

# DEFENCE PLANNING AND PREPARATIONS —NEW IMPERATIVES

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## THE EVENTS OF 1971

TO say that the events of 1971 marked the end of one stage in the evolution of countries of the sub-continent and the beginning of another would be stating the obvious. The events of 1971 developed the way they did despite positive efforts by some global and other Powers. Hence the reluctance of the Powers concerned to accept present realities. Hence also the possible danger of some at least of the Powers persisting in their efforts if not to reverse the course of history at least to initiate trends towards the re-establishment of conditions wherein the countries of the sub-continent would expend their resources and energies in mutual conflict and so permit external Powers to order the affairs of the region as it suits their own interests. Herein lies the danger to India, Bangla Desh and all other peace-loving countries in the sub-continent, and eventually even to Pakistan.

General Yahya Khan and his lieutenants appreciated that conceding the principle of complete autonomy to East Pakistan (as it then was) would mean restoration of trade relations with India and an end to the policy of confrontation. That would have meant a reversal of the policy that Pakistan had chosen to adopt right from its inception. It would also have meant a reduction not only in the size of Pakistan's armed forces but also in its power. Finally it would have meant an end to the dominance of West Punjab in Pakistan's affairs. These, the ruling elite of Pakistan were unprepared to accept.

They reasoned that if overwhelming force was used swiftly and suddenly to crush Bengali nationalism by eliminating leadership cadres of the Awami League, Bengal's autonomy movement would be contained. The armed forces could then methodically set about securing the "final solution for the East Pakistan problem" in terms of which Bengal's intellectuals and every male Bengali with leadership potential would be "eliminated"; the

minority community numbering 12 million would be decimated or driven out; Bengali language reduced to the status of a dialect and Urdu introduced as the sole language of administration and commerce; overall, Bengali population would be reduced to a minority in Pakistan and gradually West Pakistanis inducted into the East Wing to create a new people fanatically loyal to Pakistan.

The critical phase according to them, would be the first one of liquidating the top leadership cadres of Bengalis. General Tikka Khan had assured General Yahya Khan that he would be able to restore "complete order" in the province within 72 hours. Even if it took a little longer than 72 hours, General Yahya Khan and his adviser appeared to be confident that they could 'solve' the Bengali problem by the use of overwhelming force. The President had taken the precaution of obtaining the promise of full diplomatic support as well as military support short of actual intervention with troops both from the USA and China. He had also taken the precaution of massively reinforcing the East Wing in preparation for the planned massacres.

India could be held in check by political and other pressures from USA and China. Apparently, Pakistan's patrons too endorsed General Yahya Khan's assessments and plans. When massacres, arson, and other acts of terrorisation failed to subdue Bengali nationalism and when Super Power pressures and threats failed to deter India from sheltering ten million helpless refugees and sustaining freedom fighters, Gen Yahya Khan prepared to strike in the West in a bid to seize Jammu and Kashmir and if possible some areas of Punjab and Rajasthan as well so as to be able to trade those areas for the East Wing. USA secretly and China not quite so secretly, supplied arms and equipment and supported Pakistan's plans. Evidently, USA believed that Pakistan's professional officers and men were more than a match for India's, especially as Pakistan had better weapons and equipment and numerically were not inferior to the forces that India could muster on the critical Western front which in any Pakistan—India confrontation will be the decisive theatre.

Pakistan, as well as American and Chinese expectations were that General Yahya Khan may just manage to retain his grip on the East Wing. However, if he failed in that venture, by a pre-emptive strike in the West, Pakistan's powerful air and ground strike forces would, by a quick and stunning blow, paralyse at least a part of India's defences in Kashmir, Punjab and/or Rajasthan and capture sufficient real estate to enable Pakistan's powerful friends to force India to accept a settlement on their terms. When Pakistani forces in the East collapsed much earlier than expected and when its well armed and well drilled forces in the West failed to make any headway despite their heavy losses in equipment and men, Pakistan's

patrons made determined efforts to bail out Pakistan diplomatically in the UN and militarily by despatching a nuclear task force to evacuate Pakistan's beleaguered garrisons. These efforts indicate the extent of Great Power commitments to Pakistan and correspondingly the extent of the wrath and pressures that India may encounter in attempting to adhere to her policy of independence, maintenance of peace in the region and non-involvement in Super Power confrontations. This is the context in which our defence policy and programme for the decade ahead has to be charted. Hence the relevance of examining briefly the main strategic and tactical lessons brought out during the 14 day war. The changing power alignments in the context of global and regional affairs and the present and future military potential of possible adversaries are no less relevant.

