

Volume 23  
Number 2  
Year 2021  
ISSN 1529-0905



# Journal of BANGLADESH STUDIES



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# A Critical Assessment of Gary Bass's *The Blood Telegram*

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## Abstract

Gary Bass's *The Blood Telegram* narrates the historical and geopolitical backdrop to Bangladesh's war of national liberation, drawing on documents from U.S. and Indian archives, including the White House tapes, diplomatic cables, and papers of senior functionaries. Bass's research exposes the criminality of the Nixon Administration's tilt toward Pakistan Army's brutal repression of the Bengalis, and chronicles that, while the US diplomats in Dhaka, such as Consul General Archer Blood, were remitting real-time assessments of ongoing massacres, ethnic cleansing, and political repression to the State Department and the White House, the Nixon Administration was supporting General Yahya Khan's regime and Pakistan Army's terror campaign of repression in East Pakistan. He also chronicles the inner workings of the Indian political leaders, bureaucrats, and military officials, and the diplomatic maneuvers leading to the Indo-Soviet Treaty. However, Bass's coverage of ongoing developments in Bangladesh/East Pakistan during 1971 is limited and wanting, partly due to his lack of access to archival Bangladeshi materials and his unfamiliarity with the available materials in Bengali. Nevertheless, Bass's book is a critical and consequential work of scholarship.

**Keywords:** Bangladesh, War of National Liberation, massacres, Henry Kissinger, Richard Nixon, Archer Blood

"In history the man in the ruffled shirt and gold-laced waistcoat somehow levitates above the blood he has ordered to be spilled by dirty-handed underlings."

— Francis Jennings (1988, p. 215), cited in Noam Chomsky (1989)

## Introduction

Gary Bass's *The Blood Telegram* narrates the historical and geopolitical backdrop to Bangladesh's war of national liberation. The author draws extensively on U.S. documents, particularly the Nixon White House tapes, materials from the U.S. National Archives, National Security Council, and Foreign Relations of the U.S. series. He also makes judicious use of Indian sources, including P. H. Haksar's papers, and the National Archives of India.

The book is ostensibly motivated by the telegrams, dispatches, and classified cables that Archer Blood, Head of the U.S. Consulate in Dhaka (then Dacca), had sent to the relevant authorities and policymakers in the U.S. Blood and his colleagues dissented from the Nixon Administration's active support for General Yahya Khan's regime when the Pakistan Army was committing brutal and genocidal massacres in East Pakistan.

Bass is a gifted writer. He tells a compelling story, rich in details. Bass gives the readers considerable background and insights about key persons in the story. This involves a large cast of characters, including Prime Ministers and Presidents, Senators and Representatives, policymakers, top-level bureaucrats, military leaders, foreign policy and intelligence officials, and other influential people from the U.S., India, Pakistan, China, the U.S.S.R., and other countries who were somehow or the other involved in the War in 1971.

This review is structured as follows. The first section provides a summary of Bass's book with selected quotes. The second delineates some limitations of Bass's work and places it in the broader literature on the national liberation and history of Bangladesh. This is followed by a concluding section. Bass's book has been published in two editions. The U.S. edition (2013) is subtitled *Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide*, while the Indian edition (2014) is subtitled *India's Secret War in East Pakistan*. The quotations cited in this review are from the Indian edition which cites the original archival sources in the endnotes. Bass also refers to Blood's Memoirs published in 2002.

## A Summary of Bass's Book

Bass sets as his primary task to place the Blood telegram in the context of Nixon's and Kissinger's role in Bangladesh's war of national liberation. Bass's work severely castigates Kissinger's and Nixon's "tilt" that supported the Pakistani military regime during its brutal repression of the Bengalis. The Pakistan Army's massacres of the Bengalis took place while the Nixon Administration was engaged in exploring an opening to China, with the Pakistani regime trying to facilitate the process.

The Nixon Administration did not even reprimand the Yahya regime, let alone try to prevent the massacres and atrocities committed by the Pakistani military in Bangladesh, in spite of Blood's searing descriptions and honest analysis of the situation. The Administration even encouraged Chinese officials to mobilize China's troops to threaten India. Bass tried to interview Kissinger for his book, but it is not surprising that his request was denied (p. xvi).

