore on.

The third and fourth sections analyse, Indira Gandhi’s visits to London and Washington in the autumn of 1971. The Indian Prime Minister had very different experiences in meetings with Heath and Nixon. As the UK’s South Asian policy was tacitly in favour of many Indian positions, the Heath-Gandhi meeting took place within an amicable atmosphere. Her meeting with Nixon in the Oval Office provided a stark contrast. The two sections analyse the two meetings as well as the subsequent impressions of Gandhi that Heath and Nixon shared with one another. The sections demonstrate that both the Prime Minister and the President were keen to see the tone of Anglo-American relations improve in the Autumn of 1971, and that this had consequences for their interpretations of each other’s policy with regard to South Asia.

Sections five and six assess the vastly different responses of the US and UK toward the war between India and Pakistan. Nixon and Kissinger, concerned with protecting their link to China and working on the assumption that India was determined to destroy West Pakistan, authorised the movement of a Naval Task Force to the Bay of Bengal. Unsure of the rationale or meaning behind American actions, and viewing their interests as being best served through tacit support of the Indian position, the British opposed US efforts at the UN calling for a ceasefire and a withdrawal of Indian troops that was unacceptable to New Delhi. By December 1971, the lustre that the UK-US relationship had acquired in late 1970 had worn off amid competing national interests and a White House foreign policy-making system that kept its closest ally in the dark.

1. The War on the ground

By November, tension on the border between India and East Pakistan had reached the point of no return. The continued flow of refugees ran at a cost to India of \$200m per month, a financial burden that far outweighed the potential price of a war with Pakistan.² The Indian government was also keen to end the destabilising effect that the refugees were having in its North-easterly states that bordered East Pakistan. Traditional rivalries between Hindu and Bengali communities, particularly in the Indian state of West Bengal, had been heightened by the ongoing war between the Pakistan army and the Mukti Bahini.³ It was clearly within the Indian national interest to ensure a stable and

² Mohite (1995) “Indo-US Relations: Issues in Conflict and Cooperation” South Asian Publishers; New Delhi p109.

³ Sisson, R and Rose, L (1990) *War and Secession: India, Pakistan and the Creation of Bangladesh* University of California Press; Los Angeles p206.

moderate government in an independent Pakistan: one not likely to cause a further mass influx of refugees.⁴ By late November, the monsoon season was over, which allowed for easier passage into East Pakistan whilst snow was beginning to fall on the Himalayas to impede any Chinese retaliation. The time was opportune for an Indian attack.

Many accounts of the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war cite December 3rd, when Yahya Khan authorised attacks on Indian airfields along the border with West Pakistan, as the starting point for the war.⁵ However a recent study has demonstrated that the inter-state aspect of the 1971 crisis was begun by India. Srinath Raghavan's research indicates that from early October, the regular Indian army had been supporting Mukti Bahini attacks along the border with East Pakistan, and by the second week in October had carried out operations up to ten miles inside of East Pakistan.⁶ Indian offensives ramped up on November 12th when the Army made inroads into Jessore, an eastern district of East Pakistan which shared a border with West Bengal. The offensive provoked heavy retaliation, including air strikes, from the Pakistan army.⁷ By November 21st, the Indian forces had specific instructions to remain inside the East Pakistan border.⁸

Despite Indira Gandhi's speech to India's parliament, the Lok Sabha, on November 24th in which she denied Pakistani claims that India was waging an "undeclared war", reports on the ground provided evidence to the contrary.⁹ In a report on November 23rd, *Times [London]* correspondent, Peter Hazlehurst reported that Indian soldiers disguised as Mukti Bahini guerrillas attacked and subsequently occupied an area in north-west Jessore.¹⁰ Such incursions were part of the Indian strategy in late November and early December to induce an attack from Pakistan that could shift the blame for starting the inter-state war onto their adversary. On December 3rd, Yahya's decision to pre-emptively attack Indian airfields along the border with West Pakistan provided the perfect opportunity. Architect of the Indo-Soviet treaty and close confidant of Indira Gandhi, D.P. Dhar

⁴ Sisson and Rose *War and Secession* p207.

⁵ Hanhimäki, JM (2004) *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* Oxford University Press: London p179, Scott, A (2011) *Allies Apart: Heath, Nixon and the Special Relationship* Palgrave Macmillan: New York p88, Van Hollen, C (1980) "The Tilt Policy Revisited: Nixon-Kissinger Geopolitics and South Asia" *Asian Survey* Vol 20 No 4 p350; Bass, G (2013) *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide* Knopf: New York p268.

⁶ Raghavan, S (2013) *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* Library of Congress: Cambridge, Mass pp231-232

⁷ Raghavan 1971 p232

⁸ Raghavan p232; Sisson and Rose, p213.

⁹ Raghavan, p232.

¹⁰ *The Times* (London) "Undeclared war as Indian troops disguised as guerrillas invade" Nov 24, 1971 Pg 8 issue 58333.

remarked upon hearing the news that “the fool has done exactly what one had expected”.¹¹ Gandhi herself is reported to have said privately “Thank God, they’ve attacked us”.¹²

The Pakistani attack in the West was designed to relieve pressure on forces in East Pakistan and to coax the international community into some kind of intervention.¹³ In reality, the move only succeeded in playing into Indian hands: it allowed forces in the East to accelerate their plans to invade East Pakistan en-masse and allowed Indira Gandhi to claim to be the victim of direct external aggression.¹⁴ The Pakistani airstrike accelerated the timeframe within which Pakistan’s 300,000 soldiers could be overrun and quickly defeated by India’s force of 1.1 million armed personnel.¹⁵

The ensuing war was fought on two fronts, one for control of East Pakistan and another, smaller scale conflict along the border between India and West Pakistan. In the East, the Indian military’s advantage was overwhelming in terms of manpower, arms and reliable lines of supply.¹⁶ By contrast, the Pakistani forces who had their communication and supply lines cut by the Mukti Bahini, were battle weary, and exhausted by their 8 month battle with the guerrillas.¹⁷ However, Srinath Raghavan has challenged the conventional argument that these factors made an Indian victory in East Pakistan “inevitable”.¹⁸ Rather than the presumed Indian objective of an “all-out offensive” with the aim of capturing Dacca, Raghavan has argued that Indian objectives were less audacious.¹⁹ The Indians wanted to ensure that a moderate government in Dacca was able to both prevent the flow of refugees across the border and provide a safe environment so that those that had fled could return.²⁰

The capture of Dacca resulted from unexpectedly rapid gains by the Indians and incompetence on the part of the Pakistani leadership. On December 10th, East Pakistan’s governor, Dr Abdul Malik, handed a note to a senior UN official in Dacca, Paul Marc Henri. Although not a formal surrender, the note invited the elected representatives of East Pakistan to form a government in Dacca, called for an immediate ceasefire and asked for the safe passage of all West Pakistani personnel with a

¹¹ Raghavan, 1971 p234.

¹² Bass, *Blood Telegram* p269.

¹³ Raghavan, p233.

¹⁴ Raghavan, p234.

¹⁵ Bass, p267.

¹⁶ Sisson and Rose *War and Secession* p214.

¹⁷ Sisson and Rose p214.

¹⁸ Raghavan p236.

¹⁹ Raghavan p236.

²⁰ Raghavan p236.

guarantee of no reprisals.²¹ Although Yahya had seemingly authorised his military command in Dacca to do all that was necessary to prevent the destruction of both civilians and the Pakistan armed forces, he quickly distanced himself from the note and accused Malik of overstepping his brief.²² However, Yahya could not prevent the note from being circulated through official UN channels, and India became quickly aware of its existence. The evident dissension within the Pakistani government indicated that the defences of Dacca were weaker than the Indians had previously believed, and efforts to take East Pakistan's capital were speeded up.²³ On December 16th, Commander of Pakistan's army in East Pakistan, Lieutenant General AAK Niazi, signed an instrument of surrender before his opposite number, Lieutenant Jasjit Singh Aurora.

On the western front, the two combatants were more evenly matched.²⁴ Unlike in East Pakistan, where India easily gained air superiority, West Pakistan challenged the Indian Air Force for control of the skies.²⁵ On the ground, conflict on the Western border was fierce and hotly contested. Gary Bass describes how fighting in the Chamb sector of Kashmir was the worst of the war, a battle which the Pakistanis won after former governor of East Pakistan, Tikka Khan ordered a large scale attack on Indian lines after days of heavy artillery bombardment.²⁶ However, for all the ferociousness of the fighting by the Pakistani military, the Indian government was still able to achieve its aims on the battlefield. Although largely a defensive war, Indira Gandhi insisted that there be two offensive objectives; to re-occupy small sections of Kashmir ceded back to Pakistan under Soviet pressure following the 1965 war, and to launch a major movement into Sindh to rupture communication lines and provide a deterrent against further Pakistani offensives into Indian-controlled Kashmir.²⁷ Both moves were successful and India maintained control of the areas of Kashmir to form a new "line of control" from 1972 onwards.²⁸

Following Niazi's surrender in the East, India brought the brief Indo-Pakistan conflict of 1971 to a close by declaring a unilateral ceasefire on the Western front on December 17th. Having had no desire to enter West Pakistan as an invading force or to be seen as an occupying power, the Indians quickly put an end to a struggle on the western border that would have expended a great deal of

²¹ Raghavan, 1971 p253.

²² Raghavan, p253.

²³ Raghavan, p253.

²⁴ Bass, *Blood Telegram* p274.

²⁵ Bass, p280.

²⁶ Bass, pp281-282.

²⁷ Sisson and Rose, *War and Secession* p215.

²⁸ Sisson and Rose p215.

blood and treasure on both sides.²⁹ Yahya quickly accepted the ceasefire, to the chagrin of both the military establishment and to protestors in the streets of major West Pakistani cities.³⁰ He also tended his resignation as President and transferred power to PPP leader Zulfikur Ali Bhutto, to begin a new era for Pakistani politics.

2. The UK-US relationship, Autumn 1971

From the moment President Nixon announced on July 15th 1971 that he would visit Peking early in 1972, without prior consultation with the British government, UK-US relations embarked upon on a downward spiral that would not be arrested until the end of the year. By the autumn of 1971, the British government had once more been slighted by a second “Nixon Shock” on August 15th. Again announced without consultation or prior warning, Nixon proclaimed that the White House would be imposing a new trade policy that included a 10% surcharge on imports. After hearing the news, British prime minister Edward Heath was enraged and is reported to have said “I knew they killed the wrong man in Dallas” in reference to John Connally, Nixon’s treasury secretary who had been sitting next to Kennedy when he was assassinated in 1963.³¹ Connally had attracted particular ire in London as the architect of Nixon’s financial policy.³²

The continued lack of consultation, or even advanced notice of major alterations in US foreign policy led the British government to seriously consider the future of the UK-US relationship in October and November 1971. A major and ongoing concern was the manner in which the British should explain to the Americans their concern for Europe and to Europe their concern for the relationship with the US. Although the paramount issue at the time, the UK’s impending EEC membership was seen as only one, and not the most significant, cause of difficult Atlantic relations.³³ In a letter to Permanent Under Secretary at the FCO, Denis Greenhill, UK Ambassador to the US, Lord Cromer, blamed the cooling of relations between Europe and the US on the new economic policy.³⁴ A paper produced by the North American Department at the FCO a week later on November 9th agreed with Cromer’s analysis that “US introversion” as a result of domestic economic problems caused the “Connally

²⁹ Raghavan, 1971 p262.

³⁰ Sisson and Rose, *War and Secession* p234.

³¹ Scott, A (2011) *Allies Apart: Heath, Nixon and the Special Relationship* Palgrave Macmillan: New York p75.

³² UKNA FCO 82/65 Cromer to FCO 12/11/71.

³³ UKNA FCO 82/64 Overton to Greenhill 9/11/71; UKNA FCO 82/64 FCO paper on future relations with the United States 5/11/71.

³⁴ UKNA FCO 82/64 Cromer to Greenhill 29/10/71

approach” to manifest itself in the August 15th announcement.³⁵ The paper also argued the fact that the US’s recent acknowledgement of parity with the Soviet Union in the field of nuclear weapons during the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks had led to an increasing tendency for the superpowers to deal with each other on a bilateral basis.³⁶ Other reasons for the fluctuation included the rapprochement with China, a perceived weakening of US determination to defend Western Europe and the rising economic strength of Japan as a threat to the US in the global marketplace.³⁷

The FCO paper advised that although it was inevitable that there would be problems within the European-US and UK-US relationships in the medium term, these problems should be kept in perspective. The US, UK and mainland Europe still shared a great deal of common interests and the US defence commitment remained vital to the protection of Western Europe.³⁸ The FCO believed that the UK should adopt a policy towards Europe and the US that looked to maintain as much influence in Washington as possible, whilst making clear that negotiations for entry into the EC must take precedence for the time being.³⁹ In substance, these ideas did not deviate from the Heath government’s original plan upon winning the election in June 1970. What had changed was the atmosphere within which the policy was to be carried out. July 15th and August 15th had demonstrated that the US government no longer saw the need to consult with the UK as a fellow global power.⁴⁰

Trade issues were clearly the most pressing in November 1971, but they were not the only area of disagreement. Although the China issue had been overshadowed somewhat by monetary issues and despite the burgeoning rapprochement with Peking, the White House continued to look for a solution that would allow for the representation of both the Nationalists and the Communists at the UN.⁴¹ The UK continued to be opposed to a “two Chinas” solution on the basis that neither party would agree to its implementation. The UK was also opposed to the US suggestion to make the depriving of Taiwan’s seat an “Important Question”, which meant that two thirds of the UN General Assembly must vote in favour in order for the motion to pass.⁴² The US took a different, and more

³⁵ UKNA FCO 82/64 FCO paper on future relations with the United States 5/11/71.

³⁶ UKNA FCO 82/64 FCO paper on future relations with the United States 5/11/71.

³⁷ UKNA FCO 82/64 FCO paper on future relations with the United States 5/11/71.

³⁸ UKNA FCO 82/64 FCO paper on future relations with the United States 5/11/71.

³⁹ UKNA FCO 82/64 FCO paper on future relations with the United States 5/11/71.

⁴⁰ Scott *Allies Apart* p76.

⁴¹ UKNA FCO 82/64 Rogers to Home 2/8/71.

⁴² UKNA FCO 82/64 Rogers to Home 2/8/71.

relaxed, approach on this occasion. Instead of insisting on UK-US unity, as they had done previously, the US opted instead to “chip away” at the British position.⁴³

Amid the evident UK-US discord, in early November, Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home was glad of the opportunity for Ambassador Cromer to have a full and frank discussion with Kissinger and instructed the Ambassador to calm American nerves over British consternation at recent White House announcements. Home was most anxious that Cromer make clear that a lack of consultation on the part of the Americans had created a great deal of difficulty for the UK government.⁴⁴ The Foreign Secretary told Cromer that the British could only conclude that the manner in which US foreign policy decisions were made had changed, and it left American allies wondering what surprise was to come next, which had led to confidence in American policy abroad having been shaken. Cromer was asked to point out that in presenting the new economic policy the Americans had accused others of protectionism, only to bring out protectionist measures itself. The message was prefaced with an assurance that the UK did not see the UK-US relationship as being strained, but Home’s tone and the letter’s content suggested otherwise.⁴⁵

During the November 12th meeting, Kissinger explained that it was difficult for the White House to relay information about the China strategy because the State Department had been formulating policy on opposing assumptions to the executive (see chapter 4).⁴⁶ Kissinger told Cromer that the tone, terseness and tardiness of Heath’s letter responding to the China announcement had not gone unnoticed in the White House. In response, the British Ambassador said that Heath’s response was “not altogether surprising” given the circumstances whereby the announcement was made without prior warning and had jeopardised Britain’s intention to exchange Ambassadors with Peking.⁴⁷ Kissinger claimed to have had little to do with the announcement of August 15th and suggested that the Prime Minister and President meet to discuss things further in Bermuda at the end of December.

In his report to the FCO, Cromer complained that the hour long meeting had been interrupted five times by President Nixon with various queries. The White House’s marginalisation of the State Department was in plain view for the Ambassador to see. Cromer described how, upon Nixon’s interruptions requesting Kissinger’s advice, information was relayed to him before a State Department official was summoned to transmit messages directly to Secretary of State Bill Rogers.

⁴³ NPL NSC Box 729 NSC Files Vol VII UK Annenberg to Rogers 5/10/71.

⁴⁴ UKNA FCO 82/65 Home to Cromer 11/11/71.

⁴⁵ UKNA FCO 82/65 Home to Cromer 11/11/71.

⁴⁶ UKNA FCO 82/65 Cromer to FCO Report of meeting with Kissinger 12/11/71.

⁴⁷ UKNA FCO 82/65 Cromer to FCO Report of meeting with Kissinger 12/11/71.

However, above all, both parties were glad to clear the air and the meeting took place within a friendly atmosphere. To close, the National Security Advisor said that he could still have talks with Cromer that he could not have with his European counterparts.⁴⁸ Kissinger's warmth helped convince the Ambassador that Kissinger wanted to repair recent damage to the UK-US relationship and provided a boon to the UK policy of maintaining a friendly relations with both EC members and the US.

The manner in which he had observed US foreign policy being made had clearly concerned the British Ambassador and the meeting on 12th November likely confirmed his worst suspicions. The same day as the meeting, Cromer wrote a despatch for London entitled "The Making of American Foreign Policy".⁴⁹ In the report Cromer noted that not enough was known about Kissinger's relationship with the President, and that people in the Administration have the impression that the White House does not deal with foreign policy problems whilst Kissinger is away.⁵⁰ The Ambassador reported that many observers in Washington, both inside and outside of government thought the Nixonian foreign policymaking system to be a "mess". The despatch ended with Cromer asking the FCO to bear with the Washington Embassy if, given the unpredictable nature of the current Administration, they hedged their bets when reporting on what could be a troublesome twelve months for UK-US relations.⁵¹

Consultation remained the major issue for the British, and an objective for the upcoming Bermuda summit at the end of December was to secure more of it from the Americans. In a letter to Nixon on November 24th that focused upon EEC entry and trade relations, Heath openly called on the President to consult with his allies rather than make surprise announcements. Referring to the new economic policy he explained that the UK could not develop a proper response to it without first knowing how other governments, particularly in Europe, were likely to respond.⁵² The letter from Heath came in the wake of an exchange of aide memoires in the autumn of 1971. On September 13th and October 4th, the British government pleaded with the Americans not to go through with implementing the 10% import surcharge designed as a "job development tax credit".⁵³ On November 26th, two days after Heath's letter, the British Embassy was instructed to reinforce the concern amid

⁴⁸ UKNA FCO 82/65 Cromer to FCO Report of meeting with Kissinger 12/11/71.

⁴⁹ UKNA FCO 82/65 Cromer to FCO 12/11/71.

⁵⁰ UKNA FCO 82/65 Cromer to FCO 12/11/71.

⁵¹ UKNA FCO 82/65 Cromer to FCO 12/11/71.

⁵² FCO 82/64 Heath to Nixon 24/11/71.

⁵³ USNA RG 59 Bureau of European Affairs Box 3 FN 1 Aide Memoire from the UK Government 26/11/71.

amendments to the bill before Congress that would mean even goods manufactured by US companies abroad would be subject to the tariff.⁵⁴

At the end of November, the British government saw problems in the UK-US relationship as being equally ones of interest and communication.⁵⁵ Since the positivity of late 1970, the relationship had suffered over China, the dollar crisis and growing American ambivalence toward EEC expansion. Cromer's November 12th despatch clearly had a major effect on thinking at the FCO and early draft briefs for the Bermuda summit in December reflected a sense of trepidation with regard to the direction of US foreign policy.⁵⁶ The FCO believed the "old ease and closeness of Anglo-American inter-communication" had been lost.⁵⁷ The objective for the Bermuda meeting was to get back to "the old kind of consultation" that had been in place before Nixon's surprise announcements.⁵⁸ Although there was an acknowledgement of problems on the European side in terms of the Atlantic Alliance, the blame was put firmly at the feet of Kissinger and Connally's methods that had eroded the credibility of the State Department and misled America's allies.⁵⁹ The British approach had therefore altered from that at the end of 1970 when Ambassador to the US at the time, John Freeman, had reported upon the manner in which the Nixon White House conducted its foreign policy without consultation with the bureaucracy.⁶⁰ Rather than keep quiet and hope for an improvement, the plan was to discuss their communication issues frankly without apportioning blame. A high-level clearing of the air could help UK-US relations and subsequently US-European relations get back on track.⁶¹

Anger and frustration at the way the White House conducted its business permeated the British government in the final months of 1971. In the Autumn of 1971, dismay in London over the China announcement took a back seat to anger over the new economic policy.⁶² As the British wanted to ensure prosperous relations with both the US and Europe, the government looked to do this with UK-US relations too. They looked to vent their frustration at what they saw as an unacceptable way

⁵⁴ UKNA FCO 82/65 Home to Cromer 26/11/71

⁵⁵ UKNA FCO 82/66 Draft Steering brief for Bermuda summit 24/11/71.