### SOME LESSONS

The main lessons that became obvious even as General Yahya Khan launched his surprise preemptive air and land strikes on December 3, 1971, were that for any campaign to succeed, political objectives must be clearly defined and firm political direction must be retained throughout in order that military goals—completely in consonance with national political objectives—are chosen and unified military action is directed to attain the goals selected. Further, political objectives and policy must take full cognisance of military realities—that is, while political policy takes primacy it must needs take note of military capabilities and the time factor in developing mutually sustaining diplomatic and military postures and action.

As a corollary, long term intelligence and strategic assessments must be made by a qualified body which can objectively evaluate intelligence and political, economic and technological projections and so arrive at fair assessments. Such assessments in turn would lead to a series of contingent plans, enabling national leaders to deal with developing situations diplomatically on the one hand and service leaders on the other, to take silent preparatory action to modify contingent plans and be ready to implement them as occasion demands. A point of importance which deserves special emphasis is that in the political environment now obtaining, it will be difficult for a power to keep fighting indefinitely. Even a Super Power has found it necessary to create political groupings so as to impart to its military operations a flavour of international action. Again, even with powerful external support, General Yahya Khan found it impossible to suppress by armed action the struggle for freedom of an exploited people. Had he quickly succeeded in suppressing Bengali nationalism, his patrons would have given him all the help needed to ensure that the torch of freedom would never be kindled again in that country. Also if the war that Pakistan launched in a move to transform the Pakistan-Bangla Desh struggle into an Indo-Pakis-

tani affair had not quickly and successfully concluded, Pakistan's backers would have compelled this country to accept Pakistan's terms *in toto*. The moral therefore is that for this country which, by pursuing an independent policy, has incurred the wrath of two Great Powers, it has become imperative to be able to defend itself *effectively and quickly* against aggression by neighbours enjoying outside patronage.

At the operational level the principal lessons were that the three services must act in perfect unison if effective national defence at bearable cost is to be achieved. In the environment in which the forces would be called upon to act in the future, no operation would be a single service operation. All three would be involved in one from or other. Hence defence plans have to be evolved jointly by the three Services and the plans would have to be implemented jointly. This accent on the joint nature of planning and conduct of operations would ensure that risks are realistically assessed from the stand point of national objectives rather than of individual service preferences and that operations are launched and conducted under conditions providing maximum effectiveness.

In 1971 such joint planning and conduct of operations was accomplished entirely on an *ad hoc* basis primarily because of the personalities of the three Chiefs of Staff, the confidence which the Prime Minister reposed in them, and the role played by the Defence Secretariat under the guidance of the Defence Minister. In theory, changes in the holders of these high offices should not make any difference to the way in which policy is evolved and contingent plans are developed and implemented. In practice however, very much would depend on individual personalities—especially when no formal organisation exists and procedures have to be settled on the spur of the moment, and plans finalised in a race against time. Since the welfare of the nation—indeed its very existence as a free and independent country—would depend on the way a crisis is handled, it is much too risky to depend on the spirit of accommodation of individual holders of particular offices, ignoring the need for a sound organisation for defence operational planning.

Irrespective of the nature of the crisis situations that the country may have to encounter in the future it would be necessary to have a national security body. The political body at the apex such as one in existence under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister has to be served by a permanent staff body. The External Affairs Policy Planning Body suitably reinforced would be adequate but it is essential that this body should continue to be headed by a political personality and strengthened by the inclusion of competent representatives from the Defence Services. Nowhere is the need so great as in the field of intelligence gathering and assessment,

The prejudices against defence services—an unfortunate inheritance from the past—have not as yet disappeared although political leadership has recognised and accorded the armed forces their proper role as an effective instrument for safeguarding national security within the framework set for them by political leadership.