Following the Pakistan Army's crackdown, Blood sent a cable titled, "Selective Genocide," on March 28, 1971, describing in detail the Pakistan Army's merciless massacres (Blood, 2002). Later, several U.S. diplomats signed the dissent cable that Blood sent to the State Department. Even though Bass does not name all of them, the names of the signatories are readily available from the documents that Gandhi (2002) has compiled.<sup>1</sup>

In the cable, the dissenting U.S. diplomats wrote: "Our government failed to denounce the suppression of democracy. Our government failed to denounce atrocities." The diplomats accused the Nixon Administration of "bending over backwards to placate the West Pak dominated government." The signatories stated: "US policy related to recent developments in East Pakistan serves neither our moral interest broadly defined nor our national interest narrowly defined..." and that they deemed it their "duty to register strong dissent with fundament aspect of this policy." Archer Blood endorsed the "right of the ... officers to voice dissent." While noting that he "subscribe[s] to these views," Blood said that it would be inappropriate for him to sign the cable because he was the principal U.S. diplomat in the East Pakistan Consulate (Gandhi, 2002, Document # 8). The Blood cable infuriated Henry Kissinger and William Rogers (p. 79). As a Kissinger staffer told Bass, Blood became known for "telling in Washington what power in Washington didn't want to hear" (p. 73). Meanwhile, Blood's boss, the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Joseph Farland, became an advocate for Yahya Khan and the Pakistan Army, instructing his subordinates to keep silent, and accept the fact that the Pakistan Army's repression of the Bengalis was "strictly an internal affair of Pakistan" about which U.S. diplomats would have "no comments" (p. 63). In private conversations with Nixon, Kissinger denounced Blood as "this maniac in Dacca [Dhaka]" (p. 117).

President Nixon was favorably predisposed toward Pakistan. Indeed, he bore animosity toward India from his days in the Eisenhower Administration. Bass reports Nixon as having said: "Pakistan is a country I would like to do everything for" (p. 3). In contrast, Nixon is quoted as saying: "I don't like the Indians" (p. 5), "The Pakistanis are straightforward — and sometimes extremely stupid. The Indians are more devious, sometimes so smart that we fall for their lines" (p. 214). Bass quotes Nixon's Chief of Staff as stating that Nixon had a "visceral dislike" for Mrs. Gandhi, while he maintained that "[p]eople like Yahya are responsible leaders" (p. 29). When Nixon was appraised about the massacres in East Pakistan, he remarked, "I wouldn't put out a statement praising it, but we're not going to condemn it either" (p. 64).

Kissinger lauded General Yahya Khan's Sandhurst style: "Yahya is tough, direct, and with a good sense of humor" (p. 7). Bass is correct that it was not just the personal assessments. India and Mrs. Indira Gandhi were disdained and despised in the corridors of power in Washington DC because of India's non-alignment during the Cold War era. Kissinger bluntly told his staff that "[t]he President will be very reluctant to do anything that Yahya would interpret as a personal affront" (p. 30), thus making "the case for inaction." On hearing reports about the Pakistan Army's massacres in Dhaka University, Kissinger rationalized the Pakistan Army's actions by apparently referring to the Muslim rulers of India noting, "[t]hey didn't dominate 400 million Indians all those years by being gentle" (p. 68). Kissinger was fully aware that the Pakistan Army was using U.S. military equipment, such as F-86 and C-130 aircrafts, tanks, and light arms, in the vicious repression. However, the Nixon Administration had no interest in urging the Yahya regime to uphold or honor the election results (p. 27). On April 19, 1971, ruling out putting any pressure on the Yahya regime, Kissinger declared: "[N]o matter what our view may be of the savagery of the West Pakistani troops, we would just be pulling India's chestnuts out of the fire if we take on West Pakistan" (p. 113). Nixon made his endorsement clear by scribbling in a memo: "To all hands. Don't squeeze Yahya at this time" (pp. 115-116). Bass remarks that Nixon emphasized his endorsement by underlining the word "Don't" three times. Not only did the U.S. not squeeze Yahya "at this time," it never "squeezed" him. Indeed, the Administration did all it could to support the Pakistan regime. Nixon told Kissinger: "Let the goddamn Indians fight a war." To which Kissinger averred: "They are the most aggressive goddamn people around there" (p. 143). Angry that Mrs. Gandhi was preparing to intervene in East Pakistan, Nixon remarked: "The Indians need — what they need really is a —." Ever the courtier, Kissinger added: "they're such bastards", as Nixon finished his sentence: "A massive famine" (p. 144).