⁵⁶ UKNA FCO 82/66 Draft Steering brief for Bermuda summit 24/11/71.

⁵⁷ UKNA FCO 82/66 Draft Steering brief for Bermuda summit 24/11/71.

⁵⁸ UKNA FCO 82/66 Draft Steering brief for Bermuda summit 24/11/71.

⁵⁹ UKNA FCO 82/66 Draft Steering brief for Bermuda summit 24/11/71.

⁶⁰ UKNA FCO 7/1807 letter from Freeman to Greenhill 28/10/70. The letter was also confirmed to have been seen by the Prime Minister.

⁶¹ UKNA FCO 82/66 Draft Steering brief for Bermuda summit 24/11/71.

⁶² Spelling, A (2009) "Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations 1970-1974: A Reappraisal *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Vol 20 No 4 p643.

for the White House to conduct its business whilst simultaneously focusing on areas of agreement and looking to create a friendlier atmosphere. It was hoped that the former would help produce the latter.

Although not as high on the agenda as it was in London, there were active considerations of the UK-US relationship within the US government in the months leading to December 1971. A State Department Intelligence report reflected an ambivalent view of the Heath's Government's attitude toward the relationship. On the positive side, Heath and Home were seen as great supporters of NATO, very concerned about the spread of Soviet influence in Europe and were working to promote US-European cooperation in defending Western Europe.⁶³ On the other hand, the report acknowledged British concern over the 10% import surcharge and other measures that could harm British exports and set back UK-US relations and impede their membership of the EC. The State Department saw Heath as wanting to maintain close, or "natural", relations with the US without "the past aura of the "special relationship"". ⁶⁴ Absent from the State Department's analysis and from the behaviour of the White House was any consideration of the psychological effect and emotional reaction that US policies had provoked in London. It is somewhat ironic that whilst attempting to prove its reliability and worth as an ally with erstwhile enemies, the US government was losing the confidence of its closest ally to an unforeseen extent.

3. Indira Gandhi in the UK

Upon his election victory in June 1970, Ted Heath inherited a relationship with India that had been cool for a number of years. Prime Minister Harold Wilson's public blaming of India for the 1965 Kashmir war had led to a severe deterioration in relations that was especially sharp due to Indian expectations that the Labour party, the party that had presided over independence, would be more favourable to them than the conservatives.⁶⁵ Therefore Wilson's successor, Edward Heath's trip to India in January of 1971, the first of any significance for 13 years, was a chance for the two countries to build bridges.⁶⁶ By all accounts Heath succeeded in developing a rapport with Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that would help in meetings scheduled in the UK for the end of October. The

⁶³ USNA RG 59 College Park Box 2652 POL 15-1 State Intelligence Note "Heath leads Britain into future while struggling with the present" 16/12/71.

⁶⁴ USNA RG 59 College Park Box 2652 POL 15-1 State Intelligence Note "Heath leads Britain into future while struggling with the present" 16/12/71.

⁶⁵ Smith, SC (2010) "Coming Down on the Winning Side: Britain and the South Asian Crisis, 1971" *Contemporary British History* Vol 24 No4 p451-470 p459.

⁶⁶ Smith "Coming Down on the Winning Side" p459.

autumn visit formed one leg of Gandhi's world tour that attempted to galvanise the international community into action to prevent the flow of refugees crossing the border from East Pakistan into India.

The British position on the East Pakistan crisis continued to be one of sympathy for the Indian government alongside differences with it on a couple of important issues. For the British, the burden of responsibility for the refugees fell upon the government of Pakistan, and it was upon President Yahya Khan that Heath had placed political pressure throughout 1971. However, in opposition to Indian wishes, the British supported the stationing of a UN presence on both sides of the East Pakistan border, continued to recognise the fight between the Pakistan Army and the Mukti Bahini as an internal affair for Pakistan, and urged India not to intervene militarily in a fellow sovereign state.⁶⁷ The British government were well aware of the Indian training that the Mukti Bahini were receiving and believed India should cease such activities lest they exacerbate the problem in East Pakistan.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, Indira Gandhi's strategy was to focus global attention upon the atrocities being carried out by the Pakistan army and the plight of the East Pakistani refugees. She continued to insist that the government in Pakistan needed to negotiate with Mujib and the Awami League if there was to be a solution to the refugee crisis.

During the meeting on October 30th, after Gandhi had lied about providing only small-scale support to the Mukti Bahini, Heath quickly asked the Prime Minister about the possibility of India withdrawing its troops from the border areas.⁶⁹ Gandhi's response was that, for military reasons, the Indian army could not pull back just a short distance as suggested and that a large-scale withdrawal was not possible.⁷⁰ Gandhi went on to explain to Heath the pressure she was under from hawks within the Indian government that wanted India to go to war after the Pakistani crackdown on Bengali nationalists in March 1971. Heath was keen to remain informed by the Indian government with regard to the matter. At the end of the meeting, Heath told Gandhi that it would be to her advantage if she were to explain why the Indian government had not responded to the UN measures that they saw as being unfairly "even-handed" in a crisis that had clearly been caused by Pakistan.⁷¹

As part of the desire to foster communication with the White House, Heath sent a letter to Nixon expressing the impressions he had gained from his meeting with Gandhi. His sympathy for the Prime

⁶⁷ UKNA PREM 15/568 Home to Heath 4/10/71.

⁶⁸ UKNA FCO 37/877 Dacca to FCO 12/5/71.

⁶⁹ UKNA PREM 15/568 Meeting between Heath and Gandhi 31/10/71.

⁷⁰ UKNA PREM 15/568 Meeting between Heath and Gandhi 31/10/71.

⁷¹ UKNA PREM 15/568 Meeting between Heath and Gandhi 31/10/71.

Minister's plight was tangible; Heath wrote that "all of her efforts" were directed toward calming the hawks and that there was the prospect of "irresistible pressure" from within India to act.⁷² The Prime Minister noted that the strain and burden of up to nine million refugees meant that Gandhi may well have little room for manoeuvre. Even where Gandhi had been clearly disingenuous in speaking of providing the "minimum" Indian support for the Bengali guerrillas, Heath's emphasis was on her candour in not completely denying Indian support. Heath made explicit the British belief, formed over the course of 1971, that it was up to Pakistan to solve the refugee crisis through negotiations with the Awami League. The British Prime Minister urged Nixon to place pressure on Yahya Khan who may not pay attention to Heath's correspondence but would "give great weight" to advice from President Nixon.

Throughout the 1971 crisis, Heath continued his strained correspondence with Yahya Khan. A letter written a week after Gandhi's visit, on November 7th, sided almost entirely with the Indian view of the situation.⁷³ In a statement that would no doubt have angered the Pakistani President, Heath told of his confidence in Indira Gandhi's desire to resist domestic pressure to go to war.⁷⁴ The Prime Minister focused upon the key issue of refugees and implied that the steps taken by the Pakistani government to both prevent the flow and create conditions amenable to their return from India had been insufficient. Heath called on Yahya to negotiate with Mujib and expressed doubt whether conditions would ever be suitable for the return of refugees unless senior Awami League figures, currently in exile, were allowed to return and play a prominent role in public life.⁷⁵ The letter expressed disapproval at the Indian refusal to participate in mutual withdrawals and with UN initiatives to aid the return of refugees, but made clear the British position that the crisis was Pakistan's to solve.

4. Indira Gandhi in the US

President Nixon's ties to India and the subcontinent dated back to his time as Vice President in the 1950's, and it is to his experience of negotiating Pakistan's entry into CENTO and SEATO that some trace back his feelings toward the subcontinental powers.⁷⁶ Kissinger recounts how Nixon was far less amenable to Indian claims of global moral leadership than many of his predecessors and

⁷² UKNA PREM 15/569 Heath to Nixon 5/11/71.

⁷³ UKNA PREM 15/569 Heath to Yahya 7/11/71.

⁷⁴ UKNA PREM 15/569 Heath to Yahya 7/11/71.

⁷⁵ UKNA PREM 15/569 Heath to Yahya 7/11/71.

⁷⁶ Choudhury, GW (1975) *India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Major Powers* The Free Press: New York p86

developed a personal dislike for Indira Gandhi.⁷⁷ When visiting India in 1969, his reception in India was “restrained” and discussions “business like”.⁷⁸ Nixon’s experience in India contrasted with that he had with Pakistan. Nixon had a far friendlier relationship with its leaders and was greatly appreciative of the warm reception he received when visiting the country whilst out of office.⁷⁹

It is difficult to discount Nixon’s prejudices against India and in favour of Pakistan as they manifested themselves so regularly and seemed to have a definitive influence on his thinking.⁸⁰ In a conversation with Kissinger on May 26th 1971, Nixon said that what the Indians needed as punishment for their attitude toward East Pakistan was “a mass famine”.⁸¹ Nixon went on to lament the fact that there was a US food aid programme in place to prevent famine, rather Nixon complained about the fact that “we’re going to feed them”. On July 16th, discussing East Pakistan at a meeting of the National Security Council (NSC), whilst complaining that world opinion was on the side of India, Nixon referred to Indians as “a slippery, treacherous people”.⁸² At the same NSC meeting, Nixon acknowledged that he had a “bias” against India in asking what restraints, particularly in terms of aid, could be placed upon the Indian government.⁸³

Nixon’s fondness for Pakistan was almost as apparent. During his 1969 meeting with Yahya Khan, in which he sounded out the Pakistani President as a potential link to China, he is reported to have reminded the Pakistani government of the sentimental attachment he had developed with the country over the past decade and a half.⁸⁴ Nixon’s fondness for Pakistan and the usefulness of the government as a means to improve relations with China paved the way for a strong personal relationship between the two Presidents. At a Washington Special Action Group (WSAG) meeting in April, and to much bewilderment, Kissinger told senior White House and State Department officials to keep in mind Nixon’s “special relationship” with Yahya when considering policy.⁸⁵ Kissinger reinforced this personal relationship in May when he told Pakistan’s Ambassador to the US, Agha

⁷⁷ Kissinger, HA (1979) *The White House Years* Weidenfeld and Nicolson; London p848.

⁷⁸ Kissinger, *White House Years* p848.

⁷⁹ Kissinger, p849.

⁸⁰ Mohite, D (1995) *Indo-US Relations: Issues in Conflict and Cooperation* South Asian Publishers Ltd: New Delhi, p109; Bass *Blood Telegram* p153; Van Hollen “Tilt Policy Revisited” p153; Hanhimäki, JM (2004) *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* Oxford University Press: London p158.

⁸¹ Foreign relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS) 1969-1976 Vol E7 South Asian Crisis Doc. 135.

⁸² FRUS 1969-1976 Vol XI South Asia Doc. 103. Memorandum for the Record 16/7/71

⁸³ FRUS 1969-1976 Vol XI South Asia Doc. 103. Memorandum for the Record 16/7/71

⁸⁴ Choudhury, *India, Pakistan, Bangladesh* p86.

⁸⁵ Van Hollen “Tilt Policy Revisited” p341.

Hilaly that Nixon held Yahya in high regard and had a “feeling of personal affection” toward him.⁸⁶ It is on this evidence that government officials such as former Pakistan Cabinet member G.W. Choudhury and US Under-Secretary of State for near Eastern Affairs Christopher Van Hollen, as well as authors such as Gary Bass, Jussi Hahnheimaki and Dilip Mohite have concluded that Nixon’s policy in 1971 was not only guided by the China policy, but also his personal prejudices with regard to India and Pakistan.⁸⁷

Nixon’s prejudices were in plain sight during Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s trip to Washington in the first week of November. Two days prior to the meeting, on November 2nd, the White House received a cable from Ambassador Joseph Farland in Islamabad that shaped the White House’s tactics with Gandhi. Mutual Indian and Pakistani troop withdrawals from the borders had been suggested before, but Farland reported that Yahya had offered to withdraw troops “unilaterally” as long as there was an Indian commitment to do so shortly after.⁸⁸ Farland was quick to assure Yahya that his offer would be passed on to Washington in time for Nixon to raise the matter in his meeting with Gandhi. Although they had been told of Indian objections to a withdrawal, Nixon and Kissinger pressed the suggestion upon Gandhi and her senior advisor P.N. Haksar but received the same reply as the British regarding the inability of the Indian military to move back a short distance.⁸⁹

Kissinger has described the Nixon-Gandhi encounter as a “classic dialogue of the deaf” and the memorandum that he drafted at the time records a meeting where the two leaders spoke at one another rather than engage in conversation.⁹⁰ The President reeled off a number of what Gary Bass has labelled “small steps” that the US had taken to bring about a change in the Pakistani position.⁹¹ These included the aforementioned Pakistani withdrawals, the coaxing of Yahya to appoint a civilian governor in East Pakistan and US pressure to ensure Mujib was not executed.⁹² For her part, Gandhi vented her frustration that the continued shipment of US arms to Pakistan throughout the crisis had caused her great difficulty and proved a boost to those calling for India to take military action in East

⁸⁶ National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book 79 “The Tilt” Doc. 10 Conversation between Kissinger, Henry Saunders and Agha Hilaly 10/5/71.

⁸⁷ Choudhury, *India, Pakistan, Bangladesh* p86; Van Hollen “Tilt Policy Revisited” p341; Bass *Blood Telegrams* p153; Hahnheimaki *Flawed Architect* p158; Mohite p109.

⁸⁸ USNA RG 59 POL IND-PAK Islamabad to State 2/11/71.

⁸⁹ FRUS Vol XI South Asia Doc. 179. Memorandum for the President’s file 4/11/71.

⁹⁰ Kissinger, *White House Years* pp880-881

⁹¹ Bass, *Blood Telegram* p244.

⁹² FRUS Vol XI South Asia Doc. 179. Memorandum for the President’s file 4/11/71.

Pakistan (for details of the arms shipments, see chapter 4). On the issue of refugees, Nixon accused the Indian-supported Mukti Bahini of exacerbating the refugee problem through sabotage of supply lines that were carrying humanitarian aid. Gandhi did not directly respond to the point but rather pointed to the fact that the idea of a united Pakistan was no longer viable. Gandhi attempted to focus the blame for the crisis onto Yahya before Nixon made two warnings to the prime minister. Firstly that the US government “would not understand” if India intervened in East Pakistan. Secondly that despite “our long established ties of friendship and respect. It would be impossible to calculate with precision the steps which other great powers might take if India were to initiate hostilities”. Nixon had effectively told Gandhi that it was quite possible that the US would not stand in the way should the Chinese retaliate against an Indian invasion of East Pakistan.⁹³

The meeting on November 4th, and a subsequent meeting on November 5th served to confirm Nixon and Kissinger’s suspicion that Indira Gandhi was set on destroying West Pakistan. In their post-meeting debrief Kissinger said that the “Indians are bastards anyway. They are starting a war there...to them East Pakistan is no longer the issue”.⁹⁴ The discussion also explicitly demonstrated the depth of personal animosity felt by Nixon and Kissinger toward Gandhi and her advisor P.N. Haksar, to whom Nixon referred to as “that clown”.⁹⁵ The two repeatedly referred to the Indian Prime Minister as a “bitch” and an “old witch”, but both were most pleased with being able to thwart what they believed to be Gandhi’s objectives. Kissinger praised Nixon for his tact during the meeting, saying that “we got what we wanted, which was we kept her from going out of here saying that the United States kicked her in the teeth”.⁹⁶ In Kissinger’s mind, had Nixon been harder on Gandhi than he had been, she would have gone back “crying to India”, and thus be even more determined and have even more reason to carry out her assumed aim to destroy Pakistan with Soviet support.

Three weeks after his meeting with Gandhi, Nixon returned the favour in writing to Heath regarding his impressions of Gandhi’s visit. Despite the evident differences in the tone of the two meetings and the opposing stances from which the UK and US approached the crisis in East Pakistan, Nixon’s letter focused on areas of agreement. Nixon began his message with the statement that “My talks with Mrs Gandhi left me with a similar impression to yours”, and went on to describe how he told Gandhi that the initiation of hostilities would be unacceptable and that the tactics of the guerrillas were an

⁹³ FRUS Vol XI South Asia Doc. 179 Memorandum for the President’s file 4/11/71; Bass p255.

⁹⁴ FRUS 1969-76 Vol E7 Doc. 150. Conversation between Nixon, Kissinger and Haldeman 5/11/71.

⁹⁵ FRUS 1969-76 Vol E7 Doc. 150. Conversation between Nixon, Kissinger and Haldeman 5/11/71.

⁹⁶ FRUS 1969-76 Vol E7 Doc. 150. Conversation between Nixon, Kissinger and Haldeman 5/11/71.

obstacle in the way of a peaceful resolution. Within the context of UK-US relations in November 1971, it seems the President was attempting to paper over gaping chasms between the UK and US positions on the subcontinent.

Nixon's letter to Heath disguised the huge differences that were emerging between the two countries on the matter of East Pakistan; what Nixon did not say to Heath was more significant than what he did write. Firstly, the notion that Heath and Nixon gained "similar impressions" from their meetings with Gandhi is not the case. Although both believed that Gandhi was close to the point of attacking Pakistan, interpretations of how she had got to that point and what Indian aims would be should a conflict occur were markedly different. Heath's impression was that the Indian prime minister was struggling to hold back the hawkish elements within her government from forcing her into war, whilst Nixon believed Gandhi was actively looking for an excuse for war so that India could dismember West Pakistan. On the issue of Indian support for the Mukti Bahini and possible troop withdrawals, Heath mentioned British disapproval of Indian positions without pushing the point too hard, whereas Nixon deliberately pushed Gandhi on both issues. Finally, Nixon was far starker in warning Gandhi of the possible consequences of an Indian intervention than he let on in his letter to Heath; there was no mention of his warning that other "great powers" could take action against India.

In a telephone conversation on November 25th, Heath and Nixon discussed their differing positions on the crisis without fully confronting them. The two men were in clear agreement that a war should be avoided at all costs, although they had alternative suggestions as to how to achieve it. Nixon suggested that British and American efforts be focused upon counselling restraint in New Delhi, to which Heath partially agreed but believed that both parties needed to be persuaded that a war was not inevitable.⁹⁷ Rather than a focus upon New Delhi, the Prime Minister suggested that the key to averting war was to convince Yahya to talk to Mujib, to which Nixon said that although the Americans had suggested this to Yahya, it was very difficult to do as long as India was supporting guerrillas in East Pakistan.⁹⁸ On the issue of India's likely war aims, Nixon repeatedly told Heath of his belief that Gandhi and India wanted "Pakistan to disintegrate".⁹⁹ Nixon was clearly referring to the disintegration of West Pakistan as well as the separation of the East from the West, but the phrasing was ambiguous and it is possible that this is a reason why Heath did not directly disagree. Rather

⁹⁷ UKNA PREM 15/570 Telephone conversation between Heath and Nixon 15/11/71.

⁹⁸ UKNA PREM 15/570 Telephone conversation between Heath and Nixon 15/11/71.

⁹⁹ UKNA PREM 15/570 Telephone conversation between Heath and Nixon 15/11/71.