For the armed forces to be effective—that is for the country to get the maximum security out of the funds voted for national defence—a Chief of Defence Staff who can direct Joint Staff Planning and conduct of operations is thus essential. For the Chief of Defence Staff to be effective, he must be served by a competent body of Joint Staff drawn from all the three Services who could deal with intelligence, joint training, joint planning and the conduct of operations—which as stated earlier would necessarily involve more than one service in any future crisis situation.

Another aspect of the problem whose significance does not seem to have been fully appreciated either in governmental circles or outside, is that apart from want of co-ordination in operational planning which the present system makes it difficult to achieve, in a great many areas the system promotes duplication of effort—and inefficiency. As stressed earlier, the 1971 operations succeeded only because of a unique combination of forceful but cooperative and dedicated personalities.

For the future, demands for funds for the three Services, especially the Navy and the Air Force would increase.

Since the availability of funds will be strictly limited, allotment to individual services would have to be based on *overall needs* and in accordance with carefully evolved priorities. A useful institution would be a Defence Planning Committee with a Junior Minister or other public figure as Chairman under whose direction, representatives of the three services could study and formulate long term equipment plans for the forces. Long term equipment plans would have to be evolved in the light of possible technological developments abroad, the progress attending our attempts to absorb advanced technologies, our own R & D efforts, our overall plans for industrialisation and above all our threat perceptions in the long term, intermediate and near time frames.

Such long term equipment planning for defence would enable us to proceed on sound lines with the task of building up our defence forces for the future. It would also provide the necessary impetus for vigorously expanding key sectors of modern industry, such as electronics, aircraft, ship-building and heavy engineering. Also individual services have tended in the past to maintain their own logistic organisations. The Secretariat hitherto has not been conspicuously successful in streamlining these

organisations. Medical Services are the only supporting service who have been functioning as a unified service for all the three branches of the armed forces.

A measure of unification—certainly rationalisation—is possible in most other branches of logistic support. Other areas—not strictly logistic—where unification/rationalisation would promote efficiency and economy are in the field of education and communications within the armed forces.

A Joint Staff can and ought to take charge of all aspects of coordination of activities within the three armed services. This staff would be part of the Ministry of Defence proper, whose secretarial element could then attend to their proper role of serving the Defence Minister and his junior colleagues, deal with other central ministries, State Governments and the public and attend to budget, pay, pension and personnel policies as well as miscellaneous administrative duties.

The organisational changes—namely the institution of a Defence Planning Committee with a Minister of State (or a Deputy Minister) as Chairman, a Chief of Defence Staff heading a competent and adequate Joint Staff and the redefinition of the proper role of the secretarial element of the Defence Minister—would seem to be long over due. The present time is opportune to introduce the changes.

The strategic environment that is likely to prevail in the future time frame and our role in the region as we visualise it, would broadly determine the size of our armed forces and equipment that they should have.

The global strategic environment in the Seventies will be characterised by American efforts to maintain its lead in strategic weaponry, with Russia attempting to draw level as soon as possible. Although American ICBM inventory stands at 1054 as declared by Mr Laird, American lead in key areas of weapon technology such as MIRV, underwater detection and monitoring system and computer technology is so clear that it would take Russia at least five years to approach America's present level. Russian rate of submarine building appears to be faster than America's but given American superiority in detection systems and the greater delivery accuracy of America's multiple war heads, it is unlikely that Russia will over take America in overall strategic weaponry in the current or coming decade. But as Russia builds up her weaponry, American efforts to maintain its *present ratio of superiority* will become progressively more expensive. Hence American strategy to retain its overall superiority rests on four approaches. Firstly by persuading Russia (through the medium of talks at Helsinki and Vienna) to freeze, as far as possible, strategic inventories at their present levels. The first SALT agreement judging from official pronouncements is