When Kissinger visited India in July 1971, the Indian authorities asked him to visit a refugee camp. However, Kissinger flatly refused (p. 171). Bass provides a classic example of Kissinger's propensity for audacious duplicity when he told Indian officials that the U.S. would support India if China were to make any military threats against India (p. 163). Little did the Indians suspect that the Nixon Administration was on the way to opening diplomatic relations with China.

Part of the reason for Nixon's and Kissinger's tilt for Yahya was that the Pakistani regime was serving as a conduit for a secret channel to China. Kissinger pressured the World Bank President McNamara to have the Bank provide funding to keep Yahya in power at least until he served the Administration's purpose (p. 148). When the State Department asked the White House to suspend military shipments of equipment and spare parts to Pakistan, Kissinger refused to authorize it (p. 158). However, the Administration's support cannot be explained *solely* because of the Yahya regime's role in secret diplomacy. As Nixon told Kissinger: "Look, even apart from the Chinese thing, I wouldn't do that to help the Indians, the Indians are no goddam good" (p. 153). It is further reinforced by the fact that the U.S. continued to back Pakistan even after Yahya's usefulness as a conduit to China ended after Kissinger's secret trip to Beijing (p. 173). By mid-July 1971, Nixon had already informed the public that he had accepted an invitation to visit China (p. 175).

Nixon and Kissinger continued to support the Pakistan regime. Kissinger characterized Indians as "insufferably arrogant," congratulated himself and Yahya Khan for "[t]he cloak and dagger exercise" for the China trip. He told Nixon that "Yahya hasn't had such fun since the last Hindu massacre" (p. 177). Kissinger did not hesitate to compare Yahya to Abraham Lincoln, telling Nixon: "He will fight. Just as Lincoln would have fought. To him East Pakistan is part of Pakistan" (p. 209). Kissinger would rationalize the Nixon Administration's actions, claiming that "the best way to deter war would have been to continue arms deliveries to Pakistan" (p. 205).

Bass writes in details about Mrs. Gandhi's November 1971 meetings with Nixon and Kissinger in the White House (pp. 244-257). The Indian side saw that Nixon remained committed to Yahya regime. Revealing their visceral hatred for Mrs. Gandhi as well as their sexism, both Nixon and Kissinger referred to Mrs. Gandhi as "a bitch" or as "the old witch" during their private conversations (pp. 235-236). Kissinger would justify the U.S. position to Nixon: "Well, the Indians are bastards anyway. They are starting a war there" (p. 235).

Contrary to the Nixon Administration, Senator Edward Kennedy emerged as a vocal advocate for the Bengali cause. Kennedy went to India and visited Bengali refugee camps in West Bengal and Tripura. At a National Press Club briefing, Kennedy described the conditions of Bengali refugees as "the most appalling tide of human misery in modern times" (pp. 231-232). For Kennedy it was clear that the Bengali refugees were fleeing from "truly genocidal acts of their government" (p. 234).