Heath tacitly agreed with Nixon in saying that even if Gandhi herself did not want Pakistan to disintegrate, such an attitude was “true of the [Indian] armed forces”.¹⁰⁰

In terms of placing pressure on Yahya Khan, as Heath had suggested, Nixon focused in both his meeting with Gandhi and in his letter to Heath upon the influence that the US had in terms of urging restraint upon Yahya vis-à-vis India, rather than persuading him to negotiate with the Awami League. After receiving a letter from Yahya, two days before his telephone conversation with Heath, which complained of an Indian intervention in East Pakistan, on November 24th Nixon assured Yahya of continued American friendship throughout the conflict.¹⁰¹ In an opposite vein to Heath’s communications with the Pakistani president, Nixon thanked Yahya for his continued friendship and wrote of American efforts to counsel restraint upon the Indian government and emphasised the notion that the US “would not understand” if India were to initiate hostilities with its neighbour.¹⁰² Noticeably, there was no mention of possible talks with the Awami League. Alongside the note, Ambassador Farland was given instructions to convey to Yahya the efforts made by the US government to impress upon Gandhi the need for the stationing of UN observers on both sides of the border and the fact that Pakistan had made the first move in offering to withdraw troops from border areas.

It is clear that beneath a façade of agreement on the issues, the UK and US governments were heading into a likely Indo-Pakistan war on distinctly different policy trajectories. The UK and US were supporting India and Pakistan respectively at the end of November, even if neither was willing to explicitly admit it to the other. As briefs were being prepared in November for the Bermuda summit beginning December 20th, South Asia was one of many issues that were being prepared for discussion. However, by the time the summit came around, South Asia was the topic that took up the most time in talks. Studying the archival records, it does not seem to be such a surprise that relations deteriorated at an alarming rate as India and Pakistan went to war in December, but through a determination to mend relations and focus on the positives, Heath and Nixon seemed to have been blind to the true nature and depth of their disagreement on the issue.

5. The US response to the Indo-Pakistan war, November-December 1971

Once India invaded East Pakistan in late November 1971, there were three dimensions to the White House’s response; the conduct of the war on the ground; the intentions and interests of the Soviet

¹⁰⁰ UKNA PREM 15/570 Telephone conversation between Heath and Nixon 15/11/71.

¹⁰¹ FRUS 1969-1976 Vol XI Doc. 206. State to Islamabad 27/11/71.

¹⁰² FRUS 1969-1976 Vol XI Doc. 206. State to Islamabad 27/11/71.

Union; and the protection of the link to China. Naturally, the three threads overlap with one another, but they provide a strong basis for an analysis of US policy.

It has been established that both Nixon and Kissinger were firm in their belief that India's aim throughout the crisis had been not only to separate East from West Pakistan, but to destroy West Pakistan as a viable state. However, on December 7th, the White House received a CIA briefing that confirmed Nixon and Kissinger's suspicions.¹⁰³ The report itself, from a source that has never been revealed within the Indian cabinet, claimed that India would not accept advice from the UN General Assembly until, among other things, "Pakistani armored and air force strength are destroyed so that Pakistan will never again be in a position to plan another invasion of Kashmir".¹⁰⁴ The report also described how, although India had no desire to occupy West Pakistan, the plan was to incorporate the southern part of Azad Kashmir for strategic reasons.¹⁰⁵ Kissinger explained his feelings at a WSAG meeting on December 8th, where he argued that the US should come to the aid of Pakistan in a situation where an American ally is being "raped" and where the other side was receiving Soviet aid.¹⁰⁶ Undersecretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Joe Sisco and Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, U. Alexis Johnson both raised concerns over such an analysis, but their opinions were pushed aside by Kissinger.

In his memoir, Kissinger describes the information as evidence for Indira Gandhi's determination to reduce West Pakistan to "impotence" whereby the state would become fragmented and unable to defend itself.¹⁰⁷ The claim is rebuffed by Joe Sisco's assistant Christopher Van Hollen, who was present at the December 8th WSAG meeting. He points out that Nixon and Kissinger were alone in interpreting the CIA report in the manner they did. Van Hollen explains that Indian aims to take strategic areas of Azad Kashmir and to destroy Pakistan's armour and air force capabilities were not illogical and did not indicate a definitive war aim to destroy West Pakistan.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, US policy moved forward on the assumptions of the President and his National Security Advisor.

Soon after the December 8th WSAG meeting, the White House issued the courses of action that were to take place to protect US interests during the Indo-Pakistan war.¹⁰⁹ Among them were measures to

¹⁰³ Raghavan 1971 p244; Van Hollen "Tilt Policy Revisited" p351.

¹⁰⁴ FRUS 1969-1976 Vol XI Doc. 246. CIA Information Cable 7/12/71.

¹⁰⁵ FRUS 1969-1976 Vol XI Doc. 246. CIA Information Cable 7/12/71.

¹⁰⁶ FRUS 1969-1976 Vol XI Doc. 246. CIA Information Cable 7/12/71.

¹⁰⁷ Kissinger, *White House Years* pp901-902.

¹⁰⁸ Van Hollen "Tilt Policy Revisited" p352.

¹⁰⁹ National Security Archive Briefing Book 79 "The Tilt" Doc. 33 NSC List: "Courses of Actions Associated with India/Pakistan Crisis 8/12/71.

help Pakistan, in material terms, fight the Indians. Unable to provide arms directly to Pakistan due to the full embargo that had eventually been imposed with Yahya's agreement in November, Nixon and Kissinger looked to other means. The only way to provide Pakistan with American equipment was via third parties. The plan, suggested by the Shah of Iran, was for Jordan to supply planes to Pakistan, whilst Iran sent planes to Jordan to cover for their shortfall.¹¹⁰ By December 9th, Kissinger reported to Nixon that four Jordanian planes had already moved to Pakistan and that 22 more were on their way.¹¹¹ The State Department and the Pentagon quickly made it clear to the White House that the authorisation of the transfer of US arms via third parties was illegal under the terms of the current embargo.¹¹² The legality or otherwise of the matter however, did not make Nixon and Kissinger think twice about doing all they could to support Pakistan's military efforts.

Convinced that India was acting to destroy Pakistan with the full support of the Soviet Union, the second aspect of American policy was aimed at their fellow superpower. Throughout 1971, the Soviet position had slowly morphed into one of support for the Indian government in its struggle against an obdurate Pakistani regime (see chapter 4). Throughout November, Kissinger had made plain the American position to Soviet officials, including Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in Washington Yuli Vorontsov, that India was determined to have a showdown and to destroy West Pakistan.¹¹³ The response from the Soviet Union was one of scepticism toward Kissinger's assessment of Indian war aims. Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin assured Kissinger that the Soviet Union continued to counsel restraint in New Delhi and that US and Soviet interests need not be competitive in South Asia.¹¹⁴ Both Nixon and Kissinger were unconvinced by Soviet protestations of innocence.

Within Kissinger's conceptualisation of the crisis, a natural extension of the need to stand by Pakistan as an ally of the US was to prevent what he saw as aggressive adventures across sovereign boundaries from becoming the norm. He firmly believed that if a Soviet-backed India was allowed to destroy Pakistan without any repercussions from the U.S., such a model of proxy war could be repeated in the more strategically crucial region of the Middle East.¹¹⁵ In his memoir, Kissinger argued that the "very structure of the international" order was at stake should a Soviet-backed India

¹¹⁰ FRUS 1969-76 Vol E7 Doc. 165. Conversation among Nixon, Kissinger and Mitchell 8/12/71.

¹¹¹ FRUS 1969-76 Vol E7 Doc. 172. Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger 10/12/71.

¹¹² Anderson, J and Clifford, G (1973) *The Anderson Papers* Millington: London pp249-250; Bass *Blood Telegram* p294; Raghavan 1971 pp246-247; Anderson and Clifford pp249-250

¹¹³ Raghavan 1971 p242.

¹¹⁴ Raghavan p242.

¹¹⁵ FRUS 1969-73 Vol E7 Doc 158. Telephone Conversation between Connally and Kissinger 5/12/71.

be allowed to destroy West Pakistan.¹¹⁶ It was these assumptions that guided the White House's policy toward the Soviet Union in December 1971.

Kissinger saw the entire situation as being played for the highest stakes and advised Nixon to act accordingly. He was determined not to let the Indians and Soviets succeed in embarrassing the US; he told the President on December 5th that the way to navigate the crisis was "to become very threatening to the Russians" and make clear that the US realised how high the stakes were.¹¹⁷ Nixon agreed with Kissinger's assessment and sent a strongly worded letter to Brezhnev the following day. The letter acknowledged the developing atmosphere of superpower détente, but explicitly stated the US belief that the Soviet Union was aligned with India.¹¹⁸ The letter stated that if India was allowed to achieve its military objectives (as stated by Nixon), and the Soviet Union did not exercise its considerable influence in New Delhi to bring this about, that the recent improvements in US-Soviet relations would be under threat.¹¹⁹ Prior to sending the letter, Kissinger met with Vorontsov, who was the senior Soviet diplomat in Washington during Dobrynin's absence. In the meeting, Kissinger made it clear that Nixon believed South Asia to be of utmost importance that unilateral action such as that undertaken by India would not be tolerated.¹²⁰

Once Brezhnev's reply to Nixon's message affirmed the importance of a settlement with the Awami League, Nixon and Kissinger looked to increase the stakes further. A second aspect of the December 8th measures was the movement of Naval Task Force 74 into the Indian Ocean.¹²¹ The Task Force was formidable and comprised of the nuclear aircraft carrier the USS Enterprise, a helicopter carrier, seven destroyers and an oiler.¹²² Its stated objective was to react to Indian interference with US vessels in international waters and more pointedly to evacuate US nationals from East Pakistan. The real intent, however, was to demonstrate to both India and the Soviet Union that the US would not stand by should India invade West Pakistan.¹²³

Also, on December 8th, Kissinger told Nixon that he had found an agreement made between President Kennedy and President Ayub Khan in 1962 that pledged US support to Pakistan in the case

¹¹⁶ Kissinger *White House Years* p913.

¹¹⁷ FRUS 1969-73 Vol XI Doc. 229 Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger 5/12/71.

¹¹⁸ FRUS 1969-73 Vol XI Doc. 236. Nixon to Brezhnev 6/12/71.

¹¹⁹ FRUS 1969-73 Vol XI Doc. 236. Nixon to Brezhnev 6/12/71.

¹²⁰ FRUS 1969-73 Vol E7 Doc. 160 Conversation between Kissinger and Vorontsov.

¹²¹ National Security Archive Briefing Book 79 "The Tilt" Doc. 33 NSC List: "Courses of Actions Associated with India/Pakistan Crisis 8/12/71.

¹²² Bass *Blood Telegram* p311.

¹²³ Kissinger *White House Years*, p905.

of Indian aggression.¹²⁴ Keen to use anything at their disposal to not only put pressure upon the Soviets, but also to quell congressional dissent headed by Senator Ted Kennedy, on December 10th Kissinger read out the US Aide Memoire promising to come to Pakistan's aid to Vorontsov. The message was accompanied by a warning to the Ambassador that the US was prepared to honour the pledge.¹²⁵ To underscore the threat, Nixon sent another letter to Brezhnev calling on the Soviets to press for a ceasefire on the Western border and Kissinger instructed his assistant, General Al Haig, to call Vorontsov to tell him that the US would consider further movement of the US Naval Task Force should the Soviets reply in an unsatisfactory manner.¹²⁶ In response, Vorontsov repeated the Soviet line that they were doing all they could to counsel restraint in New Delhi.

An instant Soviet reply was not forthcoming, so Nixon and Kissinger informed Vorontsov of a deadline of midday on December 12th for a response, else the US would take unilateral action in mobilising its forces.¹²⁷ When no message arrived by 11:30am, Nixon used a hot line between Washington and Moscow to call on Brezhnev to support the immediate calling of a ceasefire in both East and West Pakistan and for negotiations to begin immediately afterward. Once the deadline passed without a response, Nixon ordered the Naval Task force to move past the Strait of Malacca and into the Bay of Bengal.¹²⁸ Kissinger believed such a symbolic and threatening move was necessary as there were only 72 hours left before West Pakistan "would be swept into the maelstrom".¹²⁹ Although the statement is widely disputed, 72 hours was the time-frame within which Kissinger claims the Indian army could have shifted its forces from the East to the West and destroyed Pakistan's defensive capabilities to make it ripe for total destruction. In Kissinger's estimation, the US needed to continue ordering the Naval Task force into the Bay of Bengal in order to demonstrate how far out of hand the situation could get.¹³⁰ In short, the Americans needed to demonstrate to the Soviets that they were capable of recklessness and were willing to go to war over West Pakistan. In this context, it is perhaps not surprising that Kissinger considered West Pakistan the Nixon Administration's "Rhineland".¹³¹

¹²⁴ FRUS 1969-72 Vol E7 Doc. 165 Conversation between Nixon, Kissinger and Attorney General Mitchell 8/12/71.

¹²⁵ Kissinger p905.

¹²⁶ FRUS 1969-72 Vol XI Doc 269 Nixon to Brezhnev 10/12/71.

¹²⁷ Kissinger *White House Years* p908.

¹²⁸ Kissinger p910.

¹²⁹ Kissinger p912

¹³⁰ Kissinger p912.

¹³¹ FRUS 1969-73 Vol E7 Doc 168. Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger 9/12/71.

Occurring alongside help for the Pakistani war effort and sending warnings to the Soviets was the continued imperative to protect the link to China. Chinese support for Pakistan had fallen away over the course of 1971 (see chapter 4) and the Chinese were not willing to match Soviet support for India with their own treaty of friendship with Pakistan. Despite awareness of reports to this effect, Nixon and Kissinger continued to believe that the Chinese army could attack India and based policy upon the assumption that the Chinese could walk away from the rapprochement. The Chinese had no intention of intervening in the South Asian conflict, barring the unlikely event that India did indeed mount a major offensive in West Pakistan, and there is no evidence for an assumption that they expected any more of an assertive position from the United States.¹³²

Nixon and Kissinger remained fixed in the belief that the “opening to China” was contingent upon their ability to demonstrate the US’s worth as a reliable ally.¹³³ A major aspect of the decision to move the Naval Task Force was for the benefit of the Chinese and to attempt to chide Peking into moving its forces up to the frontier with Pakistan.¹³⁴ In his meeting with Gandhi in November, Nixon warned of a possible Chinese response to an Indian invasion; by December he was trying to engineer the threat of such a response. In fact, when Chinese troop movements did not follow the movement of the Task Force, Nixon and Kissinger made their request to the Chinese explicit. On December 10th the President asked Kissinger to tell China’s Ambassador to the UN, Huang Hua that “it would be very helpful if they move some forces or threaten to move some forces”.¹³⁵

On the morning of December 12th, Kissinger’s frustration was boiling over. In conversation, he explained to Nixon his anger at the lack of Chinese troop movement, exclaiming that “We are the ones who have been operating against our public opinion, at the very edge of legality...if they want to talk they should just move some troops”.¹³⁶ However, midway through the conversation Kissinger’s Deputy, Al Haig, interrupted the pair to bring the news that the Chinese had requested a meeting in New York, a move that Kissinger assumed meant that “[N]o question they’re going to move”.¹³⁷ Having, in his mind, persuaded the Chinese into making a stand against India, Kissinger pushed Nixon to back Peking should the Soviets react in kind against China.¹³⁸ Kissinger discussed

¹³² Garthoff, R (1994) *Detente and Confrontation* the Brookings Institution: Washington DC p282.

¹³³ Kissinger, *White House Years* p895.

¹³⁴ FRUS 1969-73 Vol E7 Doc. 1768 Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger 9/12/71.

¹³⁵ FRUS 1969-73 Vol E7 Doc. 172 Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger 10/12/71.

¹³⁶ FRUS 1969-73 Vol E7 Doc 177 Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger 12/12/71.

¹³⁷ FRUS 1969-73 Vol E7 Doc 177 Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger 12/12/71; Raghavan 1971 p256.

¹³⁸ FRUS 1969-73 Vol E7 Doc 177 Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger 12/12/71; Bass *Blood Telegram* p306.

with Nixon the possibility of calling off the Chinese movement, but reasoned that the Chinese likely could not be called off, and if they attempted to do so, the China initiative would be “down the drain”.¹³⁹ Kissinger advised, to Nixon’s agreement, that if the Russians were allowed to face down the Chinese, and India to destroy West Pakistan, the balance of world power would shift decidedly against the U.S. for decades, and possibly forever.¹⁴⁰ Kissinger believed that if the Soviets moved against China and did not back down in the face of American retaliation, this scenario could be the “final showdown”.¹⁴¹ Nixon and Kissinger openly considered the prospect of nuclear war over consequences that stemmed from the civil war in Pakistan.

In the event, the Chinese did not want to convey a message about the moving of troops to the border with East Pakistan. Since Nixon and Kissinger were due to leave for the Azores to meet with French President Georges Pompidou on December 12th, it was Al Haig that travelled to New York to meet with Huang Hua. Rather, the Chinese Ambassador to the UN simply restated the Chinese call for a ceasefire in both wings of Pakistan to be followed by an immediate withdrawal of Indian troops; there was no mention of China moving its own troops to threaten India.¹⁴² In the end, the only action China took against India came after Pakistani forces had surrendered in Dacca. Zhou made a condemnatory speech against India and the Chinese delivered a protest note to New Delhi at the infiltration of a handful of India troops into China over the Sikkim border.¹⁴³ The Chinese had reluctantly accepted the *fait accompli* in East Pakistan. That China did not wish to make a military move against India, one that could provoke a Soviet retaliation, should have been plain for Nixon and Kissinger to see. In reality, the Chinese were not expecting any major action on the part of the US, and the rapprochement was not in danger.¹⁴⁴ However as with the other two aspects of their policy, it was an insistence upon the accuracy of their assumptions that guided Nixon and Kissinger into such a reckless, and ultimately unfounded, policy.

Despite a lack of Chinese movement, Task Force 74 continued to steam toward the Bay of Bengal until the evening of December 15th before word reached the US Embassy in New Delhi that Pakistan

¹³⁹ FRUS 1969-73 Vol E7 Doc 177 Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger 12/12/71.

¹⁴⁰ FRUS 1969-73 Vol E7 Doc 177 Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger 12/12/71; Bass *Blood Telegram* p307.

¹⁴¹ FRUS 1969-73 Vol E7 Doc 177 Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger 12/12/71; Bass *Blood Telegram* p307.

¹⁴² FRUS 1969-73 Vol E7 Doc 177 Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger 12/12/71; Bass *Blood Telegram* p307. Bass p309.

¹⁴³ Bass, *Blood Telegram* p310.

¹⁴⁴ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation* p281.

was due to surrender the following day.¹⁴⁵ Following the surrender and India's subsequent unilateral declaration of a ceasefire along the western border, Kissinger triumphantly told Nixon "Congratulations, Mr President you saved West Pakistan".¹⁴⁶ Kissinger believed that the ceasefire had come about as a result of the White House's insistence upon raising the stakes with the Soviet Union, who had in turn insisted that India not continue to fight in the West.¹⁴⁷ Nixon's Assistant for National Security Affairs believed that he had prevented West Pakistan from being destroyed, upheld the international order and balance of power, and had preserved the rapprochement with China. Secondary to these concerns was the increasingly troubled relationship with the UK, where stark disagreements came to a head during UN deliberations over the war in December 1971.

6. Fall out at the UN, December 1971

Differences between the Nixon Administration on one side, and the UK government and the State Department on the other with regards to South Asia dated back to the summer of 1970, when Nixon announced the "one-time exception" to the Johnson Administration's arms embargo on South Asia. At the time, neither State, nor the FCO saw the White House's justification, one of increasing influence in Islamabad, as a rational explanation (see chapter 2). Both bureaucracies leaned in favour of India as a function of its size and its potential for UK and US investment. An exception to the arms embargo in favour of Pakistan, it was thought, would only jeopardise relations with India and could spark an arms race on the subcontinent. Until the global dimensions of Nixon's dealings with Yahya Khan became known in July 1971, both the UK government and the State Department saw the crisis in South Asia as a strictly regional affair. The British government and State Department also shared a less fatalistic view of the Indo-Soviet treaty and the wider intentions of India and the Soviet Union with regard to the crisis in South Asia. The FCO interpreted the treaty to mean that the Indians could publicly demonstrate that they had powerful international friends, whilst the Soviets increased their influence in New Delhi and ability to counsel restraint over East Pakistan. The UK and the State Department also agreed on an assessment that the Chinese government was pulling back from their support for Pakistan, and were not about to enter a large-scale war over East Pakistan.

By the time India invaded East Pakistan in late November 1971, the State Department had been completely cut out of the White House's decision making in South Asia. On November 23rd, Kissinger told UK Ambassador Lord Cromer that communication on South Asia was on an "eyes of the Prime

¹⁴⁵ Bass p318.