likely to fix limits on ABM deployments which would mean that neither side would have provocations to increase their attack weapons. It would also, hopefully, set some limits on the offensive or attack weapon systems of both powers. Secondly America would introduce into service during the second half of the decade, the powerful advanced manned strategic bomber (AMSA) and its associated weaponry, the SCAD and SRAM and continue with its programme of "mirving" its land based as well as sea-based strategic weapons. These measures would compel Russia to devote its energies both to the development of its *defensive* as well as its *offensive* weapon systems and thus *prevent* Russia from significantly increasing its strike potential vis-a-vis America. Thirdly, by drawing closer to China, the latter could be persuaded to devote her resources to develop and deploy IRBMS, which would *increase* the threat to Russia and Russia's close allies in the near time frame and correspondingly *improve* the overall strategic balance of America vis-a-vis Russia. Reportedly President Nixon and Dr Kissinger during their recent Peking talks assured China that USA is not hostile to that country—and by implication China need worry only about her northern neighbour. President Nixon also reportedly offered to provide China with satellite pictures of the long and uneasy Sino-Soviet borders, thus enabling China to target her IRBMS more effectively on Russia.

Fourthly, to seek to shut out Russian underwater fleet from as many strategic seas as possible and so improve the servicing and survivability factor of America own underwater fleet, and thus enhance America's strategic lead over Russia.

America's prime strategic concern is thus Russia. South Asia is of very limited significance, as indicated by one school of American strategists. Even so, American commitment to China and Pakistan—two powers who together have physically invaded this country on five occasions during the past twenty five years causes this country justifiable anxiety.

In a recent statement, President Nixon referred to ethnic and other minority problems in India. Premier Chou En Lai has referred on more than one occasion to "nationalities" problems in India. And more recently Mr. Chou En Lai in the joint communique issued on the eve of President Nixon's departure from China saw fit to refer to Kashmir, underlining China's support for the right of the people of Kashmir for "self determination".

The warning to India from these countries that China would do all it can to foment trouble in Jammu and Kashmir and in our Eastern states is clear and loud. Both countries have also declared their unqualified support for Pakistan. The latter is still unprepared to adjure the use of force in resolving its disputes with this country. Further, it has declared its intention of building up the "finest armed forces" in Asia. Since Pakistan's leaders have frankly been declaring that their only enemy is India, it is

cumbent on Indian leaders to maintain vigil—while continuing with our national policy of seeking the friendship of all countries and especially our neighbours.

This indicates the measure of the threats to our security. In the worst contingency, a re-armed and resurgent Pakistan could renew its efforts to annex Kashmir by a more massive pre-emptive strike than the one delivered in December, 1971. China at that time could support Pakistan in a variety of ways. She could mobilise troops in Western Tibet seeking to enlarge the area of Aksai Chin in her illegal occupation. She could simultaneously increase the size of her "road building force" in the Gilgit area from its present level of 20,000 to two or three times that number. She could also mount an offensive across our borders in Arunachala either from Tibet or from Chungtien.

A force of approximately five to seven divisions could be inducted into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Western Tibet from bases in Sinkiang and another five to three divisions into Arunachala or on other northeastern states from the Chungtien area. These forces would supplement the assault troops already in position in Tibet numbering over fifteen infantry divisions.

China could combine these with a subtle nuclear threat by positioning one or more batteries of IRBMs in Tibet so as to have within its reach our industrial and political centres in Eastern and Northern India. At the bottom end of the spectrum she could step up support to dissident elements in Jammu and Kashmir and in the Eastern states and so foment internal unrest.

This is the magnitude of threat that China could pose, which our defence planners would have to take steps to ward off.

Pakistan refrained from launching all her main strike forces in the Western sector in the fall of 1971, on the advice of her patrons who probably felt that if the fighting continued another 72 hours—or even another 48 hours—the bulk of Pakistan's air and tank forces would be knocked out. This would have resulted in the fall of the entire military Junta and the possible emergence of a popular government—a prospect which Pakistan's arms donors did not apparently relish.