The Nixon Administration understood that war was inevitable after the failed Washington meeting with Mrs. Gandhi. The CIA reported that the prospects of the Chinese acting to support the Pakistan Army was nil (p. 239), but this did not prevent Kissinger from trying to prompt China to undertake military actions to threaten India. Bass reports that Kissinger passed on classified intelligence information to Hua Huang regarding Indian vulnerability in its northern border during his clandestine meeting with Chinese diplomats (p. 263). Kissinger was confident that the Chinese would take his bait and move its troops. Bass quotes Kissinger as reporting to Nixon: "They're going to move. No question, they're going to move" (p. 306). Bass writes that "[d]espite believing that a war — possibly a nuclear war — was possible between the Soviet Union and China, Kissinger insisted on China in a spiraling crisis." Bass's assessment of the documentary record is that the Nixon Administration "was ready to escalate" (p. 308). However, it soon became obvious as the Indo-Pakistan war progressed, the Chinese had no intention of starting a military adventure against India. It was the U.S.S.R. that informed the Nixon Administration that Mrs. Gandhi's objective was solely the liberation of Bangladesh, and that she had no nefarious intention against West Pakistan (p. 309).

Besides the political cover that the Nixon Administration provided to the Yahya regime, the Administration took several concrete measures to preserve the status quo in South Asia. Apart from encouraging China to mobilize troops to threaten India, the U.S. deployed naval vessels, including an aircraft carrier group consisting of the USS *Enterprise*, to the Bay of Bengal to project power and possibly stifle Indian military initiative. The Administration also approved a covert supply of U.S. military aircrafts and equipment via Jordan and Iran to Pakistan and instructed the Saudis and Turks to transfer more aircrafts to Pakistan. The State Department officials advised the Nixon Administration that transferring U.S.-supplied weapons from its allies to Pakistan "is prohibited on the basis of legal authority" (p. 294). The Administration went ahead knowing fully that this was illegal.

Nixon undertook diplomatic actions in the UN Security Council calling for a ceasefire in East Pakistan. The Nixon Administration secretly instructed George H. W. Bush to cooperate with China in calling for a ceasefire and withdrawal of Indian troops. However, the U.S.S.R. vetoed two resolutions supported by the U.S. and China. Meanwhile the White House used its full might to label India as the aggressor, ignoring that it was Pakistan that

initiated the war and that India's military intervention was meant to prevent the genocide in East Pakistan. Nixon and Kissinger loathed India so much that they did not hesitate to take actions that risked escalating the Indo-Pakistan war into a global conflict.

Bass renders a clear and comprehensive account of inner workings of the Indian government and the diplomatic maneuvers that led to the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation. Besides drawing on Indian archives, he relies on the papers of Haksar who, as the principal secretary to the Prime Minister, was Mrs. Gandhi's foremost adviser and confidante. Bass points out that, whereas Indian intelligence assessment was that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto would strike a deal and avoid a civil war to attain political power (p. 45), Haksar presciently warned that "2½ Divisions of Pak Army is poised to decimate East Pakistan" (p. 48). Hence, Haksar urged Indian authorities to be prepared for the worst and seek military supplies from the U.S.S.R. Likewise, the Indian strategist K. Subrahmanyam was skeptical that India could avoid a war with Pakistan. He argued that if India could defeat the Pakistan Army and liberate Bangladesh, the international community would accept this as a *fait accompli* (pp. 91-92). Sam Manekshaw advised Mrs. Gandhi to postpone any military intervention until winter, which would deter any Chinese military due to the snow in the Himalayan passes. D. P. Dhar suggested the Indian paramilitary forces arm, support, and train the Bengali resistance. It did not take long for the Indian authorities to realize that Indian military intervention was necessary to stop the genocide in East Pakistan, prevent the influx of refugees, and assist the Bengali resistance to defeat the Pakistan Army. Meanwhile, Haksar urged Mrs. Gandhi to withhold a formal recognition of the Bangladesh government-in-exile while doing "whatever lies within our power to sustain the struggle" (p. 101). Haksar also knew that a central tenet of India's foreign policy was non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign nations (p. 124), but he maintained that considering the genocidal massacres that were occurring, Indian diplomats would have to argue, both in diplomatic parlance and in the court of the world public opinion, that the events in East Pakistan were no longer Pakistan's internal affairs. The influx of millions of Bengalis fleeing Pakistan Army's massacres into India made the crisis an "an internal problem for India," stated Mrs. Gandhi (p. 126). For Mrs. Gandhi, creating the conditions for the return of the refugees back to their home was a strategic priority. (Bass states that White House staff estimated that the cost of hosting the refugees amounted to between \$700 million to \$1 billion annually). Moreover, Mrs. Gandhi was also concerned that the presence of Bengali refugees in West Bengal could be politically destabilizing.