¹⁴⁶ FRUS 1969-73 Vol E7 Doc 191 Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger 15/12/71

¹⁴⁷ Kissinger *White House Years* p913.

Minister only basis” and suggested that the State Department’s communications be taken less seriously because the President “felt more strongly” about South Asia and that State would provide a “less clear opinion”.¹⁴⁸ These requests reinforced, in stark terms, Cromer’s cable of November 12th that described the manner in which American foreign policy was being carried out. The State Department’s irrelevance in policymaking over South Asia had been affirmed, which meant that the UK government had to deal directly with a White House whose understanding of the South Asian crisis differed wildly from their own.

In his conversation with Cromer, Kissinger explicitly set out the White House’s position on the crisis. He said that Nixon’s belief was that it was India’s aim to “achieve a total collapse of Pakistan with East Pakistan wholly under Indian influence and West Pakistan so withered as to be no more significant than say Afghanistan”.¹⁴⁹ He also told Cromer of the White House’s assumption that the Chinese were ready to intervene, saying that “China was not prepared to stand by and watch Pakistan disintegrate” and that the “Chinese would certainly intervene to prevent this occurring”.¹⁵⁰ These calculations were at odds with a British policy that had not bought into the White House’s geopolitical designs and had already embarked upon a tilt toward India.¹⁵¹

As soon as war was officially declared between India and Pakistan on December 3rd, the different policy trajectories of the British and American governments manifested themselves in disagreements at the UN Security Council. UK Ambassador to the UN, Sir Colin Crowe, reported that his US counterpart, George Bush, was expecting instructions to call for an immediate end to hostilities to be followed by an immediate Indian withdrawal from East Pakistan.¹⁵² A day later Bush was instructed to brand India as the “major aggressor” before introducing a motion that supported the Pakistani position in favour of a ceasefire and Indian withdrawals.¹⁵³ The British opinion was that a ceasefire to be followed by Indian withdrawals would only succeed in provoking a Soviet veto on the grounds that it was Pakistan that was the aggressor on the subcontinent.¹⁵⁴ The British insisted that only a unanimous Security Council resolution would have any impact upon the war in South Asia. This position allowed the British to maintain their tacit sympathy for the Indian predicament

¹⁴⁸ UKNA PREM 15/570 conversation between Cromer and Kissinger 23/11/71.

¹⁴⁹ UKNA PREM 15/570 conversation between Cromer and Kissinger 23/11/71.

¹⁵⁰ UKNA PREM 15/570 conversation between Cromer and Kissinger 23/11/71.

¹⁵¹ Smith “Coming Down on the Winning Side” p460.

¹⁵² UKNA PREM 15/570 Crowe to FCO 3/12/71.

¹⁵³ Scott *Allies Apart* p94.

¹⁵⁴ UKNA PREM 15/570 Stretton to Crowe 5/12/71.

whilst justifying disagreements with the Americans on the basis that Soviet vetoes made UN resolutions in support of Pakistan pointless.

The US motion was put to a vote on December 4th. It attracted eleven affirmative votes, two abstentions from the UK and France and two negative votes from Poland and, crucially, the veto power of the Soviet Union. Within the continued spirit of confronting UK-US issues head on, Heath sent a letter to Nixon the following day in an attempt to solve what he referred to as “a very difficult situation in the Security Council”.¹⁵⁵ The Prime Minister explained that, as well as having no positive effect on the ground, a vetoed resolution would only succeed in pushing India and the Soviet Union closer to one another and encourage future obstinacy.¹⁵⁶ Heath then asked Nixon for a delay in a second vote planned for later that evening in New York. The British position followed advice received from its High Commissioner in New Delhi, Terrence Garvey. Garvey cautioned the government against endorsing the American position and to bear in mind the long term importance to the UK of favourable relations with India and Pakistan.¹⁵⁷ He also reminded the government that although he did not condone Indian actions in late November, it was Pakistan that had pushed the refugees over the border into India, and accordingly the moral high ground remained with India.¹⁵⁸

Discussions at the UNSC quickly reached a stalemate; a vote on a similar resolution on December 6th produced the same result as that achieved two days earlier. The Americans, along with the Chinese, insisted that they would veto any resolution that did not contain provisions for a ceasefire and withdrawal, whilst the Soviets insisted they would veto anything that did.¹⁵⁹ For their part, the British were in a difficult position. Crowe explained to the FCO that whilst an insistence upon unanimity was defensible as long as there was a possibility of such an outcome, should the Soviets make clear that they would veto any resolution calling for a ceasefire, the British position could become untenable.¹⁶⁰ The British and French worked on a possible resolution, but to no avail. The British resolved to balance relations with India, and what they saw as the morally correct position with rapidly deteriorating relations with the US.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ UKNA PREM 15/570 Heath to Nixon 5/12/71; Scott p95.

¹⁵⁶ UKNA PREM 15/570 Heath to Nixon 5/12/71.

¹⁵⁷ UKNA PREM 15/570 Garvey to FCO 5/12/71.

¹⁵⁸ UKNA PREM 15/570 Garvey to FCO 5/12/71; Scott p93.

¹⁵⁹ Scott *Allies Apart* p95.

¹⁶⁰ UKNA PREM 15/570 Crowe to FCO 5/12/71

¹⁶¹ Scott p98.

As the crisis wore on, and once Nixon had authorised the movement of Naval Task Force 74, the White House made one last attempt to have the UK side with them on the Security Council. On December 12th Kissinger held a meeting with Cromer to candidly explain major aspects of the American policy and to exert great pressure on the British to follow the American lead. The Assistant for National Security Affairs told the Ambassador for the first time about the 1962 aide memoire that promised US support to Pakistan in the event of an attack by India. Kissinger then followed up by revealing that US intelligence sources had supported Nixon and his assumptions that Gandhi's intention was to destroy West Pakistan's military capabilities in order to facilitate a "definitive acquisition of Kashmir".¹⁶² Kissinger said that the US policy was aimed at "scaring off" an Indian attack in the West and that the US must stand firm against the overt support that the Soviets were providing to India. He also relayed Nixon's "distress" at the UK's position both in the UNSC and the General Assembly, where the UK had also abstained and said the White House was interpreting the UK's position to be a result of its "new found Europeanism".¹⁶³ Kissinger made it clear to Cromer that any vote either against the U.S. or in abstention at the next UNSC vote "would be regarded as unfriendly".¹⁶⁴

Kissinger's remarks sparked confusion in Downing Street. Heath's private secretary for Foreign Affairs, Peter Moon, highlighted three major British concerns with regard to US policy. He was unsure of what exactly the 1962 aide memoir committed the United States to in the event of an Indian attack and was personally unaware of any such commitment. Moon also questioned the US intelligence sources that claimed India was about to annex the entirety of Kashmir, as these did not concur with British intelligence assessments. He was also unsure of how the US proposed to scare off an Indian attack in the West; it appears the British had not interpreted the movement of the Naval Task Force in such a way.¹⁶⁵ Despite knowledge of the different attitudes held in London and Washington, the actions of the White House still caught the British government off-guard.

In his meeting with Kissinger, Cromer quickly refuted the accusation that Britain's "Europeanism" had led them to their current policy stance in South Asia.¹⁶⁶ The remainder of the recriminations were carried out by Heath himself, on the advice of Moon, in a second letter to Nixon within a week. Heath stuck to the British line that any vetoed resolution would be of no value and that it was unfair for Kissinger to say that any abstention or vote against the U.S. would be regarded as unfriendly at a

¹⁶² UKNA PREM 15/570 Cromer to FCO 12/12/71.

¹⁶³ UKNA PREM 15/570 Cromer to FCO 12/12/71.

¹⁶⁴ UKNA PREM 15/570 Cromer to FCO 12/12/71.

¹⁶⁵ UKNA PREM 15/570 Moon to Heath 12/12/71; Scott p103.

¹⁶⁶ UKNA PREM 15/570 Cromer to FCO 12/12/71.

point where the UK had not even seen the latest US proposal.¹⁶⁷ Heath candidly explained the British tilt toward India. He argued that since India would undoubtedly be of increased relative importance in a subcontinent of three nations, the UK and US “should avoid actions which either antagonise the Indian government to no good effect or push it further into the arms of the Soviet Union”.¹⁶⁸ In reference to the 1962 aide memoire, Heath made clear that he personally had no knowledge of its existence and had had no idea that the US was predicating its policy upon such a commitment.¹⁶⁹

The letter was written in a similar tone to that sent by Heath to Nixon in November expressing grave concern over a lack of consultation that did not allow American allies time to properly respond. The December 12th letter implicitly emphasised the fact that the White House’s surprise announcements continued to cause great difficulty for the UK-US relationship. Disagreements over policy in South Asia had exacerbated British concerns over both a gap in interests and the breakdown in communication with the White House. The conflict in South Asia had shot to prominence within UK-US relations and was another high-level grievance that the two parties had to add to others that were due to be discussed at Bermuda on December 20th and 21st.

Once the conflict in South Asia had come to an end, Lord Cromer reflected the British view in London from the Embassy in Washington. On the substance of US policy he cast doubt upon the intelligence sources quoted by Kissinger, claiming that his Embassy’s contacts within the CIA had suggested that the intelligence did not match Kissinger’s conclusion.¹⁷⁰ He also commented upon Nixon and Kissinger’s “emotional desire” to see the Soviets and Russians isolated at the Security Council, something which fed their outrage at the British position calling for unanimity.¹⁷¹ In terms of communication with the Administration, the Ambassador complained of an inability to speak with the State Department over South Asia. He concluded that, completely unaware of the policy or tactics being employed by the White House, the bureaucracy was understandably anxious not to expose its level of ignorance on the issue.¹⁷² Over South Asia, UK and US interests had continued to diverge, and communication had continued to break down.

¹⁶⁷ UKNA PREM 15/570 Heath to Nixon 12/12/71.

¹⁶⁸ UKNA PREM 15/570 Heath to Nixon 12/12/71.

¹⁶⁹ UKNA PREM 15/570 Heath to Nixon 12/12/71. PREM 15/570 FCO research paper 16/12/71. The UK government launched an investigation into the 1962 aide memoire, which reported back to Heath only after India had called a ceasefire in West. It concluded that the British government had been shown a copy of the aide memoire in May 1963, but that it was never published and remained secret.

¹⁷⁰ UKNA PREM 15/560 Cromer to FCO 17/12/71.

¹⁷¹ UKNA PREM 15/560 Cromer to FCO 17/12/71.

¹⁷² UKNA PREM 15/560 Cromer to FCO 17/12/71.

Conclusion

The UK-US relationship in the final months of 1971 was in a state of increasingly rapid deterioration. The secretive nature of the White House foreign policy-making system had led to the British government feeling neglected by its closest ally. Surprise announcements of the China initiative and the new economic policy in July and August respectively meant that the British had suffered at first hand the new style of policy-making in Washington. However, the British still chose to tread carefully with the Americans in November in order to maintain their hopes of being able to maintain strong relationships with both Europe and the US. Frank discussions were had between Ambassador Cromer and Henry Kissinger in November, but the atmosphere remained friendly as the British were keen to promote the impression that bilateral relations were not strained. Despite a realisation in London that the congeniality and candour that was an early feature of the Heath-Nixon relationship had been lost, the British were keen not to openly blame the Americans for the breakdown.

As the Indian army entered East Pakistan in mid-November 1971, the UK government and the White House were on very different policy trajectories in South Asia. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's visits to London and Washington in late October and early November 1971 demonstrated the huge differences in approach toward the crisis on different sides of the Atlantic. Having developed a warm relationship with Gandhi during his trip to India in January, Heath was sympathetic toward India's plight with regard to the flow of refugees from East Pakistan, and undertook to continue his strongly worded correspondence with Yahya Khan. In sharp contrast, Nixon and Kissinger heaped pressure upon Gandhi to the point of using an agreement, of which she was not aware, from Yahya to withdraw troops. They insinuated that India could be the subject of a Chinese attack that the US would do nothing to prevent.¹⁷³

Despite evidently opposing positions, Heath-Nixon correspondence with regard to the matter was generally positive in tone. Although Heath appeared to be demonstrating sympathy for Indira Gandhi's domestic position, Nixon assured the prime minister that his impressions of Gandhi were largely in line with the Prime Minister's. Amid a deteriorating UK-US relationship, it seems that both Downing Street and the White House were very keen to focus upon areas of agreement in South Asia. Heath and Nixon again failed to air their disagreements in a telephone conversation on November 25th. Prior to the escalation of conflict on the subcontinent, the issue was one of many on the table and secondary to the major concern of the time, namely the new US economic policy. It was only in December that it became the most pressing issue between the two countries.

¹⁷³ FRUS Vol XI South Asia Doc. 179. Memorandum for the President's file 4/11/71.

It is within the context of opposing opinions on policy over the subcontinent and a breakdown in communication between London and Washington that disagreements over South Asia were exacerbated. Once the scale of the conflict increased on December 3rd, UK-US differences became explicit and public. Previous attempts to disguise disagreements may have contributed to the terseness of communication between Downing Street and the White House as both were surprised by the stubbornness of the other's position. The British, tacitly at least, supported the Indian position and were unhappy at American insistence at pushing through UN resolutions that were certain to draw a Soviet veto. Meanwhile, the White House saw the British refusal to support the US position as an "unfriendly act".

As had been the case throughout 1971, the British simply did not understand the reasoning for, or the meaning of the White House's policy. The significance of the power play that Nixon and Kissinger were making in sending Naval Task Force 74, initially at least, seemed lost on the British. Heath's Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Peter Moon could not "connect the dots" linking the movement of the Task Force and the stated American desire to ward off Indian aggression against West Pakistan. The major reason for this was just that such a policy made very little sense to the British. British Intelligence reports had indicated that India was not intent upon destroying West Pakistan, and Moon, along with Ambassador Cromer called into question the veracity of Nixon and Kissinger's sources claiming that India wanted to annex Kashmir. The thought of making such a strong move to prevent a threat that likely did not exist seemed illogical. The British, at every turn, were unsure as to what the White House may decide to do. They were caught completely unaware by the revelation that the US, via a 1962 aide-memoire, was committed to the defence of Pakistan in the event of an attack by India. They were then subsequently unsure of the extent to which the US may act to honour such an agreement. White House policy had left the British government bewildered, uninformed and full of trepidation as to what the next US move could be.

In December 1971, the UK and US governments thus found themselves on opposite sides of a hot war in South Asia. The British assessment of the reasons for the breakdown in UK-US relations as being ones of differing interests and poor communication were largely accurate. Unburdened by concerns over any China initiative and personal biases against India, the British viewed the conflict as a regional issue where the British national interest would be best served by a tacit tilt in favour of India. In contrast, the White House was conducting policy on a global level that saw events in South Asia as possibly leading to a "final showdown" between the superpowers. These differences were compounded by the secretive White House foreign policymaking system that had ceased meaningful communication with the State Department with regard to the issue in August, which had in turn led to the State Department's refusal to communicate with the British Embassy over South Asia in

December. Within a UK-US relationship that had relied upon close consultation and candour in the post war era, it is perhaps no surprise that relations reached a very low ebb in December 1971. There was much work to be done at the upcoming Bermuda summit due to commence on December 20th, just three days after the end of the war in South Asia.

Chapter 6: The Bermuda Summit and Beyond

Introduction

As the South Asian crisis began to reach its climax in November 1971, the FCO identified problems in the UK-US relationship as being ones of interests and communication.¹ The final chapter of this thesis assesses the impact of the South Asian crisis upon the wider UK-US relationship and the extent to which problems of diverging interests and poor communication remained. The chapter considers the period from the end of the South Asian crisis in December 1971 and subsequent Bermuda summit to the next UK-US summit meeting in Washington held on the first two days of February, 1973. The timeframe has been chosen in order to add nuance to the notion that the period between the end of 1971 and February 1973 was one of renewed amity within the Anglo-American relationship.²

The chapter has three sections. The first focuses upon top-level UK-US relations at the Bermuda summit and through 1972 until the Washington summit in February 1973. The section assesses the aims and expectations of both sides going into the talks, before providing an analysis of the substance of the talks and the degree of success which they were perceived to have had in terms of reaffirming the strength of the UK-US relationship.³ The section then moves on to consider the value that the summit meeting had for the UK government, as diplomats developed a deeper appreciation of the manner in which foreign policy was being developed and delivered in Washington. Finally, consideration is made of the effect that the secretive White House policymaking system continued to have on the relationship during a period up to February 1973 of Anglo-American amity.

The second section provides an epilogue for the events on the ground on the subcontinent after the South Asian crisis. The section assesses the contrasting situations that the Indian and Pakistani governments found themselves in on a subcontinent of three nations following the de facto independence of Bangladesh. Prime Minister Gandhi led an India that was the unquestioned leading power on the subcontinent in terms of size, population, wealth and military capabilities. In contrast Bhutto took control of a country in turmoil and looked to China to firm up international support for a state that had lost more than half of its population. The section assesses the alignments of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh relative to China and the Soviet Union in particular. In order to provide

¹ UK National Archives (hereafter UKNA) Foreign and Commonwealth office Files (hereafter FCO) 82/66 Draft Steering brief for Bermuda summit 24/11/71.

² Spelling, A (2009) "Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations 1970-1974: A Reappraisal" *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Vol 20 No 4 pp638-658 p647.

³ UKNA FCO 82/71 Joint UK-US Communique, Bermuda 21/12/71.

context for later discussion of UK-US relations with regard to them, the section provides analysis of the Simla Agreement signed as a peace deal between India and Pakistan in June 1972, and the issue of Pakistan's delayed recognition of Bangladesh.

Section three focuses upon the UK-US relationship in South Asia as an example of continued issues of interests and communication within the Anglo-American relationship. Like the first section, it follows events chronologically from the talks at the Bermuda summit until February 1973. The section looks at the manner in which the UK and US governments dealt with what they referred to as "tactical differences" over South Asia in discussions at Bermuda. The section assesses how, up until the Bermuda summit, the UK government remained unaware of the reasoning behind aspects of US policy in South Asia, with special reference to the movement of the Naval Task Force 74 into the Bay of Bengal. The recognition of Bangladesh is then presented as an example of how the post-Bermuda relationship between Heath and Nixon could function effectively on an issue where both sides took different approaches whilst keeping the other informed of their opinion. The section then assesses the continued differences in the UK and US' approach to and policy in South Asia before finally focusing attention on how continued White House secrecy impacted upon UK-US relations in South Asia.

1. UK-US Relations- December 1971-February 1973

The UK-US Bermuda summit, held December 20th-21st 1971, was one of a number of bilateral summit meetings held with allies by President Nixon in late 1971 and early 1972. The meetings were held in an effort to improve bilateral relationships that had been damaged by the two "Nixon Shocks" of a new policy toward communist China and the imposition of a 10% import surcharge on international exports to the US. The Bermuda talks occurred at a time of uncertainty within the UK-US relationship. Alongside the unpredictable nature of White House policymaking, Britain's global prestige was continuing to decline, its exact role within Europe was still to be decided, and Nixon's Assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger, believed that the post-war "special relationship" between the UK and the US was weakening.⁴

The aim of the White House was to recognise, and have Prime Minister Edward Heath agree that the evolving nature of the UK-US relationship, and the UK's pending entry into the EEC did not mean that the strength of UK-US consultation needed to be compromised. Kissinger laid out four areas for the President to focus upon; firstly that new US relationships with Communist powers such as China

⁴ Nixon Presidential Library (hereafter NPL) NSC VIP Visits Heath Bermuda 71 Memo from Kissinger to Nixon 18/12/71.

would continue to evolve, but not at the expense of relations with western allies; Secondly, that disagreements over economic policy, for example should not have an impact in other areas of the relationship; Thirdly to assure Heath that the US would continue its support for European unity in return for an understanding that such a stance created trading problems for the US; And finally that the US would continue its “unique” relationship with the UK, despite the inevitability of the UK acquiring a more European orientation to its policy.⁵ Given the fiery reaction of the UK government to several US foreign policy decisions over the course of 1971, on paper the four points appeared to be a tall order to achieve agreement upon. However, it seems that Nixon and Kissinger believed that the cordial relationship the President had struck with the Prime Minister in late 1970 would be a great aid in discussing these issues frankly. Nonetheless, Kissinger reminded Nixon prior to the summit that Heath “will be somewhat testy about our policies”.⁶

Heath, too, was prepared for his fellow head of government to be angry at the course of UK foreign policy over the previous six months. The Prime Minister knew that, in the wake of British abstentions and its refusal to support the White House over South Asia in the UN Security Council that he was likely to encounter an ill-tempered Richard Nixon. In a despatch on December 17th, UK Ambassador to the US, Lord Cromer had warned that both Nixon and Kissinger were in a despondent mood after the UK had refused to support their position in the manner in which they expected, namely to support American calls for a ceasefire between India and Pakistan.⁷ During the Indo-Pakistan war, Nixon believed that his administration’s encouragement of the UK to push forward with entry to the EC had contributed to the willingness of the British government to adopt a divergent policy to that of the US.⁸ Therefore, Cromer warned the Prime Minister both of the Americans’ belief that they interpreted UK policy as being motivated by a drive toward Europeanism, as well as their unsubstantiated belief that they had been more frank with the British than the British had been in return.⁹ As had been the case prior to the December war on the subcontinent, Heath’s overriding aim was to smooth over relations with the White House and build on the personal relations that had been developed with Nixon a year earlier.¹⁰

As planned, the private discussions between Heath and Nixon covered a wide spectrum of concurrent foreign policy issues ranging from Rhodesia to negotiations on Strategic Arms Limitation

⁵ NPL NSC VIP Visits Heath Bermuda 71 Memo from Kissinger to Nixon 18/12/71.