As of now, Pakistan's three Services have been purged of their top leadership. New commanders who have recently been inducted would need time to reorganise and retrain their commands. As President Bhutto has remarked to visiting Indian Journalists, manpower is not Pakistan's problem. Equipment is, up to a point. China has, reportedly made good losses in the equipment previously supplied by her. Chinese T-55 tanks



and MIG-19 planes would no doubt be supplied. But without American largesse, Pakistan's armed forces would not have the striking power that they would like to have. In its present mood it is doubtful whether American Congress would support the outright gift of American arms to Pakistan on a massive scale. In the absence of congressional support, the Administration could supply limited quantities of "surplus" equipment such as F-104 Mach 2 Starfighters, M-48 Patton tanks and M-113 APCs besides 'spares' for previously supplied American weapons. Even this would be formidable in the context of the conditions obtaining in the sub-continent.

Pakistan has an infantry force of not less than twelve divisions and an armoured force of the equivalent of three divisions intact. These could probably be reinforced by another, three infantry divisions and an armoured division—making for a total force of fifteen infantry divisions and four armoured divisions. This ground force would be supported by an air armada of at least twenty combat squadrons.

Pakistan's navy may take a little longer to rebuild but this would not result in Pakistan's ocean flank being exposed. From the West, Pakistan's CENTO partners would provide ocean guards, while from the South, units of American fleet either from the Gulf squadron or that from the new base of Diego Garcia would exercise surveillance.

It would, no doubt, be difficult for Pakistan to support a land force component of about twenty operational divisions and an air force component of twenty combat squadrons, together with auxiliaries necessary to keep these in combat readiness. This is particularly so in view of the economic—especially foreign exchange—difficulties she is facing. If, however, the United States in addition to donating equipment makes cash grants of the order of \$300 to \$400 million a year, Pakistan would go ahead vigorously with the task of re-training and re-equipping her armed forces.

Much would therefore depend on the extent of direct and indirect aid that America and China—especially America—decide to give Pakistan in the next two years.

This is a critical period, since it is in this period that Pakistan would have to take action to rebuild its military machine and forge plans for launching yet another attack on India.

In one of his recent Press interviews President Bhutto had remarked that till 1965 Pakistan—thanks to American support, had militarily an edge over India and could have enforced a military decision in respect of Kashmir. That opportunity, he said, had passed and would not occur

again. But from the standpoint of this country the issues are—How sincere is President Bhutto in his remark that Pakistan is not in a position to force a military solution on India in respect of Kashmir? Also does Pakistan recognise as Mr Bhutto seems to have hinted, that it is for the people of Kashmir to solve their problems? Also how secure is President Bhutto's own position as Head of State? This last is by no means an academic issue. Mr. Bhutto himself announced at a Press Conference at Lahore in March that if he cannot carry the people of Pakistan with him, he will quit. This prompted Khan Wali Khan to point out that the way to prevent a power vacuum in Pakistan is to convene the national Assembly forthwith so that it can, acting as a sovereign body, steer the country on a safe course. Khan Wali Khan and other popular leaders, no doubt, are apprehensive that should Mr. Bhutto step down—or be forced to step down—an army strong man may again take over, with all its attendant dangers of foreign control of the country's policies and tension within and without.

An unstable neighbour especially in the historical context in which Pakistan finds herself, is particularly susceptible to external pressures. And China, from Mr Chou En Lai's most recent pronouncements, has indicated its determination to foment trouble within our country involving Pakistan.

Those considerations make it imperative that we build up defence forces of sufficient strength and versatility which can deal with Pakistan's attempts to carry out pre-emptive air and land strikes across Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab/Haryana and/or Rajasthan. Simultaneously we must have forces in position on our Northern borders which can hold any attacks by China in Ladakh, the Middle sector, Arunachala or further East.

It would also follow that the country would need land forces with two components—one capable of warding off possible attacks from the North, and the other to deal with trouble emanating from the West. Considering the forces in being on the other side of our Northern borders and their possible future build up, our Himalayan forces ought not to be under eighteen mountain divisions. These would need extensive air mobility facilities in order that troops may be rapidly deployed from one sector of the theatre to another as operational need may dictate.