Mrs. Gandhi was never particularly keen about signing a mutual defense treaty with the U.S.S.R. But the lukewarm support for India that was evident during her tour of the Western capitals convinced Mrs. Gandhi that only the U.S.S.R. could provide the strategic cover and military equipment for India's intervention. Moreover, Dhar championed the case for a treaty. Manekshaw was obsessed with the risk of Chinese intervention but believed the treaty with the U.S.S.R. necessary to deter any Chinese threats. Finally, Mrs. Gandhi relented and agreed to an Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty. The Soviet leadership, however, urged India till the very last minute to refrain from the military option. Bass reports that amid the Indo-Pakistan war, Mrs. Gandhi dispatched D. P. Dhar back to the U.S.S.R. for additional support. While the U.S.S.R. was still reluctant to recognize Bangladesh, the Soviet ambassador in New Delhi assured the Indians that, if necessary, the U.S.S.R. would undertake diversionary troop movements in its borders against the Chinese (p. 305). Internal Indian records reveal that Mrs. Gandhi resisted any temptation to capture a major city in West Pakistan (p. 322).

Bass tellingly sums up one aspect of Kissinger when he says that "[A]n apology from Henry Kissinger is too much to expect." Kissinger has not apologized for his long list of crimes, such as bombing of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, overthrowing Salvador Allende in Chile, fostering a war in the Middle East, and supporting the military junta in Argentina. Hersh (1983) has profiled these and other crimes. Bass ends his book by indicating what happened to Archer Blood after he sent his dissenting cables. The Nixon Administration transferred him out of Dhaka. Blood never got an opportunity to serve as a U.S. Ambassador, though he served as the deputy chief of mission in New Delhi during the Carter Administration. He retired from the Foreign Service in 1982. Upon retirement he taught at Allegheny College, a prestigious liberal arts college in Pennsylvania, as its diplomat-in-residence. He waited for the U.S. authorities to declassify his cables and other documents before he published his memoirs, *The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh* (Blood, 2002). He died shortly thereafter in 2004, aged 81.

## Some Critical Comments

Bass covers pretty much the same ground as Srinath Raghavan's (2013) earlier book. However, Bass's book is more lucid. Whereas Raghavan is an academic, Bass is a journalist, and a former reporter for the *Economist*. Bass's book has the mark of an investigative reporter. He depicts the characters and events with drama and details.

For a more complete background to Bangladesh's national liberation and its aftermath, readers can consult several works by Bangladeshis and international scholars and policymakers, many of which are rich and substantive.

However, it must be pointed out that since the Chinese archives are closed to external researchers, both Bass (2014) and Ragahavan (2013) miss an important dimension in the international geopolitical context to Bangladesh's national liberation.

Bass's coverage of ongoing developments in Bangladesh/East Pakistan during 1971 is limited and wanting. This is undoubtedly due to his lack of access to archival and other Bangladeshi materials. Although Bass makes extensive use of Indian documents, he says little about the complex and multifaceted relationships of Bangladesh government-in-exile, the Bengali resistance, and the Indian authorities. Bass does give some descriptions of the brutal massacres and crimes committed by the Pakistani Army, drawing on Blood cables, and interviews of U.S. diplomats and news reports, but he could have provided more extensive quotes and descriptions based on easily available materials in English.

Even though the Pakistani Army specifically targeted the Bengali Hindu community, the Pakistani army also committed war crimes against Bengali Muslims. To be sure, the Pakistan Army fostered anti-Hindu bigotry and an anti-India rhetoric that lent itself to the disproportionate targeting of the Bengali Hindu community, but as rule, the Pakistani Army and its allies engaged in indiscriminate use of violence and repression on the Bengali population, irrespective of religion. Bass cites *New York Times* journalist Sydney Schanberg observing the ethnic hatred of the Pakistan junta for Bengalis (p. 81).