⁶ NPL NSC VIP Visits Heath Bermuda 71 Memo from Kissinger to Nixon 18/12/71.

⁷ UKNA FCO 37/754 Cromer to FCO 17/12/71.

⁸ UKNA Files of the Prime Minister (hereafter PREM) 15/570 Cromer to FCO 12/12/71.

⁹ UKNA FCO 37/754 Cromer to FCO 17/12/71.

¹⁰ UKNA FCO 82/66 Steering Brief for Bermuda meetings 6/12/71.

(SALT). The talks were informal and meandering at times. At one point, whilst discussing the prospect of a Soviet-proposed European Security Conference in 1972, Nixon and Heath began bemoaning the intellectual establishment on both sides of the Atlantic that annoyingly opposed their policies on Vietnam and Rhodesia respectively.¹¹ On substance, Nixon reiterated his line of support for the UK's entry into the EEC whilst emphasising the fact that this would mean the US would take a short term economic hit. Nixon told Heath that as the only European nation with a global outlook it was important that the UK take a leadership role in a united Europe.¹² The Prime Minister assured the President that the UK would work toward a greater degree of political cooperation within the EEC. He said that although many details would need to be worked out in trade negotiations between the EEC and the US, "the particular relationship between Britain and the United States need not change in any way".¹³

In a conversation on December 21st, the two leaders affirmed their friendly relationship and drew comparisons between their being able to discuss global affairs at Bermuda, and those held at the same venue between their illustrious predecessors Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt.¹⁴ Heath and Nixon wished for the return of a frankness in relations between their respective governments that had been lost in the run-up to and during the South Asian crisis. The Bermuda meeting was seen as the beginning of a new phase for the relationship between Heath and Nixon's governments where candour within the UK-US relationship need not be harmed by the UK's turn toward Europe as a member of the EEC. Nixon affirmed Heath's assertion that the abiding nature of the Anglo-American relationship would continue, but added a more specific view of the nature of relations in future. The President remarked that "As Britain goes into Europe, there will be a new Europe", thereby focusing attention upon what the White House saw as a rapidly changing global context within which a new Europe and a new America would continue to engage in constructive economic competition with one another. For Nixon, it was "essential" that the western allies work together.¹⁵

The ongoing strength of an evolving UK-US relationship in the midst of a changing global environment was the theme for both leaders at speeches held at a dinner on the evening of December 20th aboard HMS Glamorgan. Nixon was candid in explaining that the British move toward Europe and the US' preference for bilateralism with the Soviet Union and China meant that

¹¹ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Conversation between Heath and Nixon 20/12/71.

¹² UKNA PREM 15/1268 Conversation between Heath and Nixon 20/12/71.

¹³ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Conversation between Heath and Nixon 20/12/71.

¹⁴ UKNA FCO 82/71 Exchange of remarks between Heath and Nixon 21/12/71.

¹⁵ UKNA FCO 82/71 Exchange of remarks between Heath and Nixon 21/12/71.

the UK-US relationship was fundamentally different to what it had been in the past.¹⁶ Détente with communist powers was welcomed by the British, but recent experience with Nixon Administration's policy toward China had reminded the British that the US no longer felt the need for consultation on major issues of foreign policy. The President emphasised the fact that the challenges faced in 1971 could not have been predicted a decade previous nor imagined in the wake of the Second World War, thus clearly making the point that the future nature and/or importance of the UK-US relationship could alter in the near future.¹⁷ For the present however, Nixon affirmed the idea that, despite what he referred to as "tactical differences", (to be discussed below) the fact that shared principles such as those of freedom, economic progress and peace alongside a shared language, history and culture would ensure that the UK-US relationship remained strong.¹⁸

The joint communique issued after the talks signalled Heath's agreement that the "closest possible degree of understanding" was necessary between the two nations and that the UK's entry into the EEC would strengthen the Atlantic Alliance during a time of fluidity in international politics.¹⁹ Press reaction tended to focus upon the theme of change within the relationship, which was interpreted as an indication of a loosening of UK-US ties as reported by *The Chicago Sun* and *Washington Daily News*.²⁰ *The Wall Street Journal* went even further, and downplayed Heath and Nixon's commitment to friendship but interpreted the meeting as an agreement between the two leaders that the two nations must go their separate ways in future, the UK toward Europe and the US toward China and Japan.²¹ Meanwhile, in London, *The Times* focused upon Heath's straightforwardness in having told the President that British entry into the EEC would change the nature of the UK-US relationship.²²

The talks were seen as a success by both governments and as the beginning of a new phase for relations between the Heath government and the Nixon Administration after the travails of 1971.²³ The meeting had met both sides' expectations as it showcased the UK and US' continued ability to maintain close consultation and a collaborative approach to global issues. The State Department was pleased that Heath demonstrated support for the President's visits to Moscow and Peking and did

¹⁶ UKNA FCO 82/71 Nixon's Toast for Heath 20/12/71.

¹⁷ UKNA FCO 82/71 Nixon's Toast for Heath 20/12/71.

¹⁸ UKNA FCO 82/71 Nixon's Toast for Heath 20/12/71.

¹⁹ UKNA FCO 82/71 Joint UK-US Communique, Bermuda 21/12/71.

²⁰ UKNA FCO 82/71 Cromer to FCO 22/12/71.

²¹ UKNA FCO 82/71 Cromer to FCO 22/12/71.

²² *The Times* (London) "Mr Heath and Mr Nixon Get to the Point" p1, issue 58356, Tuesday 21/12/71.

²³ UKNA FCO 82/182 FCO to Washington 7/1/72.

not believe conflicts of interests between Europe and the US to be inevitable.²⁴ Kissinger, too, was pleased with the way the talks went and by the positive atmosphere that had been created.²⁵ Permanent Undersecretary of State at the FCO, Sir Denis Greenhill agreed with the positive assessments and was particularly satisfied with the tone adopted by the two heads of government.²⁶

Heath and Nixon's amiable personal relationship had survived the disagreements of 1971 and both sides agreed to keep relations close and cordial whatever may change within global affairs. However, although the issue of the inevitability of diverging interests had been confronted, the issues that had affected communication between the two governments in 1971 had not. As has been discussed in previous chapters, the secretive White House foreign policy-making system that excluded the State Department had severely disrupted and confused lines of communication between the UK and the US in the second half of 1971. A number of cables had been sent from the British Embassy in Washington to the FCO with regard to the secretive machinery within the White House over the previous year. Most notable among these had been a despatch from then-Ambassador John Freeman in October 1970 that described Nixon and Kissinger's tendency to interpret the role of the executive branch very literally on important foreign policy affairs, to the point of not consulting with the State Department.²⁷ At that time, the FCO decided not to accept invitations from the White House to circumvent the US bureaucracy, due to a fear of damage to the historically advantageous system of having the State Department present British policy to the Executive.²⁸ After Anglo-American relations had deteriorated in the second half of 1971 Lord Cromer sent a despatch to London in November that described how foreign policy issues could not be dealt with without Kissinger's presence, and that many officials in Washington were describing the Nixon Administration's handling of foreign policy as a "mess".²⁹ Cromer's November cable had a discernible impact upon thinking in Whitehall and spurred a belief that the Bermuda summit needed to rekindle the "old kind of consultation" that had been lost following the "Nixon Shocks" of July and August 1971.³⁰

Despite knowledge of the White House's secretive style of policymaking it was not until the Bermuda summit that the wider foreign policy establishment could deepen their understanding of the US

²⁴ UKNA FCO 82/182 State Department Telegram shown to UK officials 5/1/72.

²⁵ UKNA FCO 82/183 Greenhill to Cromer 3/2/72.

²⁶ UKNA FCO 82/183 Greenhill to Cromer 3/2/72.

²⁷ UKNA FCO 7/1807 letter from Freeman to Greenhill 28/10/70.

²⁸ UKNA FCO 7/1807 letter from Greenhill to Freeman 15/10/71.

²⁹ UKNA FCO 82/65 Cromer to FCO 12/11/71.

³⁰ UKNA FCO 82/66 Draft Steering brief for Bermuda summit 24/11/71.

foreign policymaking at first-hand. A meeting between Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home and Kissinger at Bermuda exemplified the major problem in US-UK communications. Around midway through the discussion, Nixon's Assistant for National Security Affairs said that the White House "regretted" the fact that the UK may have received information about US policy on South Asia from other government sources, but forcefully told Douglas-Home "[T]he fact was that policy was made in the White House and this lesson must be learned".³¹ As Home was leaving the meeting, Kissinger reminded the Foreign Secretary to "not mention anything that he [Kissinger] had said to any other member of the United States delegation".³² These statements must have cast into doubt the substance of the meeting that Home had had with US Secretary of State Bill Rogers just hours earlier. In that meeting Rogers seemed to be (finally) up to speed on the reasoning behind the US policy in South Asia and repeated the White House's claim that India's war aim in December 1971 was to destroy West Pakistan. However, Rogers also spoke with Home about the possibility of a "signing off" resolution at the UN to recognise an end to the crisis, and speculated that future Soviet support for Mujib's new government in the newly seceded Bangladesh would further increase Soviet influence on the subcontinent.³³ By implication, Kissinger was asking Home to disregard the information that he had received from the head of the US State Department.

It was the meeting between Kissinger and Home on December 20th that Head of the North American Department at the FCO Hugh Overton described, in a letter to Deputy Undersecretary of State, Thomas Brimelow soon after the summit, as the greatest example of the White House's secretive mentality.³⁴ Overton noted that the most valuable aspect of the Bermuda summit had been the extent to which UK Ministers within the delegation had experienced, at first hand, the inner-workings of the Nixon administration.³⁵ Overton believed that further exposure to the White House's manner of operating had even had an impact on the Prime Minister, who would now be more conscious of what Overton described as a "curious blend of pragmatism and sensitivity" that governed Nixon and Kissinger's approach.³⁶ Overton also noted that, as a result of the concentration of foreign policymaking power within the White House, there had been a basic ambivalence within

³¹ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Meeting between Home and Kissinger 20/12/71.

³² UKNA PREM 15/1268 Meeting between Home and Kissinger 20/12/71.

³³ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Meeting between Home and Kissinger 20/12/71.

³⁴ UKNA FCO 82/71 Overton to Brimelow [undated].

³⁵ UKNA FCO 82/71 Overton to Brimelow [undated].

³⁶ UKNA FCO 82/71 Overton to Brimelow [undated].

US policymaking in that over the South Asian crisis, White House and State Department explanations for US policy had been very different.³⁷

US Ambassador to the UK, Walter Annenberg provided a neat summary of relations seven weeks after the Bermuda summit for the State Department. The Ambassador wrote that although the summit had succeeded in improving relations at the top level and that the UK-US relationship remained close in a number of areas, 1971 had nevertheless had a negative impact upon the relationship.³⁸ Annenberg cited the Opening to China, the New Economic Policy and different attitudes toward the December Indo-Pakistan war as having taken their toll on the relationship and as contributing “to a certain sense of estrangement” that had left Whitehall “stunned”. In Annenberg’s opinion, it was that the US felt the need to act unilaterally that was more hurtful to the British than the fact that they had done so.³⁹ The Ambassador believed that divergent interests and breakdowns in consultation meant that there was a feeling in London that the Anglo-American relationship was becoming less and less unique when compared to relations with other allies, particularly those in Europe.⁴⁰ Annenberg believed that this ongoing change in the nature of the Anglo-American relationship had accelerated pace over the 12 months to February 1972.

By 1972, the British had become experienced in dealing with the unique manner in which Kissinger conducted his diplomacy. In June 1971, and in an operation reminiscent of his later visit to Peking (see Chapter 4), Kissinger had visited the UK to provide a cover story for his visit to Paris for secret negotiations with representatives from North Vietnam.⁴¹ The UK government agreed to tell the press that Kissinger was engaged in meetings outside of London on the morning of June 26th, so that Kissinger could secretly fly to the French capital. Naturally, the State Department and US Ambassador in London, Annenberg, were not to be informed of Kissinger’s secret operation.⁴² As details of the operation continued to alter as dictated by the White House, officials within the British government, including Permanent Undersecretary Denis Greenhill had privately become agitated by Kissinger’s continual changing of his itinerary.⁴³ Having gained assurances from Cabinet Secretary Burke Trend that the UK would agree to facilitate future trips to Paris, Kissinger took up the offer in

³⁷ UKNA FCO 82/71 Overton to Brimelow [undated].

³⁸ US National Archives (hereafter USNA) State Department Central Files 1970-73 Record Group 59 (hereafter RG 59) Box 2658 POL 1 UK Annenberg to State 14/2/72.

³⁹ USNA RG 59 Box 2658 POL 1 UK Annenberg to State 14/2/72.

⁴⁰ USNA RG 59 Box 2658 POL 1 UK Annenberg to State 14/2/72.

⁴¹ UKNA PREM 15/1272 Cromer to FCO 1/6/71.

⁴² UKNA PREM 15/1272 Cromer to FCO 9/6/71.

⁴³ UKNA PREM 15/1272 Greenhill to Cromer 27/5/71.

September 1972.⁴⁴ Again the visit, and Kissinger's continually altering demands, provided an internal headache for the British government; an unsigned handwritten note spoke to his "obsession with secrecy".⁴⁵ To facilitate Kissinger's second secret trip to Paris, the British arranged for Kissinger to depart from Claridges Hotel early on the morning of September 15th and fly from RAF Northolt to Paris shortly after.⁴⁶ D.C. Tebbit, a minister at the British Embassy in Washington, believed that abetting Kissinger's penchant for elaborate ruses would help UK-US relations prosper in the long run.⁴⁷

Although by September 1972 the British had come to expect such behaviour from Kissinger, these episodes underscored the continued side-lining of the State Department. Effectively the British needed to be complicit in the US Executive's deception of the State Department and of the US Embassy in London if they were to be able to communicate effectively and maintain a constructive relationship with the White House. Whilst in the UK in September 1972, Kissinger held talks with Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home and Cabinet Secretary Burke Trend. The discussions were friendly and covered a number of issues, but Kissinger was keen to remind Home that his remarks on South Asia (to be discussed below), in particular, were of special delicacy due to his views not being known to some US officials.⁴⁸ The UK continued to walk on eggshells when it came to discussing US foreign policy with high ranking members of the Washington bureaucracy. These examples serve to illustrate the "sense of estrangement" that US Ambassador Walter Annenberg spoke of in his February 1972 despatch.⁴⁹

In December 1972 Lord Cromer sent a message of exasperation to the FCO from the British Embassy in Washington.⁵⁰ Cromer described the period up to December 1972 as "an extremely unsatisfactory patch in so far as keeping you in London abreast of top-level thinking here in Washington". Knowing that important foreign policy decisions were made exclusively within the White House, Cromer explained that in his forlorn attempts to gain information, he had gone "as far as to ask the State Department!" (Emphasis in original).⁵¹ The Ambassador reported that high-ranking officials at the State Department, including Secretary of State Bill Rogers had been extremely helpful, but given the

⁴⁴ UKNA PREM 15/1272 Trend to Heath 28/6/71.

⁴⁵ UKNA PREM 15/1273 Tebbit to Home 7/9/72.

⁴⁶ UKNA PREM 15/1273 FCO to Cromer 8/9/72.

⁴⁷ UKNA PREM 15/1273 Tebbit to Home 7/9/72.

⁴⁸ UKNA PREM 15/1273 Conversation between Home and Kissinger 14/9/72.

⁴⁹ USNA RG 59 Box 2658 POL 1 UK Annenberg to State 14/2/72.

⁵⁰ UKNA FCO 82/185 Cromer to FCO 20/12/72.

⁵¹ UKNA FCO 82/185 Cromer to FCO 20/12/72.

nature of the White House's policymaking machinery, doubt had to be cast "as to the true depth of their knowledge".⁵² For Cromer, the crux of the issue was that it continued to be the case that all enquiries ended up on Kissinger's desk, and were not answered during his frequent periods of absence. For instance, in December 1972 Kissinger, along with his Assistant Al Haig were in Paris negotiating with a delegation from North Vietnam⁵³ and the UK government continued to struggle to gain information on US foreign policy from the Nixon Administration.

Alex Spelling has argued that, after the UK-US relationship was publicly reaffirmed at the Bermuda summit in December 1971, 1972 saw the UK-US relationship return to a period of stability that lasted well into 1973.⁵⁴ Spelling cites in support of this conclusion success in the re-negotiation of the US use of UK facilities on Malta, Nixon's backing for Heath over the troubles in Northern Ireland and particularly Heath's support for the White House's stepping up of the bombing campaign in North Vietnam after March 1972.⁵⁵ By the end of 1972, Heath's standing in Washington was at a career high as the UK and the US governments headed toward another bilateral summit in February 1973.⁵⁶ Kissinger believed the 1973 visit to be the most important of Nixon's contacts with European leaders throughout 1973 as it set the tone for relations between the US and the newly expanded EC. Unlike for the talks at Bermuda, the briefs prepared in advance did not contain sections assessing the state of the UK-US relationship. In fact, the state of the relationship was not something that diplomats felt the need to address. Rather the briefs, and the talks themselves were focused upon the future of US-EEC relations, and Nixon demonstrated deep gratitude for Heath's support on various issues throughout 1972.⁵⁷ The Bermuda summit succeeded in drawing a line under the public disagreements of December 1971 but had not addressed the impact that the secretive formation of White House foreign policy was having upon UK-US relations.

2. A New Reality in South Asia: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh

Following the surrender of Pakistani forces in Dacca on December 16th 1971 and the calling of a ceasefire on the border between India and West Pakistan a day later, India emerged as the most powerful state on the subcontinent. Victory demonstrated Indian strength in the face of US and

⁵² UKNA FCO 82/185 Cromer to FCO 20/12/72.

⁵³ UKNA FCO 82/185 Cromer to FCO 20/12/72.

⁵⁴ Spelling, "Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations" p646.

⁵⁵ Spelling, p646.

⁵⁶ Spelling, p647.

⁵⁷ UKNA PREM 15/1978 Conversation between Heath and Nixon 1/2/73.