To deal with the threat on the Western front, a force of twenty infantry divisions and at least six armoured divisions would be necessary in order firstly to discourage attacks against us, and secondly to deal effectively with such attacks should they develop. To equip and sustain such a force we would need to step up our tank and gun production capacities urgently.

The air force would need to be built up eventually into a hundred squadron force, with a strong strike element and supported by adequate ground facilities. Those would not doubt be expensive, but we cannot afford *not* to have a strong air strike force, as weakness on our part would tempt interested foreign powers to prop up Pakistan once again and utilise that country as proxy to strike at us. Despite the events of 1971, Pakistan's utility as proxy for disrupting India does not seem to have reduced from the stand point of Pakistan's patrons.

The overall cost to the country would be within our means provided we utilise the opportunity build within the country the capacity to design and build advanced strike aircraft, for which plans have been under preparation for some time.

Our Naval forces would require very considerable expansion and modernisation. As our aircraft carrier, cruisers, and destroyers become due for replacement, the fleet would need to be equipped with newer fighting ships. Some of the types required are helicopter ships, destroyers/frigates capable of delivering surface to surface missiles as also surface to air weapons and a fairly large armada of well armed fast boats. This last component, though vital would need to be supported by bigger ships—hence the need for an adequate number of destroyers/frigates.

We have only just made a beginning in equipping our fleet with a few underwater vessels. This element would need to be strengthened very considerably.

In the matter of reequipping our navy—as that in the case with our air force—the key move is to set up facilities to build vessels/equipment. The Minister for Defence Production announced during the Budget Session of Parliament that steps are being taken to commission facilities for building submarines within the country. This has to be pursued with vigour. Simultaneously our ship-building capacity must be stepped up.

Although our plans for developing a simple short range surface to surface missile were made almost eight years ago, much remains to be done. Medium artillery would need to be replaced by missiles. Improved versions of such missiles could well be mounted on light motor boats. Longer range missiles would also be needed for equipping both land and naval forces. Developing these weapons has become increasingly important.

Our policy—as affirmed by the Prime Minister only recently—continues to be to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes only. This is a laudable objective. But in view of China's rapidly increasing nuclear

arsenal and her posture of continued hostility towards us, a stage perhaps has been reached when prudence demands that we acquire the *capacity* to build a reasonable arsenal. If nuclear powers continue to enjoy special "directorates" rights at the expense of peace loving and unarmed and non-aligned countries, it would be wrong on our part not to exercise our right to be suitably armed for ensuring our defence. This is especially important because of our position as a non-aligned power. Even though we have a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union in terms of which we can take counsel with them in the events of threats against our security, the less we invoke aid under the treaty the better both for the Soviet Union and for ourselves.

### CONCLUSION

In sum, the danger of Pakistan supported by others, once again attacking us is still there. To prevent such attacks from materialising and to overcome the attacks should they develop, the country would need land forces capable of holding the northern frontier while dealing with attacks across the western border. An overall land force element of at least six armoured divisions, and thirty-five to forty infantry divisions with adequate air mobility would be needed. The air element would need to be at least a hundred squadron force. The naval element has also to be augmented very considerably in order that our coasts and island districts may be protected adequately. The build up has to be suitably phased with equal emphasis on large surface ships, small and fast boats equipped with effective weapon systems and underwater fleet—all provided with air cover.

To equip and sustain these forces, our defence production capacity in the areas of aircraft, shipbuilding, missiles and tanks would have to be considerably augmented.

On the organisational side, an effective Defence Planning Committee would be necessary to formulate and oversee the implementation of equipment plans. A Chief of Defence Staff and an adequate Joint Staff would be needed for involving and carrying out joint operational plans. The Defence Secretariat could then carry out its proper role of providing secretarial service to the Minister, deal with other central ministries, State Governments and the public, as also attend to budgeting, personnel and routine administrative matters.