Bass's book includes photographs of the principal American and Indian statespersons and functionaries. However, it does not have any photographs of the war victims, refugees, squalid conditions of the refugee camps, men and women fleeing the brutality of the repression, Bengali *Mukti Bahini* (freedom fighters), or death and destruction that occurred during the war of national liberation. There are no photographs of the key Bangladeshi leaders, not even of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, let alone Tajuddin Ahmed, and other key players. Tajuddin Ahmed is referred to just five times in the book, including twice in the footnotes. However, Tajuddin Ahmed's vital role in leading Bangladesh government-in-exile has been widely recognized in recent years, thanks to Hasan's (2008 [1986]) participant-observer memoirs and Ahsan's (2018) biography of Tajuddin Ahmed. However, Bob Dylan (p. 212-213), or Arundhati Ghose (the Government of India's key liaison to the Bangladesh Government-in-exile) gets more coverage than does Tajuddin Ahmed in Bass's narrative.

Bass gives a full picture of Kissinger's prompting the Chinese authorities to make some military moves. However, he provides no explanation why China did not follow through on the Nixon Administration's prompting, or Pakistani leadership's plea for material assistance and military support against India. The Chinese archives are not accessible to foreign scholars, so document-based analysis is not possible. However, at the very least, Bass could have offered some plausible hypothesis about why the Chinese chose not to intervene.

Bass did not interview many Bangladeshis. When Bass did interview a few Bangladeshis, it is not clear why he chose the people that he did. For instance, he interviewed Mizanur Rahman Choudhury, who had served as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh under General Ershad's dictatorial regime. But he was hardly a figure of any political consequence, or intellectual significance. The paucity of archival materials from Bangladesh and primary documents available to overseas researchers are probably the main reasons for this relative lack of attention to Bangladeshi materials in Bass's book.

The subtitle of the Indian version of the book suggests that India's war in East Pakistan, or rather India's support for the national liberation of Bangladesh, was a secret. Actually, it was open knowledge that India was helping *Mukti Bahini* from the start. The *New York Times* reported so in print in April 1971. Of course, Indian officials denied providing military assistance to the *Mukti Bahini* and the Bangladesh government-in-exile. If it was a secret, then it was the worst kept secret of 1971.

Bass is correct in pointing out the Soviet Union's restraining and cautious role. But Bass underestimates the vital role of Indo-Soviet treaty in providing Mrs. Gandhi the room to maneuver. Mrs. Gandhi was shrewdly aware that India's military overreach could have adverse consequences. The claims of India's malign intentions of destroying West Pakistan may have been concoctions of Kissinger's imagination and Nixon's ramblings.

Bass does not speculate why the Bangladesh genocide has been largely forgotten and remains slighted in Western discourse. It is not because the scale of the massacres was small. The facts were well known. The events were contemporaneously, even widely, publicized in the Western press. Rather the repression was carried by a regime with which the United States — and the Western countries — were allied during the Cold War against the Soviet Union. It is easier and more convenient to condemn the crimes of one's enemies than one's own crimes. Hence, Western countries' crimes and the crimes of Western countries' allied dictators just do not merit the same type of coverage or attention given to the crimes of one's official enemies. Given Kissinger's and the Nixon Administration's blatant support for the Pakistani Army, it is convenient to consign the genocidal massacres to the footnotes of history, while

the crimes of the official enemies are highlighted in the headlines and titles of history. The likes of Samantha Power reflect this phenomenon. Bangladesh genocide gets only a brief mention in Power's (2013 [2002], p. 82) massive tome on genocide, where Kissinger's role is barely mentioned. Fittingly enough, Power is the 2016 recipient of the Henry A. Kissinger Prize.<sup>2</sup>

Many people remain under the illusion that Kissinger is an intellectually impressive figure. It is true that Kissinger can juxtapose polysyllabic phrases but he is without any moral qualms. He also is someone who brought the world to the brink of disaster. Hersh (1983) evinces Kissinger's pettiness, back-stabbing, paranoia, selfishness, deceitfulness, half-truths, deliberate misinformation, self-promotion, mania, dedication to undermining peace and stability, warmongering, and disregard for laws, constitution, and morality.