Chinese intimidation and reinforced its ability to defend its territorial integrity.⁵⁸ For India, the events of 1971 are remembered as both a famous military triumph that boosted its image as a defender of human rights and as a victory that allowed it to reduce the threat posed to its security by Pakistan.⁵⁹ Indira Gandhi and her ruling faction of the Indian National Congress (which became known as the INC (I)), received a huge boost both at home and abroad.⁶⁰ Prior to Provincial elections of March 1972, Gandhi enjoyed a 93% approval rating which helped the INC (I) win 71% of the assembly seats in those states that held elections.⁶¹ The victory also provided an ideological boost for the Indian political establishment. The independence of Bangladesh dealt a great blow to Pakistan's "two nation" theory that a common Islamic faith could be the sole basis for the creation of a nation-state.⁶² India had lost prestige within the non-aligned movement as major allies Yugoslavia, Indonesia and Egypt had all voted against its position in the UN General Assembly.⁶³ Although it never entered a formal alliance with the Soviet Union it became an important aspect of the continuing Sino-Soviet rivalry.⁶⁴

After 1971, the Indo-Soviet relationship continued to strengthen.⁶⁵ India had secured Soviet support against the prospect of hostilities with China, whilst the Soviet Union secured a bulwark against the emerging US-China-Pakistan axis.⁶⁶ Brezhnev was also, albeit briefly, able to revive the idea of Collective Security for South Asia through a depiction of the Indo-Soviet and subsequent Indo-Bangladesh friendship treaties as a step toward a wider defence agreement.⁶⁷ As Indo-Soviet ties strengthened, Sino-Indian relations remained cool as Chinese support for Pakistan hardened in 1972. The Chinese continued to view New Delhi as Moscow's largest client and saw the potential for Soviet-Indian-Bangladeshi collusion to cause trouble along China's borders.⁶⁸ With Chinese forces

⁵⁸ Roy R (1973) "India in 1972: Fissure in the Fortress" *Asian Survey* Vol 13 No 2 p242.

⁵⁹ Bass, G (2013) *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide* Knopf: New York p334. Sheldon, SW (1973) "China, the Soviet Union and the Subcontinental Balance" *Asian Survey* Vol 13 No 7 p657.

⁶⁰ Roy, "India in 1972" p231.

⁶¹ Bass *The Blood Telegram* p334, Roy p233.

⁶² Ganguly, S (2001) *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions Since 1947* Columbia University Press: New York p71.

⁶³ Raghavan, S (2013) *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* Library of Congress: Cambridge, Mass p242.

⁶⁴ Choudhury, GW (1975) *India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Major Powers* The Free Press: New York p225

⁶⁵ Ganguly *Conflict Unending* p73.

⁶⁶ Choudhury, *India, Pakistan, Bangladesh* p220.

⁶⁷ Choudhury, p220.

⁶⁸ Choudhury p236; Sheldon, "China, the Soviet Union and the Subcontinental Balance" p657.

concentrated in the North of the country to ward off a possible Soviet attack, the possibility for India to encourage dissent in a region such as Tibet provided a plausible threat for the Chinese.⁶⁹ This helped justify firmer support for Pakistan in an attempt to keep Bangladesh from becoming another Soviet client.⁷⁰

In Pakistan, Yahya handed power over to Bhutto as soon as the war was over on December 20th 1971. In contrast to the situation Indira Gandhi found herself in, Bhutto took control of a depleted nation. As a result of East Pakistan's de facto secession following the December War, Pakistan, as a sovereign state, had lost half of its territory and more than half of its population. 70,000 Pakistani soldiers were held as prisoners of war and the country's levels of international credit were severely reduced.⁷¹ In 1972, Bhutto continued to speak publicly of a Pakistan that included East Bengal; he symbolically offered to step down and allow Mujib to assume the Presidency if it meant that Pakistan and Bangladesh would reunite.⁷² In the immediate aftermath of the December 1971 war, it took time for the West Pakistani establishment to adapt to the reality of East Pakistan's secession.⁷³

Despite the extent of support provided by the Nixon White House to West Pakistan throughout 1971, Pakistan took a turn away from the United States.⁷⁴ Bhutto and much of the citizenry in Pakistan resented the US for not doing enough to protect its ally against what they saw as an aggressive assault from India.⁷⁵ As discussed in Chapter Three, US Ambassador to Pakistan, Joseph Farland had to assure President Yahya in January 1971 that the United States was not conspiring to split Pakistan and these suspicions continued in Pakistan once the civil war was over.⁷⁶ The loyalty shown by Nixon and Kissinger in 1971 was toward Yahya and his Generals, not ordinary Pakistanis to whom President Bhutto was now accountable. Having promised to withdraw Pakistan from all of its alliances, Bhutto withdrew from SEATO and promised to pursue an "independent foreign policy".⁷⁷

⁶⁹ Sheldon "China, the Soviet Union and the Subcontinental Balance" p658.

⁷⁰ Choudhury *India, Pakistan, Bangladesh* p237.

⁷¹ La Porte, R (1973) "Pakistan in 1972: Picking up the Pieces" *Asian Survey* Vol 13 No 2 p187.

⁷² La Porte, "Pakistan in 1972" p189.

⁷³ Bass, *Blood Telegram* p229; La Porte p189.

⁷⁴ Bass, p331.

⁷⁵ Bass, p330

⁷⁶ Bass, p330

⁷⁷ Burke, SM (1973) "The Postwar Diplomacy of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971" *Asian Survey* Vol 13 No 11 p1046.

Although ties with fellow Islamic nations Iran and Turkey meant Pakistan remained a member of CENTO, Bhutto went on to establish formal diplomatic ties with North Vietnam and North Korea.⁷⁸

On July 2nd 1972, India and Pakistan signed a peace treaty known as the Simla Agreement, named after the Indian city in which it was negotiated and signed. The agreement mandated for exclusively peaceful means of dispute settlement and encouraged trade, cooperation and the promotion of friendly relations between the two nations.⁷⁹ On the crucial issue of Kashmir, the two parties agreed to alter the terminology of the “Ceasefire Line” between the two countries to a “Line of Control”.⁸⁰ In substance the agreement seemed to provide a basis for an eventual settlement of the Kashmir dispute, whereby the “Line of Control” would eventually acquire the characteristics of an international border. Bhutto proclaimed that an “agreement [over Kashmir] will emerge in the foreseeable future...Let there be a line of peace; let people come and go; let us not fight over it”.⁸¹

Initial reaction to the Agreement was positive in both countries, but it quickly became clear that neither side was completely satisfied. Despite his rhetoric in the aftermath of the accords, Bhutto had insisted that language implying that the Line of Control be converted into a de facto border was not included within the text of agreement.⁸² Previously, Gandhi and India had advocated for small steps to be taken in settling the Kashmir dispute, but the Prime Minister now looked to press for an overall settlement, whereas Pakistan now adopted the said step-by-step approach.⁸³ The Agreement called for both parties to withdraw their troops from the newly created Line of Control within thirty days of the Agreement coming into force. That these withdrawals did not occur until December 20th 1972 was symbolic of the quick return to acrimonious relations between the South Asian neighbours.⁸⁴

In the wake of the December war, the recognition of Bangladesh by Pakistan became a major sticking point among South Asian nations as well as China and the Soviet Union. The issue became a three-way stalemate. After the war, India and Bangladesh held 73,000 Pakistani prisoners of war (PoWs) whose repatriation was demanded by Bhutto. India insisted that it could not release the PoWs without the consent of Bangladesh. Bangladesh would not release the prisoners until Pakistan

⁷⁸ Burke, “Postwar Diplomacy” p1045.

⁷⁹ Ganguly *Conflict Unending* pp168-169.

⁸⁰ Burke, “Postwar Diplomacy” p268.

⁸¹ Burke, p268.

⁸² Dixit, JN (2002) *India and Pakistan in War and Peace* Routledge: London p229.

⁸³ Burke, pp1036-1037.

⁸⁴ Burke, p1037.

recognised Bangladesh's sovereignty. In turn, Pakistan would not recognise Bangladesh until the prisoners were released.⁸⁵ Eventually, the PoWs were released to West Pakistan in 1973, upon a promise from Bhutto that those charged with war crimes in the former East Pakistan would face trial in Islamabad- though such trials never happened.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, Pakistan officially recognised Bangladesh on July 9, 1973, a move which paved the way for the removal of a Chinese veto at the UN and the confirmation of Bangladesh as a full UN member in 1974.

In the aftermath of the December War, the Chinese position hardened in opposition to the newly independent Bangladesh. Peking was deeply concerned about the implications that recognition of Bangladesh could have for its claims over Taiwan.⁸⁷ On the surface, there were striking similarities between the Bengali struggle for freedom from an ethnically different West Pakistan and the cause of the nationalists on Taiwan.⁸⁸ Combined with a renewed desire to stand by its allies in Islamabad, concern over its position with regards to Taiwan translated into strong support for the Islamabad government's sovereign right to determine the status of East Pakistan/Bangladesh. After restricting support for Pakistan during 1971 to rhetoric, and refusing to move its troops for an anti-Indian intervention, China insisted that recognition for Bangladesh would only come once Islamabad had done so.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, relative to the Soviet Union, China's position in South Asia and the wider global context had been diminished in the aftermath of the December War.

3. UK-US relations in South Asia, 1971-72

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given events at the UN Security Council in the previous two weeks, UK-US relations with regard to South Asia was the single most discussed topic at the UK-US summit at Bermuda held 20th-21st December 1971. The talks had been designed to be both informal and flexible, with leaders able to discuss the issues that were most pressing at that point in time. In private talks in which Heath and Nixon were accompanied only by British Cabinet Secretary Sir Burke Trend and Nixon's Assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger, the two leaders seemed keen to iron out the differences they had had over South Asia. In an extended explanation of his actions, Nixon denied that policy had been predicated on a fondness for Pakistani President Yahya Khan and a dislike for Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Rather, US policy had been guided by a

⁸⁵ Burke, p1037.

⁸⁶ Raghavan, 1971 p270.

⁸⁷ Sheldon, "China, the Soviet Union and the Subcontinental Balance" p652.

⁸⁸ Sheldon, p652.

⁸⁹ Sheldon, p653.

desire to maintain influence in Islamabad once it became clear that Yahya had “bungled” the situation in East Pakistan.⁹⁰ He then proceeded to list the small concessions that the US had extracted from Yahya, notably an agreement to station UN observers along the East Pakistan border and an agreement to pull troops back from the West Pakistan border, before wishing that he had taken a tougher line with Gandhi.⁹¹ Nixon then reiterated his belief that India’s war aim was “the liquidation of the West Wing [of Pakistan]”, which would create a dangerous situation for global stability in which a Soviet-backed nation could “cannibalise” a neighbour with impunity, thus setting a worrying precedent in other areas of the world.⁹²

In response, Heath emphasised the fact that the British, too, had attempted to coax Yahya into a more reasonable position and reminded the President that although Gandhi may have thought war inevitable, British intelligence supported the Prime Minister’s opinion that she harboured no hostile feelings toward Pakistan. The Prime Minister however, was keen to move on from discussions of disagreements over the matter and looked to quickly focus upon the importance of working together on present issues such as post-war aid for Pakistan.⁹³

Notably absent from Nixon’s explanation of his South Asian policy was the single most important factor in the White House’s calculations- protection of the rapprochement with China. It was Heath that first mentioned this issue, and in the process demonstrated that the British government had not understood the rationale behind the White House’s policy in South Asia.⁹⁴ The Prime Minister brought up, unbeknown to him, a matter of great frustration for Nixon and Kissinger in the fact that the crisis had made clear the fact that China would not come to the aid of West Pakistan. Heath then used the idea to question the President’s theory of a true balance of power in Asia. Heath also posed the dilemma that, had India and the Soviet Union wanted to destroy West Pakistan, it “would not be easy to convince the Soviet Government in a situation of this kind not only that effective action could be taken against them but also that there was the will to take it”.⁹⁵ It was clear from the conversation that Heath was unaware that Nixon and Kissinger believed that, by their actions in authorising the movement of Naval Task Force 74, they had indeed been able to convince the Soviet government that the US was willing to take severe action. Possibly embarrassed by the implicit point

⁹⁰ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Record of Conversation between Heath and Nixon 20/12/71.

⁹¹ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Record of Conversation between Heath and Nixon 20/12/71.

⁹² UKNA PREM 15/1268 Record of Conversation between Heath and Nixon 20/12/71.

⁹³ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Record of Conversation between Heath and Nixon 20/12/71.

⁹⁴ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Record of Conversation between Heath and Nixon 20/12/71.

⁹⁵ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Record of Conversation between Heath and Nixon 20/12/71.

that the aims of their policy had not been interpreted as they intended by the British government, Nixon moved on to talk about how a similar situation might play out in the Middle East.

The issue of India and Pakistan also came up in various other high-level meetings throughout the summit. Following his attendance at the meeting between Heath and Nixon, Kissinger met with UK Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home, in which the two reviewed events in South Asia in greater detail. Kissinger began the discussion by rejecting the idea that UK-US differences over India and Pakistan were the result of differing assessments.⁹⁶ To demonstrate his point, Kissinger drew upon the broadest possible parallels between the policies of the two governments; that both saw from March 1971 onwards that East Pakistan would eventually gain independence and that both wanted to see this come about as peacefully as possible.⁹⁷ However, despite emphasising areas of agreement, Kissinger went on to describe a US policy rationale completely at odds with the assessments of the British. In the meeting, Kissinger explained the notion that Heath had seemingly not grasped inasmuch as the US believed Soviet assurances that India would not look to break up Pakistan only came after the Naval Task Force had been ordered to move into the Bay of Bengal.⁹⁸ Kissinger's explanation of the thought process behind the movement of the Naval Task Force was enlightening for the entire UK government. Head of the FCO's North American Department, Hugh Overton noted that Kissinger's "revealing explanation" provided a new insight into the White House's preoccupation with their conception of Soviet policy.⁹⁹

A keenness to move on from "tactical disagreements" over South Asia was evident at a plenary meeting between the entire UK and US delegations to close out the Bermuda summit. In discussing South Asia, Home asserted that there was "no difference in fundamental assessment" of the recent events and traced the issues between India and Pakistan back to Pakistan's alignment with China and subsequent estrangement from SEATO in the 1960s.¹⁰⁰ The British Foreign Secretary's assessment represented a whitewash of the clear differences in British and American interpretations of the South Asian crisis and hugely oversimplified the causes of the crisis, seeming to ignore the internal crisis in Pakistan.¹⁰¹ When US Secretary of State Bill Rogers brought up the US opinion that the UN should have been able to condemn India's behaviour (something the UK stood against),

⁹⁶ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Record of Conversation between Home and Kissinger 20/12/71.

⁹⁷ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Record of Conversation between Home and Kissinger 20/12/71.

⁹⁸ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Record of Conversation between Home and Kissinger 20/12/71.

⁹⁹ UKNA FCO 82/71 Overton to Brimelow [undated].

¹⁰⁰ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Plenary meeting between UK and US Delegations, Bermuda 21/12/71.

¹⁰¹ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Plenary meeting between UK and US Delegations, Bermuda 21/12/71.

Home continued to quickly move on to looking forward.¹⁰² An unwillingness to dwell on disagreements over South Asia was also practiced by Heath in his meetings with Nixon, and was a noticeable British tactic at the summit.¹⁰³

The term “tactical differences” was used by both the UK and the US governments to paper over the severe levels of disagreement over South Asia in December 1971. The rhetoric was used despite the British government having believed the US policy to be misguided, and the US being disappointed at the UK’s lack of support for their policies, at the UN in particular.¹⁰⁴ Discussions over South Asia fulfilled the aims of both sides for the talks, to maintain candour and frankness of exchanges whilst focusing on areas of agreement and the overall strength of the UK-US relationship. The two parties were willing to focus on agreements, however small, in the name of future cooperation.

Such candour and frankness over differences in South Asia were soon put to the test in early 1972 over the issue of Bangladesh’s recognition as a sovereign state. The US position was such that, amid China’s increase in support for the Pakistani government after the December war, the White House wanted to wait until after Nixon had consulted with the Chinese with regard to the issue during his upcoming visit to Peking. For the British, financial interests lay more with Pakistan’s erstwhile Eastern Wing than they did with the West. Of particular note were the British-owned Tea Gardens that were now in Bangladesh.¹⁰⁵ The issue came up briefly in discussions between Nixon and Heath at Bermuda, in which Nixon told the Prime Minister that the US would not recognise Bangladesh prior to his scheduled visit to China in the third week of February 1972.¹⁰⁶ In a similarly brief comment, Secretary of State Bill Rogers told Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home that the US government assumed that the British would want to recognise Bangladesh before the Americans.¹⁰⁷

The issue of recognition for Bangladesh was not discussed at length, however, until an exchange of letters between the Prime Minister and the President in January and February 1972. In a letter to Nixon on January 13th, Heath made the positive case for the recognition of Bangladesh, not only by the UK and the US, but the Western alliance as a whole. Heath reasoned that it was in the best interests of the West to recognise Bangladesh in the near future as it would confer upon Mujib’s

¹⁰² UKNA PREM 15/1268 Plenary meeting between UK and US Delegations, Bermuda 21/12/71.

¹⁰³ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Plenary meeting between UK and US Delegations, Bermuda 21/12/71; PREM 15/1268 Record of Conversation between Heath and Nixon 20/12/71.

¹⁰⁴ Scott, A (2011) *Allies Apart: Heath, Nixon and the Special Relationship* Palgrave Macmillan: New York p104.

¹⁰⁵ Musson, J (2008) “Britain and the Recognition of Bangladesh in 1972” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Vol 19 No 1 p126.

¹⁰⁶ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Record of Conversation between Heath and Nixon 20/12/71.

¹⁰⁷ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Record of Conversation between Home and Rogers 20/12/71.

new government a legitimacy that would help it establish itself and keep left wing extremists from gaining power.¹⁰⁸ Nixon's response on February 2nd agreed with Heath's sentiment with regard to the desire to keep Bangladesh out of the hands of leftists who had provided Mujib with support prior to the events of 1971, but was much more cautious on the question of recognition.¹⁰⁹ The President explained that a decision on recognition must take into consideration the situation on the ground in South Asia and relations between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. He argued that an early recognition could reverse what he saw as Pakistani President Zulfikur Ali Bhutto's trend toward a more "realistic" position in terms of accepting the reality of East Pakistan's secession.¹¹⁰ Naturally such a position conformed with the US desire to continue its tacit support for Pakistan in order to safeguard Nixon's upcoming visit to Peking.

Janice Musson has argued that Heath's attempt to persuade Nixon that an early recognition was in the best interests of the West was sent more in hope than expectation, and that Nixon's response suggested an indifference toward the opinion of the British.¹¹¹ The issue of recognition for Bangladesh was carried out within the spirit of Nixon and Heath's conversation at Bermuda in which the President told Heath that, just as with regard to Europe, the UK and US "need not try to have exactly the same positions" on South Asia, but must ensure that there were no misunderstandings.¹¹² Although both sides were aware prior to January 1972 of the likely disagreement over extending recognition to Bangladesh, substantial efforts were made to keep one another aware of their respective policies toward the issue. Therefore, when the British recognised Bangladesh on February 4th 1972, three weeks before Nixon's visit to China, it did not catch the Americans by surprise. In fact, the communications went as far as to allow CIA director Richard Helms to see some advantage in the British and French, who had come to a similar conclusion, recognising Bangladesh early so that the US could observe the reaction of the South Asian nations, the Chinese and the wider international community.¹¹³ Once consultation with the Chinese revealed no great barrier to US recognition of Bangladesh, the Administration did so on April 8th 1972.

Throughout 1972, US policymaking for the South Asian region remained the exclusive preserve of the White House. Kissinger had relayed this information to the FCO during his brief visit to London

¹⁰⁸ UKNA PREM 15/751 Heath to Nixon 13/1/72.

¹⁰⁹ UKNA PREM 15/751 Nixon to Heath 2/2/72.

¹¹⁰ UKNA PREM 15/751 Nixon to Heath 2/2/72.

¹¹¹ Musson "Britain and the Recognition of Bangladesh" p132.

¹¹² UKNA PREM 15/1268 Record of Conversation between Heath and Nixon 20/12/71.

¹¹³ UKNA FRUS 1969-1976 Vol E7 Doc. 201 Minutes of SRG meeting 19/1/72.

en-route to Paris in September 1972 (discussed above).¹¹⁴ This information meant that the FCO went into upcoming talks with the State Department on South Asia knowing that their counterparts continued to be excluded from the policymaking process. The talks between the FCO and State Department revealed a gap in optimism between the respective foreign services with regard to the likely success of the Simla agreement, with US Undersecretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Joe Sisco agreeing with the British delegation that the agreement should be welcomed but warning that it could easily fall apart.¹¹⁵ However, the main theme of the talks was a reaffirmation of Anglo-American commitment to stability in South Asia as the major concern for the pursuit of Western interests.¹¹⁶

The desire for stability was also espoused by Kissinger in his September 1972 meeting with Home. Kissinger reassured the Foreign Secretary that US interests in South Asia lay in the stability of the subcontinent. However, UK and US interests in the region continued to diverge. Kissinger reminded Home that US policy toward the region remained contingent upon US relations with China and that consequently, US policy remained one that tilted toward Pakistan.¹¹⁷ Kissinger reiterated the US contention that protection of Pakistan was crucial if the Soviets were to be deterred from making advances in the Middle East (see Chapter 5) and speculated that Indira Gandhi wanted to bring about “an end of Pakistan, once and for all”.¹¹⁸ All of this contrasted with the British policy in 1972 of continuing to favour India as a result of greater British material and political interests in the country when compared to Pakistan.¹¹⁹ Both the US and the UK shared an interest in stability on the subcontinent, but differed on which party, India or Pakistan, to tacitly favour.

Although there was a shared desire for stability, the UK and the US remained, at least tacitly, aligned with India and Pakistan respectively.¹²⁰ In the September meeting between FCO and State Department officials, the British admitted that in Pakistan the British were seen as pro-Indian whilst the American delegation spoke of poor relations with the Indian government that showed little sign of improvement.¹²¹ These sentiments were repeated during Heath and Nixon’s summit meeting in

¹¹⁴ UKNA PREM 15/1273 Meeting between Home and Kissinger 14/9/72.

¹¹⁵ UKNA FCO 37/986 meeting between FCO and State Dmnt officials 21/9/72.

¹¹⁶ UKNA FCO 37/986 meeting between FCO and State Dmnt officials 21/9/72.

¹¹⁷ UKNA PREM 15/1273 Meeting between Home and Kissinger 14/9/72.

¹¹⁸ UKNA PREM 15/1273 Meeting between Home and Kissinger 14/9/72.

¹¹⁹ UKNA FCO 37/986 meeting between FCO and State Dmnt officials 21/9/72.

¹²⁰ UKNA FCO 37/986 meeting between FCO and State Dmnt officials 21/9/72.

¹²¹ UKNA FCO 37/986 meeting between FCO and State Dmnt officials 21/9/72.

February 1973.¹²² In the thirteen months between the UK-US summit meetings at Bermuda at the end of December 1971 and in Washington in early February 1973, UK and US relations with regard to South Asia continued upon divergent trajectories. However, in contrast to the situation prior to the Indo-Pakistan war of December 1971, both governments now had a much clearer understanding of the other's position.

Conclusion

The Anglo-American summit meeting in Bermuda on 20th-21st December 1971 succeeded in clearing the air after a turbulent final six months of the year. It was agreed that a strong UK-US relationship continued to be advantageous for both parties as well as for the wider western alliance. To this end, the serious policy disagreements over the South Asian crisis that had erupted at the UN Security Council just a week earlier were referred to by both parties as "tactical differences". Such a characterisation of events in which Nixon warned Heath that the UK would be committing an "unfriendly act" should it not vote in favour of a US resolution demonstrated a shared desire to smoothly move on from recent discord.

The Bermuda summit was also successful in increasing the British government's understanding of US foreign policy under the Nixon Administration. The UK government learned a great deal about the rationale behind US policy toward South Asia in December 1971. Prior to Heath's meeting with Nixon, the UK was unaware that the White House had authorised the movement of Naval Task Force 74 to the Bay of Bengal in order to ward off an Indian attack on West Pakistan, and that Nixon and Kissinger believed this to have been a major consideration for India in calling a unilateral ceasefire on December 17th.¹²³ Furthermore, FCO diplomats had the opportunity to see for themselves the secretive manner in which the White House conducted its business.¹²⁴ This exposure allowed the FCO to better understand and subsequently handle Kissinger's insistence upon a secretive diplomatic style. However, as the matter of Kissinger's trip to Paris in September and Ambassador Cromer's frustration at a lack of communication with the Nixon Administration November 1972 have shown, a knowledge or understanding of the White House's foreign policymaking style did not prevent British frustration at the manner in which the White House conducted itself.

¹²² UKNA PREM 15/1978 Meeting between Nixon and Heath 1/2/73.

¹²³ UKNA REM 15/1268 Record of Conversation between Home and Kissinger 20/12/71; FCO 82/71 Overton to Brimelow [undated].

¹²⁴ UKNA FCO 82/71 Overton to Brimelow [undated].

At Bermuda, Heath and Nixon also agreed on the need for a return to frankness in communication between the two allies.¹²⁵ They agreed that candour was necessary if misunderstandings were to be avoided, and looked forward to 1972 marking a new start for the relationship between the two governments. A signal of this was the issue of recognition for Bangladesh. After the groundwork had been laid at Bermuda, the two leaders exchanged letters on the matter that established a mutual understanding that the British government would recognise Bangladesh before Nixon's trip to Peking in late February 1972.¹²⁶ However, US Ambassador to the UK, Walter Annenberg noted that the UK government had been "stunned" by the Nixon Administration's actions over China, the New Economic Policy and the South Asian crisis, and despite the fact that the Bermuda summit had helped mend fences, there continued to be a "certain sense of estrangement" from the US Administration.¹²⁷

Relations with regards to South Asia in the year following the Bermuda summit highlighted continued divergent interests and problems in communication. On the Subcontinent, the UK and US governments perceived their interests to be served through tacit favour for India and Pakistan respectively, as they had throughout 1971. Unlike throughout 1971, the British knew, in explicit terms, that US policy toward South Asia was governed by the White House's focus on protecting its burgeoning relationship with China.¹²⁸ Conversely the American government was now more aware of the fact that in South Asia the UK would favour India and Bangladesh over Pakistan in order to protect its economic interests. In terms of communication, policy over South Asia remained heavily impacted by the secrecy of the White House foreign policymaking style. As had been the case in 1971, the FCO still could not be sure that State Department officials' statements were a true reflection of the White House's policy.

Ahead of the February 1973 UK-US summit in Washington, the Anglo-American relationship had seen what has been described as a "year of virtually unbroken friendliness".¹²⁹ Unlike those prepared for the Bermuda summit 13 months earlier, policy briefs did not consider, at length, the state of the Anglo-American relationship.¹³⁰ At the summit, Nixon thanked Heath for his support over the US decision to increase the intensity of the bombing campaign in Vietnam and his

¹²⁵ FCO 82/71 Exchange of remarks between Heath and Nixon 21/12/71.

¹²⁶ PREM 15/1268 Record of Conversation between Heath and Nixon 20/12/71; PREM 15/751 Heath to Nixon 13/1/72.

¹²⁷ USNA RG 59 Box 2658 POL 1 UK Annenberg to State 14/2/72. If you are giving archive for US sources, why not for British sources too?

¹²⁸ UKNA PREM 15/1273 Meeting between Home and Kissinger 14/9/72.

¹²⁹ Spelling "Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations" p647.

¹³⁰ UKNA Cabinet Files (hereafter Cab) 133/440 Briefs for Heath-Nixon meeting 16/1/73.

helpfulness negotiating US use of British facilities on Malta. In return Heath appreciated Nixon's support for his position on Northern Ireland.¹³¹

At Bermuda in December 1971, the British found out that not only had they not been consulted on the direction of US policy, but that they did not understand major aspects of it. For the British, their experience over South Asia was perhaps the most painful example of the difficulty in working with the unique foreign policymaking style of the Nixon Administration. Meanwhile a lack of support from the British over a matter as important as South Asia, and by extension the China initiative, was interpreted by the White House as a signal of things to come as the UK moved closer to Europe. The Bermuda summit succeeded in drawing a line under the disagreements of late 1971 and helped the UK and US governments develop a deeper understanding of one another's position. But in the secretive nature of White House foreign policymaking, it did not confront the problem that exacerbated them. The UK continued to find it difficult to ascertain a clear and detailed picture of the direction of US foreign policy and could not be sure if the State Department was involved in policymaking or fully briefed on a particular topic

¹³¹ Spelling "Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations" p647.

Conclusion

This thesis has provided a detailed analysis of UK-US relations with regard to the South Asian crisis of 1971. The conclusion to the thesis looks to take a step back from the detail and assesses three broad questions; (1) Was the relationship between Prime Minister Edward Heath and President Richard Nixon as problematic and frosty as previously suggested?; (2) Were disagreements over South Asia simply “tactical”, as suggested at the December 1971 Bermuda Summit?; (3) Did the public disagreement at the UN have any lasting effect on the UK-US relationship? Finally, this thesis ends with a summary of the contribution made to the study of Anglo-American relations.

1. A frosty relationship between Heath and Nixon?

The notion of a frosty relationship between Heath and Nixon has been most notably propounded by Nixon’s Assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger. Until archival material was available on both sides of the Atlantic in the early 2000s, much literature on the period relied upon Kissinger’s claims as evidence for arguments that it was Heath’s fervent pro-Europeanism that led him to shun a close relationship with the US President.¹ In the first volume of his memoir *White House Years*, Kissinger claims that “Heath and Nixon never managed to establish the personal rapport for which Nixon, at least, longed in the beginning”.² He goes on to state that, for Heath, “the “special relationship” was an obstacle to the British vocation in Europe. Heath was content to enjoy no higher status in Washington than any other European leader”.³ Kissinger’s accusations are therefore twofold; not only did the Heath-Nixon relationship never flourish, but Heath was out to foil Nixon’s desire for a “special” relationship from the outset.

Upon their first meeting as Prime Minister and President at Chequers in October 1970, Heath and Nixon succeeded in establishing a friendly personal relationship. Contrary to Kissinger’s accusations, Heath was looking to establish a cordial relationship with the President and to ensure that the UK concerns were factored into US foreign policymaking.⁴ Heath succeeded in his aims and successfully reaffirmed an Anglo-American relationship that had suffered a difficult period in the late 1960s.

¹ Scott, A (2011) *Allies Apart: Heath, Nixon and the Special Relationship* Palgrave Macmillan: New York p9.

² Kissinger, HA (1979) *The White House Years* Weidenfeld and Nicolson; London p933.

³ Kissinger, *White House Years* p933.

⁴ UK National Archives (hereafter UKNA) Foreign and Commonwealth Office Files (hereafter FCO) 7/1812 Briefs for the Prime Minister in preparation for Nixon’s visit to Chequers.

Meanwhile Nixon succeeded in ensuring that the two agreed to candour within consultations.⁵ The meetings were brief, but the two leaders laid out their agreements on US policy in Vietnam and UK policy toward South Africa.⁶ Kissinger alleges that the presence of the Queen, something that limited the scope of discussions, annoyed Nixon, but always a fan of pomp and ceremony, conflicting reports have suggested that Nixon was suitably impressed by the presence of Royalty.⁷

Heath's speech prior to the Washington summit meetings on December 17th 1970 has been marked as a milestone in Heath's unilateral downgrading of the importance of the Anglo-American relationship.⁸ In it, he referred to a "natural relationship" rather than the "special relationship" that Nixon had been speaking of since his inauguration in 1969.⁹ Analysis of the subsequent talks however, suggests that this was not as significant an alteration in UK-US relations as has been previously argued. Nixon consciously acquiesced and used the term "natural relationship" during the Washington talks and in correspondence thereafter.¹⁰ The thesis has provided support for the notion that there was an acceptance of the UK's reasoning in changing the rhetorical categorisation of the Anglo-American relationship at a critical stage in the UK's EC negotiations.¹¹ Negotiations which the US did not want to fail as a result of the resurfacing of accusations that the UK may act as an American "Trojan Horse" in Europe. The Washington talks were interpreted by most observers, with the notable exception of Kissinger, to have been a successful and amiable meeting the President and the Prime Minister.¹²

Ructions in the Heath-Nixon relationship did not begin until Nixon announced on July 15th 1971, that the US had been secretly working on a rapprochement with China that would see him become the first President to visit Peking early in 1972. The announcement triggered a sense of betrayal in London. In negotiations with the Chinese over an exchange of Ambassadors, the UK government had

⁵ UKNA FCO 7/1812 Briefs for the Prime Minister in preparation for Nixon's visit to Chequers; FCO 7/1815 Conversation between Heath and Nixon 3/10/70.

⁶ UKNA FCO 7/1815 Conversation between Heath and Nixon 3/10/70.

⁷ UKNA FCO 7/1811 Freeman to Armstrong 8/10/70

⁸ Hynes, C (2009) *The Year that Never Was: Heath, the Nixon Administration and the Year of Europe* University College Dublin Press: Dublin; Bartlett, CJ (1992) *The Special Relationship: A Political History* Longman; New York p130.

⁹ Hynes, *The Year That Never Was* p23; Hathaway, R (1981) *Great Britain and the United States: Special Relations since World War II* Twyne: Boston p94; Kissinger *White House Years* p91.

¹⁰ Heath, E (1997) *The Course of My Life* Bloomsbury Reader: London p472

¹¹ Spelling, A (2009) "Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations 1970-1974: A Reappraisal" *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Vol 20 No 4 p641; Scott *Allies Apart* p11

¹² Hynes, *The Year That Never Was* p24; Heath *The Course of My Life* p473; Spelling "Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations" p642.

kept the White House informed at every turn. They had acquiesced to US requests to delay a decision to withdraw opposition to the seating of Communist China at the expense of the Nationalists on Taiwan, a move that was a prerequisite for improved diplomatic representation. The US claimed it was still considering a new policy toward Peking, and that as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, any UK decision on Chinese representation would have a considerable impact upon US policymaking. On July 10th, just days before Nixon's announcement, the British received a message from Peking which explained that the Chinese now wanted the UK to recognise Taiwan as a province of the People's Republic, something the British were unwilling to do. Only on July 15th did Heath and the rest of the UK government learn of the reason for this – for China, the rapprochement with the US meant that an exchange of Ambassadors with the UK was less valuable, and so they could afford to request further concessions.

Heath felt slighted not only by the deceptiveness of the White House but also the fact that the US' opening to China, by secretly undermining the British negotiations on upgrading diplomatic relations, had damaged the British national interest. The UK publicly welcomed the move, as it coincided with post-war British policy to bring China into the international community, but in private, Heath was seething. He refused to send a letter of congratulations to the President and felt it signalled a worrying trend toward a lack of consultation on the part of the US with its closest allies.¹³ Such feelings of betrayal were once again aroused in London on August 15th, when Downing Street was only given a few hours' notice of the second "Nixon Shock": A New Economic policy that included a reduction in the liquidity of the dollar and a 10% import surcharge on imports into the US.¹⁴

In the summer of 1971, it was not so much the policy decisions themselves that sparked anger in London, but the lack of consultation that the US afforded the UK. It was on this subject that Heath complained to Nixon in a letter on November 24th, calling for an end to surprise announcements that made it very difficult for allies of the US to respond.¹⁵ Heath's letter was the culmination of much soul-searching within the British government in the Autumn of 1971 with regard to the Anglo-American relationship. In briefs prepared for the Bermuda summit of 21st-22nd December, the FCO concluded that the "old ease and closeness of Anglo-American communications had been lost" and the objective for the summit was to return to "the old kind of consultation" that had been enjoyed for the majority of the period since 1945.

¹³ Scott *Allies Apart* p68.

¹⁴ UKNA PREM 15/715 Nixon to Heath 15/8/71.

¹⁵ UKNA FCO 82/64 Heath to Nixon 24/11/71.

Given the disagreements at the UN Security Council (see Chapter 5 and below), a return to amiable relations between Heath and Nixon may have seemed unlikely. Both leaders were expected to find the other in a tempestuous mood, Heath over US policy in South Asia and Nixon over the UK's refusal to support it.¹⁶ However, the two leaders succeeded in reaffirming a friendly relationship both on a personal level and between the two governments, indeed one of Heath's explicit aims was to fall back upon the amiable relationship that he had built with Nixon in late 1970 to ensure that close relations continued into the future.¹⁷ Indeed, both governments considered the talks to have marked the beginning of a new phase in relations between the Heath government and the Nixon Administration after a torrid second half to 1971.¹⁸

To say that Heath and Nixon had a frosty relationship within the period covered by this thesis would be a gross oversimplification. This thesis supports Alex Spelling's argument that the Anglo-American relationship, and that between Heath and Nixon, saw peaks and troughs from June 1970 to February 1973.¹⁹ The difficulties in the second half of 1971 were bookended by periods of friendly, positive relations. Contrary to Kissinger's claim, this thesis argues that Heath and Nixon did, indeed, lay strong foundations for their personal relationship in late 1970, that helped rebuild the relationship at Bermuda in December 1971 following a torrid six months. Spelling argues that had Heath lost office following the Washington summit of February 1973, nobody would have thought the Heath-Nixon relationship as "anything but a continuation of the post-war norm".²⁰ On this point, the thesis agrees in the sense that if occasional crises in Anglo-American relations are considered the "norm", the disagreements of late 1971 can easily sit alongside, and were perhaps not as severe as, the passing of the McMahon Act in 1947, the Suez Crisis of 1956 and the cancellation of the Skybolt missile system in 1962.

This thesis argues that Heath's attitude to the Anglo-American relationship was more nuanced than the description of a "Europe obsessed" leader that had no interest in the "special relationship".²¹ British entry into the EC was Heath's top foreign policy priority, however he was conscious to make

¹⁶ Nixon Presidential Library (hereafter NPL) NSC VIP Visits Heath Bermuda 71 Memo from Kissinger to Nixon 18/12/71; FCO 37/754 Cromer to FCO 17/12/71.

¹⁷ UKNA FCO 82/71 Exchange of remarks between Heath and Nixon 21/12/71; FCO 82/66 Steering Brief for Bermuda meetings 6/12/71.

¹⁸ UKNA FCO 82/182 FCO to Washington 7/1/72.

¹⁹ Spelling, "Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations" p654.

²⁰ Spelling p654.

²¹ See Ovendale, R (1998) *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century*. Macmillan; London p42; Kissinger *White House Years* p933; Arnold, G (2014) *America and Britain: Was there ever a Special Relationship?* C.Hurst and Co: London p93.

clear that his being pro-European did not make him anti-American. This thesis has presented evidence that, in the period in question between June 1970 and February 1973, Nixon and the US government believed that the UK's entry into the EC was in the long-term interests of the US. The Administration understood the British desire to mollify European concerns at Britain's close ness to the US and agreed to refer to a "natural" rather than "special" relationship.²² At Chequers in October 1970, Washington in December 1970 and Bermuda in December 1971, this thesis has demonstrated that Heath's priorities were to ensure the continuation of a strong and healthy UK-US relationship. The relationship broke down in late 1971, but it was a result of the secretive manner in which US foreign policy was being conducted and the lack of consultation afforded to the British government, not because of Heath's push for the UK's entry into the EC.

2. "Tactical Differences" over South Asia?

The second question to be assessed is whether the disagreements between the UK and US over the South Asian Crisis of 1971 were simply tactical, or whether the differences were more fundamental. At the Bermuda summit meetings held December 21st-22nd 1971, the UK and US delegations agreed to move on from their "tactical differences" over South Asia and focus upon improving the state of the Anglo-American relationship. This thesis has demonstrated that disagreements over the South Asian crisis were over more than simply tactics. Rather, trouble in the Anglo-American relationship with regard to the issue encapsulated the two wider problems for the bilateral relationship identified by the FCO in November; those of communication and of interest.

The problem of communication stemmed from the White House's perceived need for secrecy in foreign policymaking. When the Pakistani military government enacted a crackdown on Bengali nationalists in Dacca on the night of March 25th/26th 1971, it presented a problem for President Richard Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger. Yahya Khan was the go-between in their still-secret rapprochement with China and was set to help organise Kissinger's secret trip to Peking in July 1971. The "opening to China" was designed to be the flagship diplomatic achievement of Nixon's first term – a move that would not only win him re-election but cement his place in history. Nixon and Kissinger believed that in order for the initiative to succeed, leaks of the plan needed to be avoided at all costs, as they could lead to a derailment of the entire process by Congress and/or a reluctance on the part of the Chinese to pursue the rapprochement. To guard against such an occurrence, the State Department, an organisation not trusted by Nixon since his

²² UKNA FCO 7/1809 Washington to FCO 6/7/70; USNA State Department Central Files 1970-1973 Record Group 59 Box 2652 Pol UK report from Embassy in London titled "Foreign Policy of the Conservative Government: A New Realpolitik" 8/12/70.

days as Vice President, was excluded from the policymaking process with regard to China, and necessarily therefore, the subcontinent.