In the epilogue of his book, Bass devotes just two and half pages to Bangladesh, while devoting six pages each to India and Pakistan. The events of 1971 continue to have reverberations in Bangladesh politics, Bass shrewdly observes. The Awami League regime was unable to deal successfully with the post-war economy and faced a grave famine in 1974. Sheikh Mujib established a one-party state in 1975, which ended with the downfall of the regime. Sheikh Mujib and most of his family were murdered brutally in a coup. Today Sheikh Mujib's daughter is the Prime Minister. In spite of impressive progress in various social and economic areas, the quest for democracy and human rights in Bangladesh remains elusive.

## Conclusion

Bass's careful analysis establishes some clear findings. First, Nixon and Kissinger were favorably predisposed toward Pakistan. This was not just because of Yahya's willingness to provide a secret channel to China. Second, Nixon and Kissinger were extremely prejudiced against Indians and Mrs. Gandhi. Third, though Archer Blood's cables provided White House detailed information about the scale and scope of the Pakistan Army's atrocities, Nixon and Kissinger chose to back the Yahya regime knowing fully that it was committing ghastly crimes. Fourth, the Nixon Administration provided military assistance even though it was deemed illegal. Fifth, though the Nixon Administration secretly encouraged the Chinese to exert its military pressure on India, the Chinese refused to move their troops. However, the Chinese leadership's strategic views and the reasons for its decisions have not been documented, but the U.S.S.R. and internal factors may have constrained the Chinese. Sixth, the Nixon Administration was willing to escalate the war by sending a U.S. aircraft carrier fleet into the Bay of Bengal, encouraging Chinese military maneuvers, transferring weapons to Pakistan through intermediaries, and threatening the U.S.S.R. Finally, the U.S.S.R. tried to restrain India, but its critical military and diplomatic support enabled Indians to undertake the military initiative necessary to liberate Bangladesh.

Despite its limitations, Bass's book is an important contribution, based on careful reading of primary documents now available in the public domain. It is a powerful and devastating indictment of the Nixon Administration's malfeasance and crimes.

Bass has done a remarkable job in exposing Nixon's and Kissinger's disgraceful roles in the perpetration of the Pakistani military regime's massacres in Bangladesh. The documentary evidence leaves no doubt that Nixon and Kissinger abetted the crimes committed by the Yahya regime and acted in violation of U.S. laws. Yet Nixon and Kissinger are still treated as respected statesmen. Perhaps the book can puncture their fabricated prestige. More importantly Bass's book deserves high praise as valuable scholarly effort to inform Western readers about the "forgotten" genocide that had occurred in Bangladesh during 1971.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> It is worth recalling the names of these U.S. diplomats who were bravely willing to stand up for human rights, though it would earn the wrath of Henry Kissinger and probably affect their career prospects in the State Department. The following diplomats signed Blood's famous telegram: Brian Bell, Robert L. Bourquein, W. Scott Butcher, Eric Griffel, Zachary M. Hahn, Jake Harshbarger, Robert A. Jackson, Lawrence Koegel, Joseph A. Malpeli, Willard D. McCleary, Desaix Myers, John L. Nesvig, William Grant Parr, Robert Carce, Richard L. Simpson, Robert C. Simpson, Richard E. Suttor, Wayne E. Swengurg, Richard L. Wilson, and Shannon W. Wilson. In a separate confidential letter addressed to the Secretary of the State, eight State Department specialists on South Asia endorsed the views expressed in the cable. These officials were: Craig Baxter, A. Peter Burliegh, Townsend S. Swayze, Joel M. Woldman, Anthony C. E. Quainton, Howard B. Schaffer, Douglas M. Cochran, John Eaves, and Robert A. Flaten (Gandhi 2002, Document # 8).

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.americanacademy.de/events/henry-a-kissinger-prize/>



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