Such a breakdown in communication within the US government had consequences for the UK-US relationship, both in general and with regard to South Asia. After Nixon publicly announced the China initiative on July 15th, Foreign Office Minister Geoffrey Rippon noted that Pakistan's role in the China initiative was the reason for the White House's reluctance to criticise Yahya for his actions in East Pakistan.²³ By mid-August, the FCO had received confirmation from the India Desk Officer at the State Department, Tony Quainton, that the bureaucracy had been cut off from decision-making with regard to South Asia.²⁴ On 23rd November, Kissinger told UK Ambassador Lord Cromer that the State Department had been totally excluded from decision making on South Asia and that any communication on the subject was for the "eyes of the Prime Minister" only. He advised that any information provided by the bureaucracy would provide a "less clear opinion" than that from the White House.²⁵ Indeed, as the Indo-Pakistan war erupted in December 1971, Cromer reported to the FCO that the Embassy had been unable to speak to the State Department at all with regard to the matter, which he believed was understandable lest they expose their ignorance of US policy.²⁶

As well as problems in communication, the secrecy surrounding the White House's China initiative meant that the British government had a different perspective to that of the White House. Both the State Department and the British government considered that their own national interest would be served by a policy that tacitly favoured the Indian position. Once the crackdown occurred however, three significant differences of opinion between the British government and the White House emerged. Firstly, although in support of a united Pakistan, Heath's communications with Yahya were significantly more condemnatory in tone than Nixon's. Heath's message of April 7th in which he told the Pakistani President that "there must be an end to the bloodshed...as soon as possible" can be contrasted with Nixon's assurance to Yahya on May 7th that the US had "stressed the need for restraint in New Delhi".²⁷ The second disagreement centred on the issue of aid to Pakistan, which the British argued should have been contingent upon there being a political solution "acceptable to the people of East Pakistan". This policy can be contrasted with the softer line taken by the US in

²³ UKNA FCO 82/61 Minute by Geoffrey Rippon 20/7/71

²⁴ UKNA FCO 37/820 Boyd to Byatt 16/8/71.

²⁵ UKNA PREM 15/570 conversation between Cromer and Kissinger 23/11/71.

²⁶ UKNA PREM 15/560 Cromer to FCO 17/12/71.

²⁷ UKNA FCO 37/882 Heath to Yahya 7/4/71; FRUS 1969-1976 Vol XI South Asian Crisis Doc. 41 letter from Nixon to Yahya 7/5/71.

insisting only that conditions in East Pakistan be amenable to the distribution of aid.²⁸ Thirdly, the UK and the US had different interpretations of the August 9th Indo-Soviet Treaty. The British saw the agreement as the Indian government demonstrating to domestic critics its ability to gain international support, whilst the Soviet Union gained further leverage with which to urge restraint in New Delhi. The White House, however, saw the treaty as a de facto affirmation of Soviet support for India's intention to destroy East and West Pakistan.²⁹

Despite disagreements between the UK government and the White House, both Downing Street and the FCO remained in agreement with the State Department beyond Nixon's China announcement on July 15th. On July 29th, the State Department put forward the idea that the US should put pressure upon Yahya to end the military repression and work toward a peaceful solution amenable to the people of East Pakistan, as this would provide suitable conditions for the return of refugees.³⁰ This attitude continued a pattern of agreement between the British government and the State Department that could be traced back to late 1970 when the bureaucracies agreed upon the lack of necessity for a "one-time exception" on arms supply to Pakistan and the identification of relations with India as more important for UK and US interests than Pakistan.³¹ Differences of opinion that the UK government had with the US over South Asia in 1971 were strictly with the White House, not the State Department.

These problems in both communication and interests between the Heath government and the Nixon Administration manifested themselves in the weeks following Indira Gandhi's respective visits to London and Washington in late October and early November. UK-Indian relations had been on an upswing under Heath and the meeting with Gandhi on October 30th occurred under a cordial atmosphere.³² Although there was no agreement on issues such as Heath's suggestion that India cease its training of Mukti Bahini forces, or the issue of a UN presence on both sides of the Indian border with East Pakistan, Heath was clearly sympathetic to Gandhi's situation.³³ Days later, Gandhi met an American President that had long held prejudices against India and had a "special

²⁸ UKNA FCO 37/829 Moon to Barrington 6/7/71; UKNA FCO 82/61 Meeting between Home and Irwin 20/7/71.

²⁹ UKNA FCO 37/820 New Delhi to FCO 16/8/71. Smith, SC (2010) "Coming Down on the Winning Side: Britain and the South Asian Crisis, 1971" *Contemporary British History* Vol 24 No4 p456.

³⁰ Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS) 1969-1976 Vol E-7 Documents on South Asia Doc 142 Paper prepared for the Senior Review Group Meeting July 29 1971.

³¹ USNA Central Files 1970-1973 RG 59 Box 2530 Pol 23-9 Pak State to New Delhi 20/8/70; Smith "Coming Down on the Winning Side" p457.

³² UKNA FCO 82/65 Cromer to FCO Report of meeting with Kissinger 12/11/71.

³³ UKNA PREM 15/569 Heath to Nixon 5/11/71.

relationship” with the President of Pakistan.³⁴ Having received an offer from Yahya to withdraw troops from the borders with India, Nixon put pressure on the Indian Prime Minister to do the same, even though he was aware that she had previously rejected such a suggestion.³⁵ The meeting both reinforced Nixon’s personal dislike for the Indian Prime Minister as well as his and Kissinger’s suspicion that India was intent upon destroying West Pakistan.

However, despite evidently different approaches and experiences in meetings with Gandhi, Heath and Nixon’s communications on the matter gave the appearance of a shared opinion. Heath’s report of his meeting demonstrated his sympathy for Gandhi’s domestic position. He told Nixon that all of Gandhi’s efforts were being poured into quelling calls from hawks within the Indian government for decisive military action.³⁶ Heath also made clear the British belief that the onus was upon Yahya to bring about a peaceful solution to the crisis and urged Nixon to put pressure on him to do so. Despite the fact that these statements were clearly at odds with his opinion, the President’s response focused upon areas of agreement with the British Prime Minister. Despite the stark tonal differences between the two meetings in his reply to Heath, Nixon asserted that the two men had a “similar impression” of the Indian Prime Minister. Nixon’s letter ignored the fact that the UK and US had embarked upon divergent policies toward South Asia throughout 1971. A telephone conversation between the two leaders on November 25th reinforced the idea that there were fundamental agreements in policy.³⁷ In attempting to mend a relationship that had deteriorated as a result of a lack of communication and consultation, Heath and Nixon’s determination to focus on the areas of agreement obscured the extent to which UK and US policy diverged over South Asia. The thesis has argued that this lack of understanding for one another’s position helped foster misunderstandings that exacerbated the subsequent disagreements at the UN Security Council in December.

Once War was officially declared between India and Pakistan on December 3rd 1971, disagreements that the UK and US governments had failed to confront in November erupted in public at the UN Security Council. The US wanted to follow through on their assertion that India was the aggressor in South Asia and maintain their tacit support for the Pakistani government. They wanted a resolution that would condemn India and call for an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of Indian troops

³⁴ Van Hollen, C (1980) “The Tilt Policy Revisited: Nixon-Kissinger Geopolitics and South Asia” *Asian Survey* Vol 20 No 4 p341.

³⁵ FRUS Vol XI South Asia Doc. 179. Memorandum for the President’s file 4/11/71.

³⁶ UKNA PREM 15/569 Heath to Nixon 5/11/71.

³⁷ UKNA PREM 15/570 Telephone conversation between Heath and Nixon 15/11/71.

from East Pakistan. The British position, tacitly in favour of India, was that only a unanimous UN Security Council Resolution would have any impact upon the conflict in South Asia. They insisted that any resolution along the lines desired by the US would only trigger a veto from the Soviet Union. The British also believed that a vetoed resolution would end up pushing India into a closer relationship with the Soviet Union.³⁸

When the UK abstained on a US motion that condemned India and called for a ceasefire between India and Pakistan on December 4th, Heath sent Nixon a letter regarding what he saw as “a very difficult situation” and asked for a delay before a second vote could be taken.³⁹ A second vote on December 6th produced the same result whereby the anti-Indian resolution received eleven positive votes, two abstentions from the UK and France and two negative votes from Poland and the Soviet Union. The Security Council quickly reached a deadlock, whereby a Soviet veto against a ceasefire was met by a veto from both the US, and the newly-seated Chinese communists in the opposite direction. As the conflict continued in South Asia, the UN Security Council continued its stalemate.

Having grown increasingly frustrated with the British stance, Kissinger applied pressure on December 12th in telling Ambassador Cromer that the White House was distressed by the British position and had no other choice but to infer that British policy was the result of its “new found Europeanism”.⁴⁰ Nixon’s Assistant for National Security Affairs made it clear that further British abstentions against US-supported motions would be regarded as an “unfriendly” act.⁴¹ The British, however, stuck to their position. Heath sent a letter to Nixon explaining that both the UK and the US should maintain good relations with India, as it would undoubtedly end up as the dominant force on a subcontinent of three nations.⁴² The tone of communication between the two nations had quickly become terse as Heath reminded Nixon that his decision not to consult on major issues was causing great problems for the British government.⁴³

Although the British government was aware that the rapprochement with China greatly influenced the US’ support for Pakistan, it was unaware of the specifics of US policy toward South Asia and the lengths that the White House was willing to go to protect West Pakistan. Ambassador Cromer cast doubt upon the veracity of Kissinger’s claim that a December 7th CIA report indicated an Indian

³⁸ UKNA PREM 15/570 Heath to Nixon 5/12/71.

³⁹ UKNA PREM 15/570 Heath to Nixon 5/12/71; Scott p95.

⁴⁰ UKNA PREM 15/570 Cromer to FCO 12/12/71.

⁴¹ UKNA PREM 15/570 Cromer to FCO 12/12/71.

⁴² UKNA PREM 15/570 Heath to Nixon 12/12/71.

⁴³ UKNA PREM 15/570 Heath to Nixon 12/12/71.

desire to break up West Pakistan, and believed that US policy was being driven by Nixon and Kissinger's "emotional desire" to isolate what they saw as the Indo-Soviet axis on the Security Council.⁴⁴ The British, however, did not understand the intended significance of the policy moves being made by the White House. Heath's Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Peter Moon, did not know the reasoning behind the American decision to authorise the movement of Task Force 74.⁴⁵ The thought that the movement was designed to ward off an Indian annexation of Kashmir and invasion of West Pakistan did not seem to cross the mind of the British foreign policymaking establishment. Although there were suspicions that Nixon and Kissinger's interpretation of Indian intentions was based upon faulty or non-existent intelligence, the idea that such a strong move would be made to guard against India destroying West Pakistan, may have seemed illogical. It was not until Kissinger spelled out the reason for the movement of the Naval Task Force to Alec Douglas-Home at the Bermuda summit meetings on December 20th that the British gained a full understanding of US policy during the Indo-Pakistan war.⁴⁶

South Asia was discussed at length and grievances were aired at the Bermuda summit. However, as had been the prevailing attitude prior to the crisis, discussion focused upon areas of agreement. At a plenary meeting between the two delegations to close the summit, Douglas-Home asserted that their "was no difference in fundamental assessment" of the crisis in South Asia.⁴⁷ The thesis, therefore, provides support for Andrew Scott's claim that the disagreements over South Asia were more than the "tactical differences" that both parties referred to at Bermuda.⁴⁸ Nixon and Kissinger's focus upon the "opening to China" had caused US policy to diverge from the traditional UK-US desire for stability above all else on the subcontinent. These policy divisions were then exacerbated by the secretive nature in which US policy was administered and the desire of both governments to focus on areas of agreement in order to repair the relationship in November 1971. The result was a lack of understanding of one another's position and public disunity at the Security Council.

⁴⁴ UKNA PREM 15/570 Cromer to FCO 17/12/71.

⁴⁵ UKNA Files of the Prime Minister (hereafter PREM) 15/570 Moon to Heath 12/12/71

⁴⁶ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Meeting between Home and Kissinger 20/12/71.

⁴⁷ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Plenary meeting between UK and US Delegations, Bermuda 21/12/71.

⁴⁸ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Plenary meeting between UK and US Delegations, Bermuda 21/12/71.

3. Long-term effects on the UK-US relationship

The third question to be assessed is whether the heated Anglo-American exchanges at the UN Security Council in December 1971 had any consequences for the relationship between the Heath government and the Nixon Administration. As discussed above, disagreements with regard to UN Security Council resolutions calling for a ceasefire between India and Pakistan were the culmination of six months of poor communication, a lack of understanding, and frustration. These tense discussions did, however, provide an impetus for the two governments to focus upon reaffirming the significance of the Anglo-American relationship. The Bermuda summit meetings held between delegations from the UK and the US between December 20th-21st 1971 succeeded in their goal of drawing a line under the disagreements that had marked the previous six months. Chapter Six explained how the summit was seen by both delegations to mark a new phase for the relationship between the Heath government and the Nixon Administration, after 1971 had ended in a public disunity over South Asia at the UN Security Council. Nixon and Heath agreed that a full understanding of one another's positions was important given the shifting geopolitical context. The UK was on the verge of entry into the EC and the US was moving toward bilateralism with China and the Soviet Union. These developments meant that interests may have diverged to a greater extent than they had in the post-war period to that point.⁴⁹

The Bermuda summit also succeeded in increasing levels of understanding of each another's policies in for the US and the UK. Although the Heath government was aware from at least October 1970 of the Nixon Administration's secretive and peculiar foreign policymaking operation.⁵⁰ It was not until the Bermuda summit, however, at the end of 1971, that many Downing Street and FCO officials experienced it first hand. A particular example of this insistence upon secrecy was Kissinger's reminder to Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home not to mention any of the substance of their conversation to State Department officials.⁵¹ In fact it was cited by head of the FCO's North American Department, Hugh Overton, as the starkest example of the White House system in action.⁵² Meetings at Bermuda also made the British aware in no uncertain terms that US policy toward South Asia was both predicated upon the wider policy toward China and was decided upon exclusively within the White House- Kissinger had told Home that such a "lesson must be learned".⁵³

⁴⁹ UKNA FCO 82/71 Exchange of remarks between Heath and Nixon 21/12/71.

⁵⁰ UKNA FCO 7/1807 Freeman to Greenhill 28/10/70.

⁵¹ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Meeting between Home and Kissinger 20/12/71.

⁵² UKNA FCO 82/71 Overton to Brimelow [undated].

⁵³ UKNA PREM 15/1268 Meeting between Home and Kissinger 20/12/71.

In kind, the US government learned that greater financial interests in India and the nascent Bangladesh dictated British support for those countries over the government in Islamabad.

The White House's imperative in protecting the link to China continued into the early 1970s. The Chinese government's toughening up of its stance toward New Delhi prompted the White House to assume that any small move in favour of the Indian position could scupper three years' work in facilitating Nixon's trip to Peking in February 1972.⁵⁴ As a result, the US government delayed its formal recognition of Bangladesh until April 1972. At the UK-US summit in February 1973, in response to British criticism of the White House's decision to resume arms supplies to Pakistan, Nixon confirmed that US policy in South Asia remained predicated upon the improving relationship between the US and China.⁵⁵ The "Opening to China" dictated US policy in South Asia throughout Nixon's first term as President.

The disagreements of December 1971 had two identifiable effects on the UK-US relationship. Firstly, in relation to South Asia, both governments renewed their commitments to stability on the subcontinent. This followed a brief period in which Nixon and Kissinger had tacitly abandoned this policy in order to secure the "opening to China". This renewal did not mean, however, that the US and UK shared a common perspective on South Asia. At the Washington summit meeting in February 1973, the two governments confirmed their intentions to continue their favour for India and Pakistan respectively. Secondly, and more generally, the effect of these disagreements was to bring into focus for the UK government the style of US foreign policymaking, and for the US government to appreciate the British response to this. Friendliness returned to the Anglo-American relationship following the Bermuda summit meetings, but issues of communication and differences of opinion remained. Although by 1972, the UK government had become more accustomed to Kissinger's insistence upon secretive negotiations and had experience in arranging his clandestine trips, such as those to Paris for negotiations with the North Vietnamese, there remained a great deal of frustration. In December 1972, Ambassador Cromer sent a cable to the FCO venting his annoyance at the centralised nature of the US foreign policymaking system. He complained that he could not get any answers to policy questions from the US government unless Kissinger was sat behind his desk. By late 1972 Cromer's references to asking the State Department for information were relayed in sardonic terms due to the bureaucracy's exclusion from the policymaking process.⁵⁶ Although differences of interest and breakdowns in communication led to rancorous public disagreements at

⁵⁴ Musson, J (2008) "Britain and the Recognition of Bangladesh in 1972" *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Vol 19 No 1 p126.

⁵⁵ UKNA PREM 15/1978 Conversation between Heath and Nixon 1/2/73.

⁵⁶ UKNA FCO 82/185 Cromer to FCO 20/12/72.

the UN Security council with regard to the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971, the six months prior proved to be a learning curve for both governments in how to deal with one another, paving the way for a greater understanding of one another that allowed for an amiable relationship into 1973.

4. Contribution to the study of Anglo-American relations

This thesis has been unique in adopting a detailed policy-tracing approach toward Anglo-American relations and the South Asian crisis of 1971. In terms of the Anglo-American relationship in South Asia, this thesis has supported to an extent the argument of Simon Smith, that disagreements over the South Asian crisis fit a pattern dating back to the partition of British India in 1947.⁵⁷ The US government demonstrated a willingness to sacrifice friendly relations with India for stronger ties with Pakistan that would be of greater benefit in the fight against the communist powers. Similarly, the British favouring of relations with India as a function of its size, population and strategic significance also fit a post-partition pattern. There was, however a major departure from the Anglo-American orthodoxy of fostering stability on the subcontinent as the most effective method of combatting communist influence. Through its staunch support for the Pakistani regime, Nixon and Kissinger tacitly endangered stability in South Asia in the name of strengthening its geopolitical position with regard to China and the Soviet Union.

In considering US and UK policies toward China and South Asia concurrently, this thesis has provided a thorough analysis of the disagreements evident within the Anglo-American relationship in late 1971. In 1971, dissent over policy on the subcontinent was a consequence of poor communication between the two governments. The secretive foreign policymaking style of President Richard Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger, had an impact upon the quality of information that the British government received with regard to the direction of US foreign policy. Prior to Nixon's announcement of his Administration's new policy toward China on July 15th, the FCO was unaware of the extent to which the State Department was being excluded from the policymaking process. By the end of 1971 and into 1972, the FCO could never be sure of the extent to which the State Department had been briefed on any particular issue. Although it had assurances from Kissinger that South Asia was the special preserve of the White House, such an arrangement caused difficulties for British officials when forming policy that required either communication with the US or consultation on the US policy position. This arrangement compromised the ease of

⁵⁷ Smith, SC (2010) "Coming Down on the Winning Side: Britain and the South Asian Crisis, 1971" *Contemporary British History* Vol 24 No4 p451-470.

diplomatic consultation that has been often cited as one of the three “pillars” of the Anglo-American relationship alongside nuclear and intelligence cooperation.

This thesis has plugged an important gap within a growing revisionist assessment of the Heath -Nixon era in Anglo-American relations. This thesis has demonstrated that disagreements with regard to the South Asian crisis support claims by authors including Andrew Scott, Alex Spelling and Niklas Rossbach who have argued that the secretive White House foreign policymaking style was a greater cause of discord within the Anglo-American relationship than Heath’s desire to have the UK accede to EC.⁵⁸ Heath and Nixon laid strong foundations for their relationship in late 1970 that survived the travails of the second half of 1971. The strong and heated public disagreements at the UN Security Council, during the Indo-Pakistan war of December 1971, led to both governments gaining a greater understanding of one another’s style and priorities in foreign policy at the subsequent Bermuda summit. Despite greater amity in relations post-1971, problems of communication and interest in the Anglo-American relationship, remained into the early 1970s.

⁵⁸ Scott *Allies Apart*; Spelling “Edward Heath and Anglo-American Relations”; Rossbach, NH (2009) *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship: Britain, the US and the EC, 1969-74* Palgrave MacMillan; New York.

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